

# Pigs D of Destiny



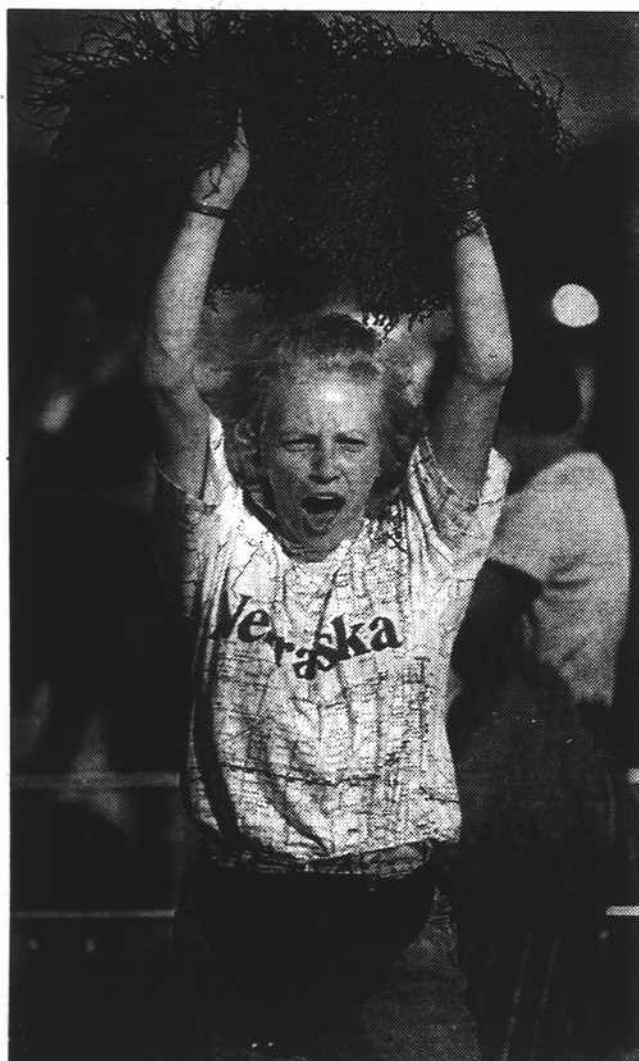
Photographs  
by  
MATT MILLER/DN

Photos (from top to bottom)

**WINNER TAKES THE OREO** - Leonardo DiPigrio, Kevin Bacon, Forrest Grunt and Elvis Pigsley race down the home stretch during the pig race at the Nebraska State Fair on Wednesday. The swine didn't break a sweat.

**IT ISN'T A CATTLE DRIVE**, but first-time race assistant Bill Burke had his hands full corralling the sows after a close race. The Des Moines, Iowa, resident didn't specialize in pigs; he trains goats and ducks as well.

**SOO-WHEE. RUN PIGGY, RUN.** Millie Welton of Ashland cheers on the piglets. After she put her pompoms down, Welton confessed she was a rookie cheerleader.



## Racing hogs ham it up at state fair

BY SARAH BAKER  
Senior staff writer

Amidst the people riding in circles on the tractor-pulled trolley, past the booths with toothless vendors and the funnel cake stand lies the real gem of the Nebraska State Fair.

The pig racing track. Hendrick's Racing Pigs, who made three performances at the fair yesterday, ran their curly tails off not for the randomly chosen cheerleaders on the track, not for the wild, screaming 10-year-old crowd, but for the coveted Oreo cookie at the end of the lane.

The pigs, who carry creative names such as Leonardo DiPigrio, Monica Sowinsky and, appropriately enough, Kevin Bacon, were all part of a mad act with two hillbilly wannabes in the lead. Joe Hendrick, owner of the traveling act, and his daughter's boyfriend Bill Burke, pose as hicks from the sticks who train farm animals.

Hendrick has been training pigs, along with goats and ducks, for the past 15 years. He said the act travels with fairs all across the United States.

"It's been pretty successful," Hendrick said. "Grandmas, grandpas, kids, they all love it. I like to say it's for kids of all ages."

Amongst the background clamor of

"Old MacDonald Had a Farm" blasting over a tiny radio, Hendrick randomly chose four "cheerleaders" from the audience of about 200 spectators.

The four lucky women were bestowed with "shakers" meant to encourage the piglets to shimmy down the track.

Hendrick kept the entertainment clean.

**"I like to say it's for kids of all ages."**

**JOE HENDRICK**  
owner, Hendrick's Racing Pigs

"Just shake your shakers, not everything else, Irma!" he hollered, giving the adults a laugh.

Burke then released the pigs from the trailer filled with squawking farm animals, and donned them with their red, yellow, blue and white numbers.

Much to the delight of the crowd, the pigs burst out of the gates for a false start, and before they could be stopped, attacked the defenseless Oreo in seconds flat.

Fortunately, no one was disqualified, and all the pigs snagged an extra treat.

After the rampant pigs were back in the gate, the actual races began.

Three heats of pigs then began running the races, boy pigs followed by girl pigs, and last of all, political pigs - with names like of Al Boar.

The audience was brimming with children, the fans ranging in age from 3 to 13. Most found the races entertaining.

"I've never been here before, but I like numbers three and four to win," said Devin Mickey, a tiny fan from Lincoln.

Some weren't so impressed. "I've seen a pig race before where a pig got three cookies," said Rachel Johnson from Stromsburg. "And my pigs at home run all over like that."

Most of the adults at the race said they were there not to personally see the races, but to entertain the children accompanying them.

"I try to bring the kids to the state fair every year," said Bonnie Mickey, also from Stromsburg. "It's a lot of fun for them, especially stuff like this."

Hendrick said he trains his animals by repetitively making them run around the track until they "just keep goin'."

He added that the ducks are the hardest to train.

Hendrick said the animal show idea wasn't originally his, but when he saw the show and thought it had potential he picked it up.

"People just like pigs," Hendrick said. "They're cute."