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UK
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Basketball and Dairy Farming

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What are the two key elements of a winning basketball team? It takes talented players and good coaching. What about your dairy farm? What are two of the key elements of a winning milk-producing team? It takes talented cows (players) and good management (coaching).

Let us use a series of questions and answers to expand on this metaphor.

Do talented players or talented cows just show up? No, it takes more effort to get talented players or talented cows.

What determines the talent level of your milk producing team? Genetics ... ability is determined by genetics.

Where can you find the best talent for your milk producing team? Artificial insemination provides the best talent, because A.I. sires are the best of the best.

How much better is A.I. talent? Daughters of active A.I. Holstein sires receive genetic merit for 720 more pounds of milk per lactation than daughters of non-A.I. Holstein bulls born in the last 8 years. That difference is much larger if you use the top end of the A.I. sires. In addition, cows with more talent pass that talent on to future generations.

Is the level of talent predictable? High school players recruited on four years of game stats are more likely to be good college players than those recruited based on their performance in a few high school games. A.I. sire proofs contain much more information than the information available on natural service bulls. Therefore, we can more accurately predict the ability of the future herd by using proven A.I. sires.

Do all of the players on a basketball team have the same talents? No a winning basketball team has some tall players, some shorter players, and some players who run faster than others.

Do all the cows on the milk producing team have the same talents? No, but through A.I. you can select in advance what talents your milk producing team has and what they will look like. If you want high production, you can select for high production. If you want correct feet and legs, you can select for correct feet and legs. If you want correct udders, you can select for correct udders. If you want to improve production and type, you can select for both. Furthermore, A.I. allows you to use several different sires which spreads the risk if one does not do as well in your herd. If you use a natural service bull, all of your eggs are in one basket so to speak. If he is a dud, you have a team of duds to coach.

How much of the milk producing teams performance is due to talent and how much is due to coaching? Milk production is 30 percent talent/genetics/ability and 70 percent coaching/environment/opportunity.

Can we have winning milk producing teams with just talent or just coaching? No, it takes both. For examples, see table.

Talent and coaching influence performance

Talent +	Coaching =	Performance
30% (great talent)	70% (great coaching)	100% performance
10% (poor talent)	70% (great coaching)	80% performance
30% (great talent)	35% (poor coaching)	65% performance
10% (poor talent)	35% (poor coaching)	45% performance

Do teams which stay healthy have a better chance of winning? Yes! Healthy players spend more time in the game and less time with the trainer - ditto for healthy cows. In addition, we can use A.I. to plan for healthier cows. Using calving ease sires on heifers yields fewer bad starts in the rookie season. Breeding for correct feet and legs and correct udders yield cows with fewer problems. Selecting for Productive Life results in cows which have a greater chance of having a more productive life.

Do coaches who stay healthy have a better chance of winning? Yes! Anywhere there is a dairy bull there is a chance of injury or death. If the coach is laid up, the team suffers. If the coach is dead, the game is over. Do we really need any other reason to use A.I.?

Please A.I. your heifers and cows. Do not do it because I made the suggestion. Do it for yourself and your family. Do it to make your farm a safer place. Do it because you deserve to have the best talent to coach.