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Aaron Rhoads/staff

Sedalia resident Lisa Phillips and her rooster, White Lightning, try to catch up in yesterday's rooster crowing contest finals in the Poultry-Rabbit Building at the State Fair.

Veteran rooster at State Fair to claim final championship

By Christine Lyall
Staff Writer

Solo's an old bird, but he came back to reclaim his first-place trophy, strut his stuff one more time, and show the other birds how to do it right.

And after the State Fair, he'll retire.

Solo, owned by Kim Beer of Adrian, Mo., was named champion in the rooster crowing finals Monday afternoon at the State Fair.

The black Dutch Bantam rooster finished the competition with 66 crows in the allotted 30 minutes, one crow more than he gave Saturday to qualify for the event and 13 crows ahead of his stiffest contender. There were six roosters in the final crow-off.

By placing first this year, Solo was able to repeat his success of two years ago and reclaim the title he lost last year. In 1991, Solo placed second in the same contest.

Beer, 26, Solo's owner and coach, said the 3-year-old Solo actually is rather old for a crowing rooster.

"I'm surprised he can still keep up at that pace," she said.

But Solo did more than keep up — he set the pace early in the contest, taking a 10-crow lead within the first seven minutes. About half-way through the race, Solo got a little self-absorbed and slowed down, ignoring the chants and coaxing he was receiving from his personal cheering squad behind him.

Beer didn't give up. She continued to taunt Solo, who — like all the other roosters in the race — was standing alone in a cage. She paraded another rooster or chicken past him, rapped on his table and called out his name.

Finally, out of agitation and excitement, Solo would square his feathered shoulders, raise his neck, look to the heavens and belt out a long crow. He'd lower his neck on the tail end of his crow for emphasis, then shake his right leg.

Everyone cheered as Solo paced in his cage, gearing up for another crowd-pleasing squawk.

"Bantam roosters are always cocky little smart asses," Beer said of Solo. "He loves the noise, he loves the crowd ... he's such a ham."

Her sister, Barbara Hogan said, "If Solo were a teenager, he'd be in to heavy metal music."

Beer said Solo, born in an incubator, was raised as a household pet in an indoor cage with canaries. She said he is accustomed to people, talking and lots of activity.

Raising a crowing rooster as a pet may be the secret to raising a champion crower, she said. Many of the other roosters, which were probably farm roosters, may have been nervous from the commotion in the poultry barn where the contest was held, she said.

Beer said she intends to return for the contest next year with a new, young crowing rooster, perhaps a son of Solo's. She's been showing roosters and chickens at the fair since she was 6 years old.