



(L) Stephanie Brown Trafton hurls the discus at the Beijing 2008 Olympics (R) Gina Miles celebrates after completing the equestrian eventing competition during the Beijing Olympics in Hong Kong. (Photos by Associated Press)

# BEIJING

## CAL POLY OLYMPIANS BRING THE MEDALS HOME

BY JOHN SCHUMACHER

IN THE OLYMPIC GAMES, there's no getting around the magnitude of the moment, which arrives presenting two choices – seize the opportunity or shrink from it.

When that time came, the years of hard work, commitment and sacrifice building to a crescendo, Cal Poly graduates **Stephanie Brown Trafton (IE '04)** and **Gina Ostini Miles (CRSC '97)** delivered the performances of a lifetime.

Trafton, 28, entered the Beijing Games with the third-best discus throw in the world in 2008. She left with the gold medal after uncorking a 212-foot, 5-inch effort on her first throw, a mark that won by nearly four feet and gave the United States its first Olympic victory in the women's discus since Lillian Copeland's win in 1932.

Miles, 34, and her 14-year-old, 1,410-pound horse, McKinlaigh, earned a silver medal in eventing, an equestrian competition that combines dressage, cross country and show jumping. They did it with a flawless final-day performance in Hong Kong, handling an eight-jump course cleanly to move onto the medal stand.

Both thrower and rider were inspired by the 1984 Olympics in Los Angeles. Trafton, then 4, watched gymnast Mary Lou Retton dazzle and wanted to be an Olympian. Miles, then 10, attended the Los Angeles Games and fell in love with eventing.

Making it to the Olympics is an accomplishment in itself. Also competing in the Beijing Games were former Cal Poly high jumper **Sharon Day (KINE '08)** and former Mustang first baseman-outfielder **Jimmy Van Ostrand (KINE)**, who played for Canada. Cal Poly swimmer **Mark Barr (NUTR)** is scheduled to compete in the 2008 Beijing Paralympic games in September.

Trafton and Miles savored incredible outcomes. As she entered the discus ring for that fateful throw, Trafton tried to clear

her mind and let her 6-foot 4-inch, 225-pound body do its job.

"That's the point, being in the present, not worried about the future and not being held up by the past," said Trafton, the first gold medalist in Cal Poly history. "You're really in the moment and trying to do the best you can with whatever you have in that moment."

"It was an awesome opportunity to get a medal for the United States and inspire the rest of the team."

Trafton, who grew up in Oceano and graduated from Arroyo Grande High School, found herself in the spotlight after striking gold. When she arrived home in Galt, a town just south of Sacramento she and her husband Jerry moved to three years ago, the victory celebration drew more than 1,000 people.

Trafton said the time management skills she learned at Cal Poly while balancing being an industrial engineering major and competing in track and field helped her reach her potential. She's still juggling, balancing training with a part-time job at an environmental consulting firm.

She's also savoring the added attention a gold medal brings. "It's been really a great little ride," she said.

Miles manages a ranch in Creston, where she lives with her husband, Morgan and their two children, Austin and Taylor. During a stopover in London on the way home from Hong Kong, she sounded ecstatic.

"It's been a dream, just way more than I could have dreamed," she said. "He (McKinlaigh) delivered, certainly."

Miles and McKinlaigh finished with 56.1 penalty points, trailing only Germany's Hinrich Romeike, who claimed gold with 54.2 penalty points. Miles began the last day in fourth place, but her clean ride moved her up to second place.

"By the time we turned around, the next rider had gotten a

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penalty, so we moved up to medal position,” she said. “We were just over the moon. The next rider also dropped a rail ... It just couldn’t get better.”

Miles started riding when she was 7 and living in Davis. Three years later, the Olympics gave her a goal. From there, hard work, dedication and finding a way to pay for the high cost of eventing \$50,000 \$75,000 a year - proved challenging.

Miles said her Cal Poly days as a crop science major exposed her to a wider world and helped her develop contacts.

“When you’re standing on the podium and reflecting and watching the flags go up, you have a moment to check everything that went into it,” she said. “The ups and downs, the road is full of both.” □