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Cal Poly Student Places in Top 5 at National Equestrian Championships

SAN LUIS OBISPO - Cal Poly student and Equestrian Team member Vanessa Thomas placed fifth in the competition for the United States Equestrian Federation/Cacchione Cup at the Intercollegiate Horse Show Association National Championships, held April 23-26 in Murfreesboro, Tenn.

Thomas, a senior majoring in Recreation, Parks, & Tourism Administration, was representing the Cal Poly Equestrian Team, a club organized under the Animal Science Department in the College of Agriculture, Food, and Environmental Sciences and supervised by faculty advisor Pete Agalos.

Thomas' accomplishment was particularly impressive given that this was her first year as an intercollegiate rider. In addition, Cal Poly's program is managed as a club without some of the resources that many other well-funded collegiate teams and riders enjoy.

"The competitors at the nationals really were the best of the best," Thomas said. "I was very impressed. I was able to ride well, and I was happy with my scores."

Thomas' childhood was spent riding horses competitively, but she only recently renewed her passion for the competitive side upon transferring to Cal Poly. Thomas previously competed on the cross-country team at Cuesta College.

The Santa Barbara native qualified for the right to compete at the nationals for the coveted USEF/Cacchione Cup in dramatic fashion in a Feb. 28 "ride-off" with Brittany Henson from the University of Nevada at Reno, for the Zone 8 Region 1 championship. Henson, the defending Zone 8 Region 1 champion, and Thomas tied in overall points based on the overall horse show season.

About 372 colleges and universities are members of IHSA, with approximately 8,300 riders competing for the 31 National spots awarded based on zones and regions. Zone 8 Region 1 consists of Cal Poly, Stanford University, UC Davis, Sonoma State and University of Nevada at Reno.

Thomas said she will continue to ride competitively throughout the summer.



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