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Contact: Amy Hewes
805-756-6402; ahewes@calpoly.edu

Cal Poly Team Finishes First at Parker Chainless Challenge

SAN LUIS OBISPO — Cal Poly Engineering students rode to a first-place finish at the 2015 Parker Chainless Challenge at Orange County Great Park in Irvine, Calif., April 7-8.

The Cal Poly team took first place with a bicycle propelled by fluid power rather than the traditional spoke and chain, winning three of the nine parts of the event: the 6-Mile Endurance Race, the Reliability and Safety Contest, and the Efficiency Challenge. Cal Poly also finished second in the Sprint Competition and third in both the Design/Originality and Best Design Chosen by Teams categories. The team won nearly \$9,000.

“It was really great to see the students come together as a high-functioning team and use all the engineering knowledge and skills that they practiced during their time at Cal Poly to design and build an extremely reliable, efficient and ultimately winning machine,” said faculty advisor Jim Widmann. “Their success is a testament to Cal Poly’s Learn by Doing philosophy.”

The team included mechanical engineering students Jack Rechten from Wenatchee, Wash.; Matt Pallotta from Modesto, Calif.; Kemper Whaley from Ojai, Calif.; and Nathan Klammer from Corvallis, Ore.

“We figured out a better way to charge and discharge our hydraulic accumulator,” said Klammer. “On the competition day, Jack guided our bicycle to 180 meters without pedaling! I’m pretty sure this is a competition record.”

The Parker Chainless Challenge allows student teams to design and build a human-assisted, fluid-powered vehicle traveling on two, three or four wheels. Bogdan Kozul, group manager of technical training for Parker, said the Chainless Challenge is a “creative way get students exposed to fluid power technology that’s in very high demand right now.”

The University of Illinois finished second, Murray State University was third and the University of Cincinnati placed fourth. Other teams competing were Cleveland State, Illinois Institute of Technology, Purdue University, the University of Akron and Western Michigan University.

The Chainless Challenge is sponsored by the Parker Hannifin Corp., a global engineering manufacturer of motion and control technologies and systems. For more information, see parker.com.

Caption: From left Jack Rechten, Nathan Klammer, Matt Pallotta and Kemper Whaley with their winning bicycle at the 2015 Parker Chainless Challenge at Orange County Great Park in Irvine, Calif., April 7-8. The team was first overall and earned nearly \$9,000.

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Phone: 805-756-1111