



A College of Champions

CASNR sports a winning tradition

Many people know that Oklahoma State University has the most national championship titles of any school in the Big XII conference. These championships are all sports-related, but that is not the only way in which OSU excels. In the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources, championships are garnered in academics and club activities.

CASNR has 26 student organizations as well as 12 judging teams. In addition, the college has ties to the OSU women's equestrian and rodeo teams.

The national titles and championships these groups earn bring recognition to the teams and to their individual members. These honors also reflect positively on CASNR and the university as a whole.

"Competing at a national level brings recognition to the

university," said Ed Miller, CASNR assistant dean. "Winning is always nice, but it shows what students here learn and that they know how to use what they have learned."

Competitive teams and organizational activities within CASNR come from the talent, dedication and strong recruitment efforts put forth by coaches and advisers.

Recruitment occurs for many teams, especially when there is an opportunity to defend national titles and keep the university positively associated with the activity or organization. For example, the livestock judging team actively recruits members from high schools and junior colleges.

"I came to OSU because of the livestock judging team," said Kim Cerny, animal science senior. "I knew the caliber of the program, and I admired the quality of the past members of OSU's team I had met."

Alumni support is also a part of the success of CASNR's judging teams. Their continued support by providing scholarships and allowing teams to practice at their facilities has helped the teams to be part of the winning tradition. Alumni donations and assessment funds also help pay for students' travel and contest expenses.

"We rely on the support of successful alums to assure the continued emphasis on the vital parts of our animal science department," said Kim Brock, former coach of the livestock judging team.

In 2001-2002, two CASNR teams earned national championship titles: the livestock judging team and the women's rodeo team. In addition, the horticulture team won the coveted Southern Regional championship title. Individually, Mark Johnson was named National Coach of the Year in livestock judging, and Janae Ward was the national champion intercollegiate barrel racer.

Nation's best livestock judges

In November, the 2001 OSU livestock judging team won its first national title in 10 years, winning by more than 51 points at the North American International Livestock Exposition in Louisville, Ky. The team judged 12 classes of beef, sheep and swine and gave eight sets of oral reasons to earn the championship.

Previous to Louisville, the 11-member team won the American Royal livestock judging contest in Kansas City, Mo., and set a new high point record. It was the first time in 11 years OSU had won the two contests back to back.

Every year at Louisville, the champion teams from 10 and 40 years ago are recognized at the awards ceremony. All teams recognized this year in Louisville were from OSU. Both former winning teams had members present at the awards ceremony when OSU claimed this year's championship trophy.

"It was a great feeling to know our team was a part of history," said Grant Turner, animal science senior. "Having our alumni there made the win even more special."

During their judging season, the team worked out two times a week and traveled almost every weekend to either compete or practice. The time was spent learning to evaluate different species of livestock and deliver effective oral reasons.

"Several people told me our performances at the final two contests were the most dominant they had ever seen," Johnson said. "When I evaluate our performance at Kansas City and Louisville, it says a great deal about the talent and ability of the entire team."

Students of CASNR, as well as the faculty and staff of the college, are just as excited and proud of the team's accomplishments. The wins emphasize the quality of the college and OSU students.

"It was such a great feeling to have your peers congratulate you," said Jeremy Burr, animal sci-

ence senior. "It makes you realize what you have done for your college. I never realized how much it means to everyone else to have us win a national title."

More than just flowers

The OSU horticulture judging team had not won the regional title since 1998. They accomplished this feat in February 2002 in Orlando, Fla., at the J. Benton Storie Horticulture Commodity Judging Contest. Winning this contest is more highly recognized than the national title because the level of competition is much more stringent in comparison to the national event.

The contest consisted of judging 10 classes of fruits and nuts, 10 classes of vegetables, five classes of greenhouse foliages and floral plants, and five classes of woody plants. In addition, contestants were required to identify 20 greenhouse and woody plants by scientific name.

"I learned a lot about horticulture [while] preparing for the contest," said Erika Brooks, horticulture senior. "Being on the team was a great experience, one you don't have in a classroom setting."

Seven students represented the horticulture department at the contest. Four competed as a team, and the rest were classified as individuals. The students began preparing for the contest in November by going to the OSU greenhouses for several hours each week.

"We had a good team this year because of the members' dedication to work and their background," said Janet Cole, professor of ornamental horticulture and team coach. "The fact that they were willing to prepare and put in a lot of time outside of practice to learn plants and names shows their level of dedication."



Julie Daniel, spring 2002 graduate, looks at flowers in the OSU Teaching Greenhouse in preparation for an upcoming contest. (Photo by Gretchen Summers)

Tenths of a second make the difference

In May 2001, half of the top 12 barrel racers in the Central Plains region were OSU Cowboys, or in this case, Cowgirls. After the College National Finals Rodeo, these winning Cowgirls were national rodeo champions, making them the first such team ever from OSU.

Intercollegiate rodeo contestants compete in regional rodeos to qualify for the College Rodeo Championship Series and the College National Finals Rodeo. The CRCS was established to make the qualifying process for CNFR a more objective process.

“I think the National Intercollegiate Rodeo Association has created a CNFR qualifying procedure that sends the best college cowboys and cowgirls to the finals,” said Sarah Neely, NIRA director of public relations and administration.

At the 2001 CNFR in Casper, Wyo., nearly 450 contestants from across the United States competed for more than \$200,000 in scholarships and prizes.

“Honestly, I didn’t think we had a chance of winning as a team, being all barrel racers,” said Janae Ward, accounting junior. “Toward the end of the week it was starting to sink in — we might have a chance, because the other teams were having some problems.”

Ultimately, seven-hundredths of a second separated Ward and 2001 OSU alumna Julia Warner for the national barrel racing title. Junior Gretchen Benbenek was eighth, securing the national team title. Ward later expanded her honors to include a December 2001 trip to the National Finals Rodeo in Las Vegas, earning a total of \$88,568 for the season.

Coach Terry Hyman said winning a national title brings recognition to OSU as the place to come and rodeo.

“We’re building for the future, and now recruits know it’s possible to come to OSU and win a national championship,” Hyman said.

And the winning continues ...

It is not only these championship teams that make OSU and CASNR so great, Miller said, but also it’s many other successful organizations.

The Agronomy Club has been named Most Outstanding Agronomy Club in the nation every year for the last 12 years. Agricultural Communicators of Tomorrow has earned more than 150 awards at their national contest for the *Cowboy Journal* magazine and individual entries. In addition, other clubs and teams have been national champions in the past, including the soils team, the horse judging team, the biosystems and agricultural engineering tractor pull team and the meats judging team.

Each win shows the quality of students in the college, and also the quality of the faculty who take the time to shape and mold the students. It would not be possible to compete and win at a national level without them, said Miller.

“Students learn more when they are involved in these organizations than they ever could in a traditional classroom,” said Miller. “Competing with other schools is a gauge of how well we are doing preparing our students. Winning is proof of the good job we are doing.”

◆ *By Kylene Orebaugh, Dodge City, Kan., and Gretchen Summers, Brady, Texas*



Members of the National Champion Women’s Rodeo Team are recognized by OSU President James Halligan at a fall 2001 football game. Pictured are Terry Hyman (left), Julia Warner, Gretchen Benbenek, OSU Regent Lou Watkins, President James Halligan, Janae Ward and Shannon Herrmann. (Photo courtesy of Terry Hyman)

2001 Livestock Judging Team

Mark Johnson, Coach

Heath Bush, Chickasha, Okla.

Jeremy Burr, Kinsley, Kan.

Jeremy Cantrell, Stigler, Okla.

Kim Cerny, Narka, Kan.

Marty Fear, Sutherland, Neb.

Terry Lockhart, Muldrow, Okla.

Adam McClung, Greenbriar, Ark.

Casey Meek, London, Ohio

Cody Sankey, Council Grove, Kan.

Justin Stacy, Oktaha, Okla.

Scott Stedje, Gruver, Texas

Grant Turner, Amber, Okla.

2002 Horticulture Team

Janet Cole, Coach

Erika Brooks, Muskogee, Okla.

Jana Clift, Miami, Okla.

Julie Daniel, Newcastle, Okla.

Crystal Holder, Perkins, Okla.

Kendi Nelson, Carrier, Okla.

Teresa Mollett, Elk City, Okla.

Sheila Roggog, Perkins, Okla.

2001 Women’s Rodeo Team

Terry Hyman, Coach

Gretchen Benbenek, Missoula, Mont.

Shannon Herrmann, Ft. Smith, Ark.

Julia Warner, Sapulpa, Okla.

Janae Ward, Addington, Okla.