

2011-2012 Cal Figure Skating

4th place- USFS Intercollegiate National Championships



The weeks prior to the weekend of April 21st the California Figure Skating Team trained for the US Figure Skating Intercollegiate National Championships after placing in 2nd in the Pacific Coast Conference and becoming one of nine teams out of 36 to qualify. Being one of the smallest teams with 8 skaters, Cal came in with no

expectations but to have fun as a team and skate their best. Competing against schools with over twenty skaters, placing seemed out of reach.

Each skater competes individually in their own disciplines, earning points for their school by placing in the top 5 in each category. First place earns 5 points for the team, 2nd place earns four, and so on for the remaining placements. UC Berkeley obtained 38 points and brought home 7 medals: 2 gold, 2 silver, 3 bronze, and 3 team trophies.

The dynamic of the team consists of skaters in all different levels that have passion and dedication for the sport as well as high aspirations for future career goals. Senior co-president Tanya Shaby who has inspired the team immensely and competed on the team for all four years, will be graduating in May to pursue a Law degree at Harvard University. She brought home the gold and bronze medal in the Novice short and long program respectively. Other graduating seniors include Sarah Powell and Darren Lee who placed 9th and 3rd in the Preliminary events at Nationals. The rest of the team is surprisingly young, who are currently freshmen and sophomores.

Freshman Samira Damavandi competed in the Junior and Senior ice dancing events earning much needed points for the bears. She also competed in the Juvenile event for the first time where she skated a clean program that included a single axel. Janelle Unger skated an impressive long program in the Intermediate division where she hit a double Salchow-double toe loop combination taking the silver medal. Senior ladies Michelle Hong, Katrina Phan, and Laney Diggs closed day one of the competition. In the short program Michelle Hong hit a huge axel and double toe-double toe combination and her exquisite signature spins to wow the judges. Phan hit a double flip-double toe loop combination as well as double loop to capture the bronze medal and Laney Diggs hit a double axel to claim gold in the senior short program. Diggs would later on claim silver in the Senior Championship long program.

Cal dominated in the High Team and Intermediate Team maneuvers where each college has a team complete required elements and the quality of the elements are judged. The dynamic trio of Diggs, Hong, and Phan, completed two double axels,

amazingly fast spins, and intricate footwork to win 1st in the High Team event while Shaby, Unger, and Damavandi got 3rd in Intermediate team maneuvers after hitting a huge single axel and a double salchow-double toe combination.

Going into the awards ceremony the California Figure Skating Team had no expectations of placing in the top 6. But as the announcer called the University of California Berkeley to claim their fourth place trophy, cheers and tears erupted from the team. Freshman Katrina Phan later expressed the moment as unbelievable. "When I first heard our school being called I thought they were going to announce The University of Colorado, Denver. It was an amazing feeling." The California Figure Skating Team now looks to work hard and improve for next season. Look for them next year in the first qualifying competition in September at their home rink in Oakland.

In addition to competing for the California Figure Skating Team, each member has high goals off the ice. Secretary of the Cal Figure Skating Team, Janelle Unger has dreams of becoming a dietician by earning a degree in the College of Natural Resources. She has worked very hard these past years and qualified for the 2011 US Figure Skating National Championships as a Novice pairs skater where she took on the best of the best. Katrina Phan who is also a young leader plays the role of Vice President for the team. Only a freshman, she has proved her abilities by being a great leader and budgeting the team funds well. She wishes to pursue a degree in Business and German. Michelle Hong, the Team Captain and Public Relations Chair, drives her team to its full potential and is not only a competitive asset to the team but also is also an aspiring business leader as she strives to earn a degree in business, media studies, and a minor in Spanish. Michelle's well-rounded characteristics are also reflected in the working field as she coaches young skaters and is the Events Coordinator of Leadership Awards Scholars Association at Cal. Laney Diggs, the Co-President of the team is a truly dedicated and inspiring member who puts passion and energy into any aspect relating to the team. On top of being one of the best skaters in the Collegiate Championships, she also commits her time to being the CalTV Director, a member of the AAC, and the newly admitted part time

manger of the woman's basketball team. Her future career goals include receiving a degree in media studies and psychology to become a sports agent.

All in all, The Cal Figure Skating Team has become a force to be reckoned with, both athletically and academically. The dynamic of the team has evolved tremendously thanks to the strong leadership skills and passion each member of the team brings. Even though the team is currently 4th in the nation, they do not plan to let it get to their heads, instead they plan to continue their mentality of having fun and skating their best because at the end of the day, no matter what place they are, they know that skating has brought joy and motivation into their lives to continue their hard work in the classroom to pursue their dreams.