

DCI East goes to Vanguard, Cadets hot on their heels

by Catherine A. Thomas

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... Amassing its second DCI regional title within a week, the Santa Clara Vanguard coasted to the DCI East open class title with a 93.80.

As the season winds down to the last two weeks, Vanguard is picking up momentum. In tonight's finals, the corps improved a full point over its 92.80 preliminary performance. In addition, the Vanguard's winning score of 93.80 represents its highest score to date. With a 2.1 margin of victory, Santa Clara's only caption loss was in percussion.

Vanguard's performance was hypnotic. In *Masquerade*, the corps lured the crowd with the catchy, festive melody. As the melody became louder and more dominant, the pace picked up to a frantic tempo, and then everything came to a dead stop at the sudden appearance of the Phantom. This dead stop had the same dizzying effect as a sudden stop of a roller coaster.

Despite the Vanguard's close alliance with the Phantom, it, too, is subject to his pranks. During the conclusion of the show, the corps members scurried to get under the mask canopy, but as the canopy unfolded, it was on the wrong side. Instead of the familiar white mask, the only thing visible was the dim outline of the mask in reverse.

Placing second with a 91.70 were the Cadets of Bergen County. Although the Cadets trailed the Vanguard by over a point in total GE, they were much closer in the performance captions. In fact, the Cadets improved their score from prelims to finals

bettering their morning score of 91.40 by .3

As usual the Cadets continue to be the masters of change. From prelims to finals, the corps dropped its effective pre-show warm-up that concludes only seconds before the first note of judged performance. Without the warm-up, the Cadets still managed to manipulate the audience as they directed the spectators to look, to hear and to feel the spectacle of the oppressed. In *On My Own*, the delicate, flowing choreography and plaintive tune led to the fierce, frenetic confrontation and set the stage for the feeling of hope in *When Tomorrow Comes*. This last portion of the Cadets' show has been subject to much change. In tonight's performance, the Cadets constructed a moving tableau before forming the final peace symbol to the tone of a single chime.

The Madison Scouts were third with an 88.40. Entering the field from a tight square, the Scouts performed a precise visual show which earned them a second-place visual caption finish, .5 behind Vanguard. A fourth-place percussion caption finish and .6 in penalties kept the Scouts from narrowing the margin between themselves and the top two finishers.

On the whole, the Scouts' performance was consistent from prelims to finals, although their prelim score was .1 higher at 88.50. However, the crowd response was greater during their evening performance. *Make His Praise Glorious* won respectful applause, but *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue*

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line unfurled their capes. Once the canopy fell to the ground, the large, red banners with flaming attachments filled the field.

Finishing fifth with an 82.40 were the Freelancers. Like the Crossmen, the Freelancers have shown extraordinary progress this season. From morning to evening, they improved their 81.30 prelim score by .9. Beginning their performance from a series of files covering 55 yards, the Freelancers exude a massive air as if they were going to fill up the universe. In their visual presentation of *Empire of the Sun*, voluminous figures collapsed, expanded, intersected and floated away.

Close on the heels of the Freelancers were the sixth-place Velvet Knights who scored an 82.00, bettering their 81.10 prelim score. Trying to keep pace with the Crossmen and Freelancers, VK displayed inconsistencies in performance. The corps performed well in percussion and brass placing third and fourth respectively, but fell to sixth in GE and even lower, to 10th, in visual. Always a crowd favorite, the Velvet Knights were at their best as they shimmed and swayed to the strong Latin rhythm of *Yo Mambo* while repeating several drill patterns centered around vertical files.

The Boston Crusaders were the only corps to improve its prelim placement, moving to seventh with a 78.60. In the morning prelims, the Crusaders placed eighth with a 78.10. The word "tradition" has become synonymous with the Crusaders, and their 1989 production is vintage Boston. The snap, knee heights, roars and repertoire of days gone by are integral parts of their production, making them one of the easiest corps to watch. The Crusaders' blend of the old with the visual patterns of the '80s was evident when their opening figure, a tight oval, broke into files that passed diagonally through each other while moving backward.

Hampered by 1.6 in penalties, the Sky Ryders fell to eighth place with a 77.40 after having hit a 79.90 in prelims. The Sky Ryders' performance was serious business as they projected a full-bodied sound. In addition, the gloomy nature of their music was underscored by their use of a darker, more sombre color scheme and sharper

visual patterns.

Finishing in ninth place was the Florida Wave with a 74.80, an improvement over its 74.30 prelim score. Typically the corps' production was hot, hot, hot. Latin rhythms, salsa and talented soloists brought the crowd alive. A further Floridian touch was the oversized parrot flags with the trailing tails.

The tenth-place corps was L'Insolite with a 70.20. Of all the competitors, L'Insolite showed the most improvement from prelims to finals, moving up from a 68.30 prelim score. After a long delay in the start of the competition, the audience responded favorably to L'Insolite's jazz program. Snazzy steps and dancing dolls were crowd favorites.

Always a tremendously successful show, the DCI East open class competition was held before the largest crowd ever to attend a DCI regional. Pre-show exhibitions were performed by the DCI East class A-60 champion, S.T.A.R., and class A champion, Ventures.

Unlike the usual problem-free show that it has been, this year's Eastern regional was marred by a 30-minute delay before the first competing corps appeared. Part of the delay was due to the late arrival of the Bluecoats, the first competing corps, who had not performed in prelims but had marched in a parade in Canton, OH, and were speeding toward Allentown. Also contributing to the delay was the "disappearance of the Quad City Knights, who were announced as the second competing corps. Eventually the announcer stated that the Blue Coats would not compete but would put on an exhibition at the end of the competition. Once the competition did begin, the fans were still left to speculate about the whereabouts of Quad City. Much speculation was sparked by the DCI East program which indicated that 10 corps would compete in finals. However, Quad City would have made 11 corps, and the Bluecoats, 12. Some people surmised that the Quad City Knights did not know they were in finals.

After the competition ended, the Quad City mystery was solved. "There was a change of management and some miscommunication," said Bob Briske, DCI contest coordinator. Briske also added that the Quad City Knights would continue to compete on tour.