

Star hot on heels of SCV

by Sue Johnson

July 1, 1989—Sacramento, California . . . Another chilly evening (someone please flip on the California summer switch!) saw last night's corps competing again, tonight at the Freelancer's home show at Hughes Stadium. Perhaps due to the late hour of the San Jose show last night, the corps' performances seemed to lack a bit of their usual razor-edged excitement.

The Santa Clara Vanguard again took the top spot with a score of 77.60, capturing high visual, GE and brass captions. SCV continues to amaze with their drill execution. White, half-face "phantom" masks for the horn and percussion lines were added this weekend. How they can move backwards across the field at breakneck speed with half of their peripheral vision gone is beyond comprehension. (Members say they pray for well-manicured football fields!) SCV's bass drum line was cranking tonight as they treated the crowd to an ensemble performance as the corps passed in review in front of the stands.

Star of Indiana took second place with a score of 75.30, proving that last night was no fluke. Although their overall GE was down a bit, Star's percussion line was hot tonight, with a performance score two points higher than last night. The crowd was very responsive to Star's opening contra line solo in *Fantasia On the Dargason*, which is complemented by a traditional jig by the color guard.

Third place went to the Concord Blue Devils with a score of 74.10. Eight-tenths stood between BD and Star again tonight, although BD beat Star in GE percussion on both nights. I spoke with one of BD's fine soprano soloists, 18-year-old Dan Halpern, who works his magic in BD's *Allegre* piece. What a fine player he is, in his third year with BD. Dan is enjoying every minute of this season and is a fine addition to BD's talented horn line. He will attend Cal Berkeley in the fall.

Velvet Knights were in fourth position, scoring 64.50. Their toe-tapping percussion line was turned on, moving up over two points from last night to snatch high percussion from SCV by half a point. VK's color guard has their work cut out for them again this year with unique equipment including everything from huge bananas (yes, bananas!) in the opener, to 10-foot Mardi Gras heads on tall poles, to slinky

feather boas in the exit. Quite a combination!

Freelancers came in fifth place with a score of 61.00. They really put on a show for the enthusiastic hometown crowd, with their brass performance score up 1-1/2 points over last night. Freelancers' color guard uses huge red and white flags in the exit ballad piece *Home and Hearth* that suddenly expand into mega flags, effectively used to encircle the corps with a burst of color. Freelancers' corps members are eagerly anticipating getting "on the road again" for summer tour.

Sixth place went to Blue Knights of Denver, CO, with a score of 56.10. The Blue Knights' strong middle horn section really shines in a musical program which includes *Moorside March* by Holst and *Punchinello* by Reed. All of Blue Knights' performance scores increased from last night's show, most significantly their brass performance which was over two points higher.

Division II competition is beginning to heat up as the Vanguard Cadets kept their undefeated streak intact, with a first-place score of 55.40. Their show seemed to lack some of its usual spark tonight; however, their percussion score is still moving

upward, tonight more than 3 1/2 points over second-place Blue Devils "B". The Cadets are looking forward to leaving on tour on the Fourth of July for the Pacific Northwest.

Blue Devils "B" traded spots with Mandarin, by taking second place with a score of 55.00, closing the gap behind SCV Cadets to only four-tenths of a point. BDB's GE brass continues to climb, and their percussion section had a nice 2.1 point boost in GE tonight. They are working fast and furious to catch SCV by the end of the season!

The Sacramento Mandarins took third place with a score of 52.60. The corps continues to build up its GE captions, introducing beautiful, new turquoise skirts for the guard which stand out nicely against the black and pink uniforms of the horn and percussion lines. The skirts will take a little getting used to by the guard who has worn pants up until now. Mandarins were kind enough to find housing for SCV Cadets in Sacramento for tonight and will be putting on a huge picnic for the two corps tomorrow. Both groups are excited to have a day to play and get to know each other away from the competition.