

Dance team places sixth in Las Vegas

The first-year Club Sports team incorporates various types of dance

By Jennifer Rollings
for the Emerald

As members of the dance line in the Oregon Marching Band last year, Kiyoko Whiteside and Jaime Wiest enjoyed the rush of adrenaline and creative satisfaction that can come from performing in front of a roaring crowd. Yet they still yearned for something more.

Last April, Whiteside, a senior communication studies major, and Wiest, a senior sports marketing major, decided being on dance line was constricting their space, style and choice of music. Dancing in the middle of a football field wasn't enough, they said.

"We wanted an opportunity to do our kind of dance, and we were going to find a way to do that," Whiteside said.

So last year, they assembled an Oregon Club Sports dance team, the first of its kind at the University. And just four months after starting practice, the team is celebrating its sixth-place showing this month at the United Spirit Association Dance and Cheer National Competition in Las Vegas.

Placing at nationals is a far cry from the team's status a year ago — non-existent and unprecedented.

In order to gain sponsorship, Whiteside and Wiest compiled a petition of 15 signatures last April from students interested in joining the team. They received official approval from Club Sports later that month.

Tryouts took place toward the end of spring term and again in the

fall. By October, Whiteside and Wiest were the proud co-captains of eight teammates and were ready to begin outlining their objectives.

The team's primary aim was to develop a more innovative type of dance. Whiteside describes their style as a combination of "jazz dance, funk and technical moves based on ballet."

The team also wanted the option of entering dance competitions.

"Every girl on the team was involved in high school dance or cheerleading," Whiteside said. "I think we all missed the intensity of competition."

That was one reason the team was striving to dance with artistry and originality.

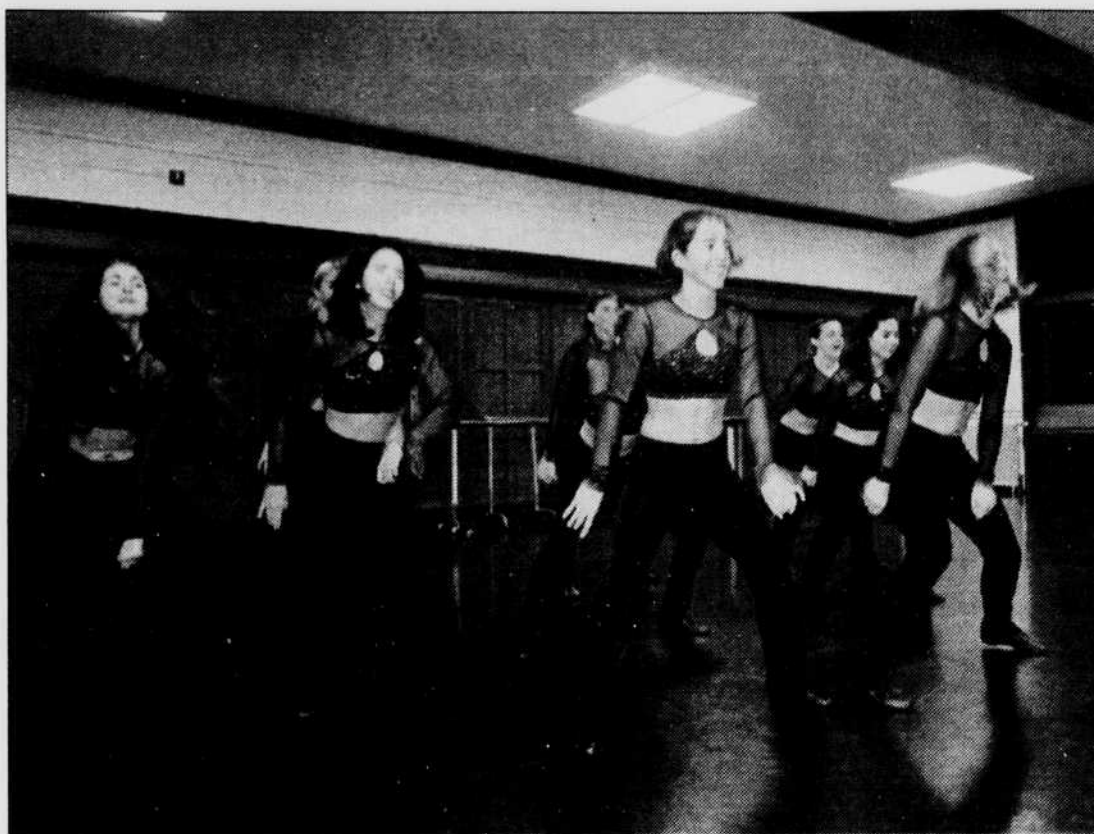
"On a football field, you have to use bigger, slower movements and do simple routines," Wiest said. "The skill level we face in competition is extremely tough."

The next hurdle the team faced was organizing practices and finding suitable locations to rehearse. Since November, the School of Dance has allowed the team to use facilities in Gerlinger and Gerlinger Annex. The team now practices together twice a week for more than three hours at a time.

In addition to scheduling, the team was responsible for its own supervision. Except for occasionally seeking professional choreography consultation, it has been without a coach this year.

"Because we didn't have a coach, we really had to listen to each other's critiques," said Kate Grossman, a freshman exercise and movement science major.

Whiteside and Wiest are considering hiring a coach for next season, but because of limited fi-



Nick Medley/Emerald

The Oregon Club Sports dance team practices a routine last week in Gerlinger Hall. The team placed sixth in a recent competition.

ancial resources, the team would need to find a person who could volunteer.

As a first-year Club Sport, money matters were no small problem for the team. It was granted the standard start-up budget of \$300, which it supplemented with fundraising clean-ups of McArthur Court and donations from local businesses.

Each team member also made a personal contribution of \$100. The team's largest expense was the national competition in Las Vegas because of the fees for custom-designed uniforms, airfare and hotel accommodations.

"Nationals was practically the only thing we spent money on this year," Whiteside said.

Club Sports was later able to give the team an extra \$650 to help pay for the trip.

The team's biggest difficulty, however, has been getting exposure and establishing performance experience. Outside of nationals, the team has danced at a men's and women's basketball game and has performed several exhibitions at local high schools.

"Making a name for ourselves was hard," said Sarah Taft, a freshman pre-journalism major. "At one of our halftime performances, nobody knew who we were. We had to dodge security guards to get on the court and do our routine."

Among their goals for the future, Whiteside and Wiest said they'd like the team to refine its

technique. Next term, all team members must include a ballet class in their schedule. The captains are also trying to decide who will take over the second co-captain position after Whiteside graduates in the spring.

Despite the hardships of surviving its first year of existence, the dance team agrees that overall, the positive experiences they have had being a team outweigh anything negative.

"If you look at our group, we have so much diversity in terms of attitudes, personalities and backgrounds," said Taya Kanchanaranya, a sophomore international studies and Spanish major. "But when we're dancing, we're all together."

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