



# Introducing the MARQUESAS





**SHOWCASE** (From left to right) Junior Kitty Liu, sophomore Rowena Lee, coach Hilary Maxwell, senior Jasmine Tsai, senior Rheanna Ganapathy and junior Kimberley Zhong chat moments after the showcase that took place in the gym on Mar. 1.

## The Marquesas overcome adversity in their path to Nationals

Story and photography by **Margaret Lin**

**"L**adies! This is the last practice before break!" This is Hilary Maxwell, the Marquesas' coach, and it's 3:17 p.m. on [Thursday], Feb. 14. The room breaks out into a scattered chorus of "Woohoo!" and "Yay!" as the dancers make their way to the floor.

"Come on out! Hurry, hurry!" Maxwell says.

It's typical rehearsal for the Marquesas. The girls are still jubilant over their then-recent win at the United Spirit Association Northern California State Championships. They had walked away from that tournament with five first place trophies in the Kick, Small Lyrical, Medium Dance, Intermediate Dance and Character routines, which more than qualified them for championship division of the March 29 to 30 United Spirit Association Costa Mesa Nationals Competition.

"[This year has been] like a roller coaster," co-captain and senior Rheanna Ganapathy says. "We've come a long way from summer and the winter show, and I think that now we're in a pretty good place [going into Nationals]."

### Setbacks

"The word of the day is attack!" Maxwell said. The day is Feb. 25, 4:31 p.m. and the Marquesas are practicing sharper execution in their lyrical routine.

The room is a lot less packed than it has been in previous years during typical Marquesa practices. Because three dance team members dropped out of the team due to time commitment issues,

the team member count dropped from 23 to 20 total members. Having a smaller team dropped them from the large to the intermediate category, which means more competitors for the team. In addition, half of this year's team consists of first-year members, which should have been a significant disadvantage.

"I think it was sad for us to see those girls go," Maxwell said. "But I think the girls understood and I understood why they made those decisions for the most part. I think that's also made us stronger [though] because here we have this core group of people who really want to be here and make dance team a priority."

### Triumphs

By the time competition season came around, the majority of the team had grown used to the changes. However, on Jan. 26 during the Homestead High School local competition, the Marquesas placed first in only two routines and second in one routine out of their five total routines. With a long history of excellence, especially at local competitions, the dance team was disappointed with the results.

"We didn't do as well as I thought we would. It wasn't bad at all. It just gave us something to work on," co-captain and senior Lyan Cogan said.

Their scores at that competition would not have qualified them for the upper division for Nationals, but because the competition was local, the scores were not evaluated by Nationals judges.

With only a week before the USA Regional Competition at Bella Vista High School, a qualifying competition, Ganapathy and Cogan

implemented shorter and more intense warm-ups, allowing more time to work on each individual routine. According to junior Michelle Chen, a three-year member, it was the most intense week of practice for the team this school year.

"I was a little shocked [at the Homestead competition] because generally we do well and Homestead is generally considered as one of the easier competitions," Chen said. "As a team we were set back, so I guess we were motivated to work harder. I think that made us stronger as a whole because you can't really move forward unless you know you have something to work toward."

As they waited for their scores during the last moments of the Bella Vista dance competition, tensions were high. A whole range of emotions ran through the team: fear, nervousness, suspense, hope.

"When we're getting our placements, we're all sitting in a circle and holding hands and looking down like come on, come on .... let's go, let's go," Ganapathy said. "They'll be like, 'In third place we have the ...' and I'll be like, 'Not Monta Vista, not Monta Vista.'"

The Marquesas managed to qualify and place in every single one of their dance routines. They placed first in four of their routines and second in their character routine.

"We all had this really great sense of achievement because it was such a big jump," said Chen. "It wasn't just one or two [routines], we placed [first] in four routines. I think that made us feel as if our work actually paid off."

The team was back on its game. At the NorCal competition one week after the Bella Vista competition, the team swept the awards ceremony with a first place win for every single one of their routines.

"It was the icing on the cake," Maxwell said. "The girls were even tearing up at the awards ceremony, [happy] to have just qualified."



**ARABESQUE** Freshman Carissa Yee practices the lyrical routine for the upcoming Nationals competition in Anaheim from W Mar. 17 to 18. The team practices last two to three hours, four days a week.

[m.lin@elestoque.org](mailto:m.lin@elestoque.org)



## Cornerstone Christian Academy

[cornerstonedream@gmail.com](mailto:cornerstonedream@gmail.com)

Dr. Sang Park, (408) 996-0354

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