Wearers of the Green: The Dartmouth Figure Skaters

By Vanessa Szalapski '10

This past spring, skaters on all of the five-time national championship teams were honored at Wearers of the Green. The event, hosted by the Boston Alumni Association at the Westin Copley Place hotel in Boston, MA, recognized students, alumni, and coaches for their outstanding athletic achievements. Founded in 1984, the event takes place every five years, and athletes from all sports including skiing, rowing, cross-country, swimming, sailing, squash, and ultimate Frisbee, among others are recognized. In order for a Dartmouth figure skater to be recognized, he or she must either win an individual national title or be a member of a national championship team. With five national championships neatly tucked into our belts, graduates from 2005 to current skaters in the class of 2011 were honored at the event that took place on Saturday, May 16, 2009.

Truly a stunning event, it was a chance for past members of the team to connect with current ones and to celebrate the outstanding achievements of our young team. The night began early for many of us, jumping on the shuttle bus in Thompson Arena parking lot to Boston. The event, which lasted from 6pm-10pm, granted us the opportunity to mingle with the other athletes being honored and to eat a scrumptious meal. 169 athletes, 4 coaches, and 5 honorary wearers that included President and Mrs. Wright, were inducted. While many athletes were honored, the figure skating team definitely asserted a strong presence; we had the most members inducted of any team! Five team members were also recognized individually for winning a high level freestyle or ice dance event at nationals. Katie Collins ’06 won gold in high level dance and Holly Ponichtera ’07 won gold in both Junior short and long at the 2006 Nationals hosted in San Jose, California, former captains Nicole Newman ’08 and Katherine Kalaris ’07 won Senior and Junior long, respectively, at the 2007 Nationals hosted by Dartmouth, and Tenley Brownwright ’10 won Junior long test track at the 2008 Nationals hosted by the University of Michigan. President and Mrs. Wright recognized each athlete individually, presenting him or her with a special 14k gold pin or pendant beautifully engraved with the green Dartmouth “D”. The evening ended all too soon after the ceremony and the numerous mandatory team photos.

While it was truly a great honor to be recognized alongside so many outstanding athletes, for me, there was an even greater sense of accomplishment not associated with the award. The event brought together the skaters from seven different classes, all of whom have contributed to the success of the team. It required seven years of skaters who practiced until their muscles ached, finished homework on the road, laughed together, cried together, bit their nails together, and cheered together to achieve not one, but five national team titles. I am so proud to call myself a member of the Dartmouth figure skating team. It is my hope that we can continue our legacy in the sport and induct many future Dartmouth skaters!