UC Scholar-Athlete of the Month for February – Tommy Marks

By: Kelley Ujvary

Balancing academics and athletics is a struggle for all but taking on the challenge with pride and dedication is exactly how Tommy Marks manages his efforts. With a 3.29 GPA in Aerospace Engineering out of the College of Engineering and Applied Science, Tommy Marks of the Track and Field Team is recognized as the Scholar Athlete of the Month for February.

Marks started his Track and Field career in 7th grade by running cross country. Later as a junior in high school, Marks that, “Pole Vault is my favorite track event. I thought it was a fun event so I immediately volunteered to participate. Since I was short, slow, and couldn’t jump high, my coach let me vault because I was not valuable in any other event,” Marks laughs. “It worked out for the best for both of us.”

Marks credits his skill and passion for the sport to his high school vault coach, Terry Wasson of Huber Heights Wayne High School. “Terry was a firm believer in becoming a student of the vault. He taught us that becoming a better athlete meant watching videos and pinpointing the flaws that prevent you from vaulting higher.” It wasn't until April of Marks’s senior year that thoughts of collegiate pole vaulting began to enter his mind.

With his mind set on engineering, his interest in UC began to grow when he attended a college fair at his high school. Marks’s deciding factor to become a Bearcat was the prestigious co-op program. “The co-op program really caught my attention and I went on an engineering visit first. It wasn’t until a few months later that I went on my official visit for Track. When I met with Coach Schnier, the athletes, and saw the facilities, I knew I wanted to be a Bearcat.”

As for Engineering, the passion for it is in Marks’s blood. “Growing up near Wright Patt*, having a grandpa who was a pilot, and a dad who worked in the Aerospace industry I have always been
interested in flight. Engineering also runs in the family, both my brother and dad are engineers, so Aerospace Engineering was the obvious direction,” Marks explains.

“After talking to a corporate recruiter and with advice from my brother, I realized how important it is to have some real world experience when applying for a full time position. Knowing that UC has one of the best co-op programs, I was almost certain I would attend UC. Meeting with the Track team also made my decision easier.”

Marks faced an additional challenge in balancing academics and athletics when he was offered a co-op position out of the state. Knowing he couldn’t pass up the opportunity to work for Gulfstream Aerospace, Marks headed to Savannah, Georgia where he currently resides during winter quarter 2012. During his off hours, Marks passes his expertise to novice engineers by helping out at a local high school while he is in Savannah.

“The co-op experience has motivated me to take what I have learned on the job and go back to school and be able to apply it in my classes,” Marks explained.

“The biggest challenge now is being away from my team during a critical training season. When you train with your teammates, they are constantly pushing you to do better. The guy next to you is always counting on you to do your best. Down here, I don’t have the jump crew making me laugh when we are trying to recover in the middle of a sprint workout. There is no place for me to vault down here, so I will only have half the time to get to the same proficiency level as our competitors.”

On being a Bearcat, Marks declares, “I’m proud to be a Bearcat. UC has given be every opportunity to succeed - on the track, in the classroom, and in the real world. It is a really close family here and I love my teammates. They will bend over backwards to be there when you need them. They are always there for me.”

All of his hard work on the track and in the classroom comes with highlights of accomplishment. As for his academic triumph, landing his current co-op at Gulfstream Aerospace has been the proudest moment for Marks. Athletically, “my proudest athletic accomplishment was qualifying for the first round of the NCAA Championships, but I’ve also enjoyed earning points for the team at the Big East Championships.”

As he completes his senior year, Marks has begun to plan his future.

“I would like to work at Gulfstream Aerospace, following a few weeks of vacation where I have no deadlines to meet, no practices, and have absolutely nothing planned. I might go to Colorado and hike the Rockies.”
The College of Engineering and Applied Science Honors Scholar-Athletes

Dean Carlo Montemagno of the University of Cincinnati’s College of Engineering and Applied Science and Whit Babcock, Director of the UC Athletics Department announced that the college is sponsoring the UC Scholar-Athlete of the Month award in the 2012 academic year. This is the fourth year that CEAS has sponsored this honor.

Each month of the academic year, the College of Engineering and Applied Science, CEAS, recognizes a UC scholar-athlete who has demonstrated success both in the classroom and in an athletic arena. To be eligible for the award a scholar-athlete will have completed 2 years of education at UC, have a defined major, a cumulative grade point average (or GPA) of 3.2 or better, be in good standing, and have achieved athletic success.

"CEAS is pleased to recognize scholar-athletes from across the university who stand out both academically and in athletic competition. Their dedication, competitive fire and ability to balance the demands of classroom, athletics and life parallel our own students," stated Dean Montemagno. "Our students balance work and class schedules on a daily basis and are rewarded with top jobs upon graduation."

On behalf of the College of Engineering and Applied Science, I am honored to announce that CEAS recognizes Thomas Marks as the UC Scholar-Athlete of the Month. Tommy is standout in the pole vault on the Track & Field Team. He is an outstanding competitor in the vault and a leader in the classroom with a strong GPA in Aerospace Engineering in my College of Engineering and Applied Science. Tommy Marks has earned our acclaim.

"With a GPA of 3.29 and his solid performance in pole vault, Tommy Marks continues to prove that scholarship and athletics do go “hand-in-hand”. His dedication to excellence during our meets and in class is a model for all of our student-athletes," affirms Mr. Babcock.

"It is an honor to have one of our collegiate partners, the College of Engineering and Applied Science, stepping forward to recognize our scholar-athletes."

Each UC Scholar-Athlete of the Month is awarded a clock during the Athletics Recognition Banquet in the spring. Additionally, a tribute to each scholar-athlete is made by the college during a home game of each active sport that month.