



www.cifstate.org

State Media Release

State CIF Office 1320 Harbor Bay Parkway, Suite 140, Alameda, CA 94502-6578
Phone: 510.521.4447 Fax: 510.521.4449

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Date: Monday, May 28, 2007

Contact: Emmy Zack, Director of Communications
ezack@cifstate.org

BARTHEL AND FINLAYSON SELECTED 2007 CIF SCHOLAR-ATHLETES OF THE YEAR

ALAMEDA – Natasha Barthel from Saint Francis (Mountain View) High School and Sam Finlayson of San Ramon Valley (Danville) High School have been selected as the 2007 CIF Scholar-Athletes of the Year. The scholarship award, established in 1982, recognizes student-athletes who excel in the classroom, in athletics and are strong contributors to their schools and communities.

Both students will be honored at the State Capitol and on the Senate and Assembly Floors in Sacramento on Thursday, June 21. In addition, they will receive a \$2,000 award. Nominations for this prestigious award were received from the 1,431 high schools that make up the CIF membership.

“I am constantly encouraged by the young people in our schools and our two scholar-athletes are another reaffirmation of the great potential the future holds,” said CIF Executive Director Marie M. Ishida. “I wish to personally congratulate all the nominees. We, once again, had an excellent group of scholar-athletes.”

NATASHA BARTHEL, Saint Francis (Mountain View) High School

Barthel has been a four-year member of the varsity track and field team. She boasts a 4.28 weighted grade-point average, and has signed a National Letter of Intent to compete as a pole vaulter at Stanford University in the fall.

She has been recognized by the *San Jose Mercury News* as one of the Vertical Jumper of the Year and Athlete of the Week by the *Palo Alto Daily News*. She also was featured in the *Campbell Reporter* as an outstanding scholar/singer/athlete. As a junior, she set the league record with a pole vault of 12’10”. Barthel has twice placed at the state championships, including a third place finish a year ago and a seventh place showing as a sophomore.

She is a third degree junior black belt in Shorinji Ryu Karate and teaches the sport to youth students. She also has volunteered at pole vault camps as well as volunteering with such activities as working with the elderly, serving food to economically disadvantaged people and teaching Spanish to middle school students.

-- more --

A self-proclaimed “science nerd,” Barthel is a member of the Science and Engineering Club and was selected to the Santa Clara University Summer Engineering Seminar. In addition, she is a member of the Chamber Choir and Spirit Commission. She has sung the national anthem at numerous sporting events and also served at the school’s Open House for prospective freshmen and their families.

Barthel intends to major in Mathematics or Physics with career goals of being a Sports Medicine Doctor, Research Physicist and Theorist or a College Professor.

“Natasha is the quintessential honor student with a passion for learning that makes her totally self-motivated and driven to perfection. She flows easily among groups of students, as comfortable with the chamber choir as the spirit club, and equally as conversant with her peers as with her teachers. Natasha listens carefully to her mentors and friends, she motivates by generously acknowledging their talents, she includes all people in her universe and she treats everyone she encounters with respect and honor,” said Patricia Tennant, Saint Francis High School Principal.

- ❑ **GPA:** 4.28 (weighted)
- ❑ **SAT:** 2160
- ❑ **Will Attend:** Stanford University
- ❑ **Career Interests:** Sports Medicine Doctor, Research Physicist and Theorist, College Professor
- ❑ **College Major:** Mathematics, Physics
- ❑ **Primary Sport:** Track and Field (pole vault)
- ❑ **Community Service:** Teaches karate and Spanish to youth students; Worked at Los Gatos Pole Vault Camp teaching high school students; Assisted the elderly and served food to the economically disadvantaged.
- ❑ **Activities:** Third Degree Junior Black Belt in Shorinji Ryu Karate; Science and Engineering Club member and on board of directors; Spirit Commission Member, National Anthem singer at numerous school athletic events; California All-State, Coastal Region and Central Coast Section Honor Choir; Level 8 Certificate of Merit Vocalist; Math Team member; Mock Trial Lead Prosecuting Attorney.
- ❑ **Awards:** Four-year Scholar Athlete; National Honor Society; California Honor Society; Who’s Who Among American High School Students; Department Award for US History and Calculus; Honorable Mention in D.I.E.T. poetry contest; Featured in *Campbell Reporter* as outstanding scholar/athlete/singer.
- ❑ **Athletics (Track and Field):** Four-year varsity pole vaulter; Two-time state pole vault finalist, with third and seventh place finishes; 2005 CCS Pole Vault Champion and Section runner-up one year later; Captain of track team as a senior; Three-time league champion; Cleared 13’ at league finals in 2007 to set school record and rank 11th all-time in the state.

Barthel Essay: "Words of Wisdom Ring True"

Sullen and angry, I shoved my pole inside its tube and slammed into my track chair, kicking off my spikes. My training shoes felt comfortable on my sore feet as I looked down the runway at the bar still lying on the pit. I had just eliminated myself from the CIF State Track and Field Pole Vault Championship by failing to clear 12 feet, a height well within my ability. I wanted to run off the field and release my bitterness at my failure. As I flicked my head back up to look at my coach, I saw my training partner having trouble communicating with him.

At the same moment, I remembered by karate sensei telling me that it did not matter if I won or lost, but how graciously I competed. His words rang clear in my head as I got up from my chair and helped my training partner communicate with our coach, cheering as she cleared a personal record height.

A year later, my coach, Mr. Tuite, gave me the key to the track shed that houses more than \$50,000 worth of pole vault and track equipment. He told me I could use the shed whenever I needed. In the mornings, I use the shed to store my poles so they are safe while I am in school. This convenience for me is an act of trust and respect by my coach. I realize my sportsmanship and responsibility on the field impressed my coaches enough to trust me with this key.

As an elite high school pole vaulter, my training consumes much of my time, leaving precious little time to finish homework and making me do my best work in a shorter time. Despite the obstacles, I am ranked in the top 10 of my class and have gained respect from my teachers who allow me the freedom to ask for extensions or help if ever needed.

When my grandfather died this past November, my teacher, understanding the importance of my grandfather, graciously allowed me to turn in my paper a few days later. My performance in the classroom, as well as on the field, affects the respect I am shown by my teachers and my peers.

However, the most important aspect of being a student-athlete is not performance in the classroom or tough competitions, but in helping and encouraging every athlete that tries hard every day whether they are successful or not. This past year, I volunteered to coach at a pole vault camp initially to earn community service hours; I never thought I would actually coach beginner vaulters to small successes and learn the value of effort. Each vaulter listened to the comments I made and tried to implement my corrections each time they ran down the runway.

Every vaulter deserves respect for the effort they make on the track. I realized from my time coaching that many vaulters look up to me as an inspiration to jump higher. Thus, I think of my sensei's words everyday at practice to remind myself of the importance of hard work along with respect for the game and respect for other athletes.

SAM FINLAYSON, San Ramon Valley (Danville) High School

Finlayson has been a four-year member of both the water polo and swim teams at San Ramon Valley High School and ranks in the top 1% in his class with a 4.39 weighted grade-point average. He will participate in water polo at Stanford University in the fall.

He is a two-time water polo All-American and has been team captain and MVP as many times. He's been recognized on the first team by the *Contra Costa Times* and *Tri-Valley Herald* and a three-time All-North Coast Section selection. He has qualified for numerous NCS championships in breaststroke, freestyle and freestyle relay. As a senior, he led the water polo team to a league championship and an undefeated 12-0 season.

He is heavily involved in his Church Youth Group Leadership and Service where he wrote an orientation/training book that is used in congregations around the country. He serves as an inspirational speaker for church services and conferences and also is a volunteer academic tutor and athletic coach. Finlayson's commitment to the Boy Scouts has resulted in reaching Eagle Scout. He has contributed hundreds of hours of community service in such activities as gardening and landscaping; visiting seniors and hospitals and collecting and delivering goods to those less fortunate.

Finlayson is a member of the school's Concert Choir and a first chair alto saxophone player in the Symphonic Band. He is a National Merit Finalist and member of the National Honor Society and California Scholastic Federation. In addition, he is a national winner of the Wendy's High School Heisman Award and a national finalist in the Coca-Cola Scholars Foundation and the Intel International Science and Engineering Fair.

Finlayson plans to major in bio-medical engineering with a goal of becoming a medical doctor who participates in the collaborative use of advances in biology, physics and engineering technologies to create and develop new treatments and medical devices.

"Sam epitomizes the definition of being a 'coachable' athlete due to his strong leadership skills, dedication, determination, work ethic and his immense loyalty and pride to his teammates, program and high school. He is that player who you point to in your program as "The Example" of how to do things right for his peers to follow and for younger players to emulate both in and out of the pool. Sam proved to be an exceptional leader and gained the trust and support of his teammates through his knowledge and understanding of the game. His greatest attribute as a leader, though, was his ability to lead by setting the right example for all to follow," said Matthew Mundelius, San Ramon Valley High School Water Polo Coach.

- ❑ **GPA:** 4.39 (weighted)
- ❑ **SAT:** 2220
- ❑ **Will Attend:** Stanford University

- ❑ **Career Interest:** Medical Doctor (participation in the collaborative use of advances in biology, physics and engineering technologies to create and develop new treatments and medical devices.)
- ❑ **College Major:** Bio-Medical Engineering
- ❑ **Primary Sport:** Water Polo
- ❑ **Also Competed In:** Swimming
- ❑ **Community Service:** Church Youth Group Leadership and Service, Boy Scouts of America; Inspirational Speaker at church services; Volunteer Academic Tutor and Athletic Coach; Collecting and Delivering Goods to Various Groups; Visiting Hospitals and Senior Centers; Various School and Community Painting and Gardening Projects
- ❑ **Activities:** Concert Choir; Chamber Singers; 1st Chair Alto Sax in Symphonic Band and Jazz Band; National Honor Society; California Scholastic Federation; Involved with Various Water Polo Clubs
- ❑ **Awards:** National Winner of Wendy's High School Heisman Award; National Scholar Finalist for Coco-Cola Scholars Foundation; Finalist for Intel International Science & Engineering Fair; Eagle Scout with Boy Scouts of America; National Merit Scholarship Program Finalist; Olympic Club Foundation Ohleyer Memorial Award for outstanding Bay Area scholar-athlete; Recipient of Numerous NCS Scholar-Athlete Awards
- ❑ **Athletics (Water Polo):** Two-time All-America Selection; Two-time Team Captain and MVP; Three-time All-NCS honoree; League MVP as a senior and First-team selection by *Contra Costa Times* and *Tri-Valley Herald*. Led team to undefeated senior season and semifinals of Section championships.
- ❑ **Athletics (Swimming):** Multiple League Finalist and NCS Championship Qualifier in 100 Breaststroke, 200 Freestyle and 200 Freestyle Relay; Two-time Team Captain; Recipient of Coach's Award for Leadership and Dedication; Three-time selection as school's Athlete of the Month.

Finlayson Essay: "Athletic Participation Has Taught Me..."

I first began swimming as a form of physical therapy to overcome the effects of a debilitating childhood illness. Gradually, the dedication and discipline that swimming requires not only enabled me to progress in health and skill, but also carried over to inspire diligence in every aspect of my life. Swimming also introduced me to water polo. Water polo forced me to develop strength and endurance, while requiring me to remain quick and agile, both physically and mentally.

But what has been the most meaningful to me in my sports experience was not becoming skilled and strong, or even developing a great work ethic, but the additional opportunities athletics have afforded me to learn about the importance of service, integrity, sportsmanship and respect.

During my high school career, I was privileged to watch as my coaches, who worked full-time jobs during the day, sacrificed what would have been their little free time so that they could make our early morning and late night practices, enabling them to serve the youth of their community by sharing the sports they love, and in turn, strengthening my desire to serve others as well.

I witnessed teammates demonstrate complete integrity by deciding to swim every yard of the thousands required each practice when it would have been easy to cheat on a few, and saw others decide not to argue with a referee after a questionable call, reinforcing my desire to hold myself to the same high standards of sportsmanship and honesty, not just in the pool but also in the classroom and community.

Athletics also helped me learn about leadership, allowing me to discover that being a leader does not always mean being in charge, but often means simply setting an example of behavior worth following, or encouraging someone to develop potential they did not know they had.

I feel grateful to have learned that sports are more about character than winning. For when I reflect upon my high school experience, I realize that what I will miss the most next year is not wins or statistics, but the camaraderie of my fellow athletes – not just my teammates', but my opponents' as well. For though we often met in battle (and if you've ever seen a polo game, you know that battle can be quite intense), over the years we developed a respect and admiration for each other that surpassed and outlasted our feelings of rivalry.

I am grateful to the CIF North Coast Section for fostering an environment of fair play where, in the end, opponents admire one another despite team affiliation or difference. It seems to me that if coupled with the work ethic, desire to serve others and integrity I have learned from sports, I am able to take with me, out into the world, the ability to respect and find the best in those different from me, even those with opposing views, then I will be well equipped to meet and make the most of life's challenges and opportunities.

Previous CIF Scholar-Athletes of the Year		
<i>Athlete</i>	<i>High School</i>	<i>Year</i>
Kim Donaldson	Merced	1982
David Bernard	Van Nuys	1982
Cheryl Burditt	Paramount	1983
Michael J. Smith	Los Altos	1983
Amy Torczon	Taft Union	1984
Michael G. Kerkorian	San Joaquin Memorial	1984
Kari E. Christensen	Pleasant Valley	1985
John J. McGrory	San Marcos	1985
Sara Rose Lillevand	Bishop O'Dowd	1986
Todd Gregory French	Canyon Anaheim	1986
Mary Katherine Cook	Del Mar San Jose	1987
Paul S. Chan	San Dieguito	1987
Amy Lightner	Point Loma	1988
Todd Forman	Long Beach Wilson	1988
Joy Jackson	Chico	1989
Caleb Roope	Yosemite High School, Oakhurst	1989
Kathleen A. Hannon	Granada	1990
Robert Bud Price	Saddleback	1990
Erin Pyka	El Toro	1991
Greg Siwek	Monte Vista, Cupertino	1991
Michele Wagner	Lynbrook	1992
Terry Mann	Sunny Hills	1992
Betty Ann Boeving	Monte Vista, Danville	1993
Steven Park	San Marino	1993
Lowen Cattolico	Leigh	1994
Bret Mobley	Campolindo	1994
Susie Erpelding	Academy of Our Lady of Peace	1995
Tom Chalberg	Campolindo	1995
Susan Rey	Gunn	1996
Nathaniel Merrill	Fresno	1996
Cathleen Sullivan	North Hollywood	1997
Brady Beaubien	Coronado	1997
Ester Gurrola	Fillmore	1998
Jeffrey Hick	Laguna Hills	1998
Samantha Piper	Coronado	1999
Andrew Hill	Los Altos	1999
Rebecca Herhold	Archbishop Mitty	2000
Evan Fox	West Hills	2000
Sara Bei	Montgomery, Santa Rosa	2001
Brett Ormsby	Vallhalla	2001
Scotti Nicole Shafer	Carlsbad	2002
Shay Murphy	Los Alamitos	2002
Meredith McColl	Capistrano Valley	2003
Barry Fischer	Campolindo, Moraga	2003
Whitney Johnson	South Bakersfield	2004
Daniel Beal	Dos Pueblos, Goleta	2004
Heather West	Davis Senior	2005
Ryan King	Christian Brothers, Sacramento	2005
Kelly Eaton	Menlo-Atherton, Atherton	2006
Michael Coe	Cabrillo, Lompoc	2006
Natasha Barthel	Saint Francis, Mountain View	2007
Sam Finlayson	San Ramon Valley, Danville	2007