MARTIN, Tenn. – The University of Tennessee at Martin equestrian team put together some of its best individual performances of the season in its first two competitions of the spring, held this past weekend at the Ned McWherter Agricultural Pavilion.

On Friday, the Skyhawks dominated to the tune of a 17-3 victory over Delaware State. The following day, UT Martin pushed five-time national champion Georgia, ranked No. 6 in the latest NCEA polls, to the limit for a tie before the Bulldogs posted a narrow tiebreaker win (767.5-725 raw points).

“What an awesome performance we had,” UT Martin head coach Meghan Corvin said. “We knew it would take near perfection to upend the Bulldogs and our Skyhawks rose to the occasion. Regardless of the final score, our ladies without a doubt had their best performance yet. We had a few minor mistakes and those were what cost us at the end of the day. We are continuously telling our student-athletes they are national contenders and Saturday proves that.”

The Skyhawks were paced by a resounding performance in Hunterseat in both competitions. Overall, UT Martin’s Hunterseat riders outscored its opposition by a commanding 15-4 margin with three MOP’s.

Against Delaware State, UT Martin swept the equitation matchup. Kaylan Herbst (76 points), Hunter Ralston (79), Mykaela Van Selus (75), Erin Douglas (69) and Reid Rickett (79) each accounted for points while Ralston brought home MOP accolades.

WHOAI!- Melanie Aiosa reigns in her horse, Pete, as they earn points for the UTM Equestrian Team on Friday during their competition. The duo won their reigning round against Dekaware State.

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Russell McKeith was recruited by Dr. Todd Winters, who had him as a student as an undergraduate at Southern Illinois University. McKeith earned a degree in Animal Science from SIU before pursuing a Masters from the University of Georgia in Animal Science. He is also finishing a second Masters in that area from Texas A&M University. UTM will be McKeith’s second teaching position and he will be teaching courses such as Intro to Animal Science, Meat Science, Livestock Merchandising, and Animal Genetics. He is actively involved with Alpha Gamma Rho, Block and Bridle, Student Cattleman’s Association, and the American Meat Science Association, where he and his wife Amanda met at a conference. She is currently a member of the animal science faculty at Western Kentucky University. McKeith enjoys traveling and playing golf in his spare time. McKeith says that everyone here is very friendly and he likes the small town atmosphere of UTM.

Another former student of Dean Winters joins the faculty of Family and Consumer Sciences. Brian Carroll grew up in the small town of Pinckneyville, Illinois; a town consisting mostly of coal mining and farming.

He earned a degree in Food and Nutrition from Southern Illinois University where Dr. Winters was one of his instructors. He and his wife, Chandra, have been married for seven years and he has three children.

Carroll has worked for food service at Rockford Hospital, nursing homes, assisted living, and in dialysis.

He is teaching a Nutrition course this semester as well as serving as the director for Dietetics Internship program. Carroll says he was excited about moving here because of the small town and he could teach even without his Ph.D.

While here, he wants to encourage Health and Human Performance students to minor in nutrition while “pumping out” good, solid dieticians.

Sharon Waterfield joins the UTM family as the Director of Child and Family Grant Program. Under her supervision will be the programs of Healthy Start, Healthier Beginnings, and Infant Stimulation.

Waterfield is a native of this area and earned a degree in Business Administration and a Masters in Child Development and Family Relations from UTM. Prior to being named director, Sharon worked in the grant business for many years, including the Department of Education and Dyersburg State Community College.

She and her husband of almost 25 years, John, reside on their family farm in Sharon, TN with their two children, Seth and Audrey. Both of them attend UTM studying Agricultural Business and Education, respectively.
In equitation over fences, the Skyhawks were led by Rickett’s 84-point ride which led her to MOP honors. Ralston (82), Nora Wilson (80) and Caitlyn Epperson (79) also emerged victorious to give UT Martin a 9-1 advantage in Hunterseat.

UT Martin also set the tone in Western by sweeping the Horsemanship event. Kenzie Perry (64.5), Cora Rogalski (71.5), Jordan Elmore (70.5), Brittany Woodard (72, MOP accolades) and Laurel Ellzey (69.5) each captured a point for the Skyhawks. Katie Kallevig, Melanie Aiosa and Laney Hixson each clinched points for UT Martin in reining. Kallevig put together a 65-point ride, while Aiosa and Hixson were responsible for rides of 70 and 69.5 points, respectively.

A strong effort in equitation got the Skyhawks off to a fast start against Georgia. Herbst (72), Rickett (78, MOP) and Van Selus (76) all registered points while Ralston’s 78-point ride earned a tie.

The Skyhawks had a repeat performance in equitation over fences, edging Georgia by a 3-2 margin. Epperson’s 78 points, Rickett’s 80 points and Ralston’s 78 points all led to points for UT Martin to make the overall score 6-3 after the Hunterseat round. In horsemanship, Ellzey tallied 71.5 points to earn a point while Rogalski’s 70.5-point ride earned the Skyhawks a tie.

Megan Marie Foley gave UT Martin a point in reining with 68.5 points while Knight captured MOP honors with 74 points.

The Skyhawks return to action on March 7-8 when they host Minnesota-Crookston and No. 1 South Carolina.

In a continuing effort to internationalize the curriculum at UT Martin, Drs. Craig Darroch (Animal Sciences) Sue Byrd (Family and Consumer Sciences) and Dawn Wilkins (Biology) are leading a group to Ecuador in August 2014.

The travel study tour will include an exploration of the small towns and large cities in the Andes mountains of Ecuador. Students will be involved in service learning projects at a Bird Reserve in the Cloud Forest including reforestation, trail repair, teaching community members life skills and more.

While this travel study is primarily for students, there may be space for others. So if you enjoy the outdoors and learning more about the way of life in South America contact one of these professors as soon as possible: Dr. Wilkins (hwilkins@utm.edu) Dr. Darroch (c darroch@utm.edu) or Dr. Byrd (sbyrd@utm.edu).