Wolfie Jr. wins Capital One Mascot Challenge

It turned out the bite of a wolf is mightier than the sting of a yellow jacket as the University of Nevada’s Wolfie Jr. won the 10th annual Capital One Mascot Challenge.

After 16 weeks of non-stop texting and online voting by thousands of dedicated Wolf Pack fans, Wolfie Jr. went undefeated in the regular season and knocked off Buzz of Georgia Tech in the championship match. With the win, he gets his claws on the $20,000 prize for Nevada’s mascot program.

It was estimated that Wolf Pack fans cast over 17 million votes to lead Wolfie Jr. to the prize, while a record 45 million votes were cast during the season-long competition.

“We are proud of what our students and community accomplished for Wolfie Jr. and the University of Nevada,” said Dr. Marc Johnson, president of the University of Nevada. “Our campus has an extraordinary amount of spirit and pride, and we’re pleased to showcase it on a national level.”

Wolfie Jr. found out that he won the national championship at the Capital One Bowl in January where he received the $20,000 check, and Wolf Pack fans found out their efforts had paid off in a national Capital One commercial that aired during halftime of the bowl game in Orlando, Fla.

According to Nevada cheer coach Kim Anastassatos ’97 who joined Wolfie Jr. at the game, she almost couldn’t believe that the University of Nevada had prevailed.

“It was almost surreal that all of those weeks had come to that moment. We almost couldn’t believe that it was happening and that we had won,” she said. “So many people had supported us, and when the commercial appeared, I got hundreds of text messages. It was like Wolf Pack nation exploded!

“It was a little sad to be so far away from all of the people who had supported us. Our fans were amazing and we are so appreciative to our community for all of the support and voting over the 16 weeks of the Capital One Mascot Challenge.”

With the $20,000 prize, Nevada will be able to add more scholarships for the Wolf Pack spirit program and buy the new costumes the mascot program needs. Capital One will also use Wolfie Jr. in their advertising for the Capital One Mascot Challenge over the next year.

But Anastassatos said the impact of winning the Capital One Mascot Challenge will be even greater than the benefits of the prize money.

“It is publicity for the University of Nevada that we could never pay for. So many people know about our program now and want to be a part of it,” she said. “We used to have one or two students try out to be our mascot and now we will have 20.”


Nevada honored Wolfie Jr.’s victory at a basketball game in February, and a banner commemorating his national championship will hang in the rafters at Lawlor Events Center.

—Rhonda Lundin, associate athletics director for communications

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