

Manteca motor officers steal the show

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Manteca's five motorcycle officers stole the show at this weekend's Redding Police Motorcycle Competition – finishing in the top seven as their unit disbands due to budget woes from the weakened economy.

Three of those officers will be parking their motorcycles on Monday being reassigned to other duties: Sgt. Nick Obligation will become acting lieutenant and officers John Machado and Bill Walmer are returning to patrol duties. Two motorcycles – less than half of the unit – are to remain on the streets for traffic enforcement.

Sgt. Nick Obligation took first place in the Harley Davidson competition and motor officer David Bright finished in the second spot. Bill Walmer took the fourth place trophy and John Machado finished fifth.

Bright also took the first place trophy in the slow competition in addition to joining with Sgt. Obligation in the team run with a third place where their motorcycles are tethered together before they make the run through the cone course.

The Larry Canfield Spirit Award was presented to Obligation by the Blue Knights of California motorcycle club for the way his team presented themselves in the competition. "You are only as good as the guys who work for you," Obligation said.

Another officer said they were recognized for their spirit because of the leadership of their sergeant – with his inventive approaches.

Obligation added that another highlight for him at the awards' ceremonies was when his men presented him with a framed picture from the recent Vallejo police motorcycle competition – everybody signed it for him including his wife and his girls.

The third annual police motorcycle competition was hosted by the Redding Police Officers Association and was held in conjunction with the "Big Bike Weekend" in that northern California community.

Following the day long training on Friday, the Manteca officers were asked to give some 300 motorcycle riders an official police escort into the Redding community – all the way through town – where they were going to a dinner at a casino.

Officer John Machado said it took the Manteca team some two hours before they could leave the ceremony site. The delay was caused by other police agencies pulling them to the side and congratulating them for their spirit and the excellence they exhibited in going through the course challenges.

"They couldn't believe how well we did and they told us how much we had improved," he said.

Machado said Saturday's competition and win was the highlight for him after serving in the motor unit for the past year.

They had trailered their motorcycles from Manteca to the event at their own cost with the time spent being in lieu of a regular training day. But it was the last day they would be together as the Manteca Police Department's motorcycle traffic unit – a bitter sweet win they were all quick to realize.

To celebrate they circled their trucks and motorcycle trailers in the parking lot and had their "family" barbecue. It was a day they say they will all remember for a long time to come.



Manteca's five officers finished in the top seven in Redding. Standing, from left, are: Ripon officer Andy Martinez, Manteca motor officer Dave Bright, his parents Nelda and Darrel Bright, Rozlyn Cruz and Manteca patrol officer Armen Avakian, motor officer Patrick Danipour, supporting Ripon motor officer Steve Meece, motor officers John Machado and Bill Walmer and Walmer's wife Jen. Front row; Cindy Bright, Ariel, Anmarie and Sallie Obligation. Head of the team, motor Sergeant Nick Obligation is at right.