



## 4 West Ga. students finalists in Peachtree T-shirt contest

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Consider Jim Balke a winner already.

The associate creative director at an Atlanta design agency was the only entrant to The Atlanta Journal-Constitution Peachtree Road Race T-shirt design contest who broke the stranglehold that a University of West Georgia art class had on the contest.

Out of 252 entries, four of the five design finalists were produced by students in Clint Samples' "Digital Media for Artists" class. Since the contest opened to voting in 1995, no students from the same school, let alone class, had been finalists in the same year, according to the Atlanta Track Club.

Said Samples, whose own submission will grace the T-shirts for volunteers, "I think it's one of the proudest accomplishments of my teaching career."

The Peachtree contest has been Samples' first assignment of the semester for the past four years. Samples, 38, saw it as a useful tool to help students learn software such as Adobe Illustrator and Photoshop. The past two years, Samples has expanded the project, including more revision and group critiquing. Students study past Peachtree designs and those from other road races.

"I wanted them to do well in the competition," Samples said. "I thought they could compete. I also wanted them to understand the process of re-design."

Last year, two students, along with Samples' own entry, were finalists. This year, Samples challenged his class of about 15 students to do better.

The four finalists came at the project from different directions. Allison Bennett, an aspiring medical illustrator from Augusta, made her first sketches on the computer before drawing by hand the silhouetted Atlanta skyline against a peach, which she then scanned into her computer and further adjusted.

Elizabeth Bounds, a graphic-design major from Valdosta, said she found "cruddy clip art" of fireworks online, "and I was like, that would be really cool if I made it look awesome." Hannah Kelley, a photography major from Hampton, went traditional with a stars-and-stripes peach, hand-drawn and water-colored.

"[Samples] told us to try to think of something that the general public would like, not just what you would like," Kelley said. "A lot of people decided they were going to steer

away from the patriotic theme and the peaches and all that. I decided to stick with that because that's what it's all about."

Jessica Gerjets, a recent graduate from Cumming looking for a job in print design, benefited from the class's critiques. Her first idea incorporated an iPod, but, she said, "the whole class kind of told me it was working, but maybe I should work on something else."

She was further convinced when Samples told her that iPods are prohibited in the race. She chose to incorporate Atlanta's history as a transportation hub with her multi-colored footprints.

Samples said he thought the four and a few others had a good chance of being finalists. The design selection panel proved him right.

And now, Samples' class, whose competition has included several professional designers, has had six finalists in the past two years. This year's fifth finalist, Balke, created a type-heavy design in the shape of a peach. Balke was the 1997 winner.

As always, the winning design will be revealed when volunteers hand out the T-shirts to finishers at Piedmont Park. The winner will receive \$1,000 and the unique honor of having his or her artwork become a treasured item in the wardrobe of thousands of Georgians.

"It's always a crapshoot," Samples said. "Some years you might get four in, some years you might not get anybody in. You just try to put the best designs out there and hope for the best. I wouldn't call it luck at all. We've got some talented students."

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