

Lady Texan Throwing Sensation Earns NJCAA Betty Jo Graber Award

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Kelly Close, a five-time NJCAA champion while competing as part of the Lady Texan track and field squad, was recently named the recipient of the 2010 Betty Jo Graber award. The Graber award is given annually to the top NJCAA female student-athlete who best exhibits hard work, discipline, ethics, and excellence in competition. Close is now the second Lady Texan to earn the award as Sally Kipyego won it in 2006.

Close had a distinguished Lady Texan career, winning three NJCAA championships in her freshman year (2008-09) and winning two more this past season. At the 2009 NJCAA indoor championships hosted by Texas Tech University Close set a NJCAA record in the shot put and also won the weight throw on her way to being named Field Event Athlete of the Meet. She then added the outdoor shot put championship to her list of accolades when she won with a meet record throw.

It is very possible Close would have more than five titles had the SPC track teams competed in the 2010 NJCAA indoor championships. However, she completed her career as a Lady Texan by repeating as champion in the shot put and added the discus title as well as a third place finish in the hammer throw, scoring 26 points and helping the Lady Texans to a second consecutive NJCAA outdoor championship.

Close, who owns SPC school records in the indoor shot put and weight throw, as well as the outdoor shot put, discus and hammer throws, will continue her education and athletic career at Texas Tech University.

About the Betty Jo Graber Award

Betty Jo Graber spent 35 years advancing opportunities for women in NJCAA athletics. Along with a successful basketball coaching career at Weatherford College, she was also the Region 5 Women's Director, the NJCAA Women's Basketball Committee Chair and a founding member of the NJCAA Women's Division. Graber is a member of the inaugural class inducted into the Women's Basketball Hall of Fame in Tennessee. Graber was the perfect model of hard work, discipline, ethics and excellence in community college athletics. This award is given annually to the NJCAA Student-Athlete that best exhibits these traits.