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Julie Hayek at moment of triumph in Oxnard.

New Rules Make Runner-Up in Beauty Contest a Winner

By MARK GLADSTONE, *Times Staff Writer*

Beauty contests just don't seem to have that old-time pizzazz. Contestants can be knocked out in the early rounds—or not even enter the preliminaries—and still be tapped as the victor.

That's the way Julie Hayek, 22, an enthusiastic UCLA senior, was able to break tradition and be selected the 1983 Miss California USA Saturday night in Oxnard.

Her path to victory was within the rules—albeit new ones—even though Hayek had not won another beauty pageant to qualify for the 1983 statewide contest.

In 1982 as Miss Catalina, Hayek was first runner-up in the statewide extravaganza. Unbowed, she launched a vigorous Rocky-like exercise schedule, including jogs around UCLA. Still, she failed to win the Los Angeles County contest. She was the second runner-up.

But under a recent rule change for Miss California USA, an attractive young woman can't be counted out simply because she hasn't won a local contest. Hayek and 17 others in the Miss California USA show took advantage of the change and became the state's first "at-large" entrants, said Faye Smith, longtime director of the contest, which is a preliminary step toward the Miss Universe competition.

Since Westwood, where she attends school, doesn't have a contest, Hayek applied to represent that part of West Los Angeles. A three-person Miss California-USA committee reviewed her credentials and approved her for the contest. Smith said the 5-feet, 10-inch Hayek, who won the swimming suit competition, was not listed as "Miss Westwood" but only as being from Westwood.

"We're not going to take a girl who weighs 300 pounds . . . she doesn't fit into a Catalina swimsuit," Smith said Sunday. The at-large entrants must be between 18 and 24 years old, must never have been married or had a child and have lived in California for six months. The major criterion, however, is "personal appearance" Smith said.

"For 25 years we've operated that you had to win a title" for eligibility in the statewide contest, Smith said. However, Miss Universe officials in New York asked her to break custom, she said, noting that California was the last state to hold out against "at-large" contestants.

She said the change was sought because starting this year Miss Universe has a promotional tie-in with J.C. Penney stores. Next month, would-be contestants in California will be able to apply at Penney's stores. Those applications will be sent to local contest organizers for screening.

"Now you can live anywhere" and enter the Miss California-USA, Smith said, adding that many small

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towns or civic groups can't afford to stage a pageant. She attributed the rule change as the major reason for the boost in contestants from an average of 75 to Saturday's 108.

Hayek was not the only repeat contestant. "There are a lot of girls in the pageant who were in last year. Last year's contest is dead news," Smith said. To her knowledge it was "the first time a girl who was first runner-up came back and won."

Smith is not expecting the kind of controversy that clouded last year's Miss America winner. After last September's Miss America contest, it was reported that winner Debra Sue Maffett had failed in 12 attempts to win a major Texas pageant before undergoing cosmetic surgery and moving to California. She represented Anaheim, even though she had never lived there, but went on to become Miss California and Miss America.

She called her loss in the Los Angeles County contest "a blessing in disguise" because it led to her asking Smith for at-large status. Smith told the psycho-biology major she could "go at large." Hayek said she wanted to represent Westwood "because I'm proud of it."

Hayek, who once turned down an offer to pose in Playboy magazine, was in the limelight briefly three years ago as a UCLA Song Girl. At halftime of the 1980 NCAA basketball finals the Song Girls discarded their uniforms in favor of blue and gold shorts and gold, V-necked leotard tops. Although their dances were as well-watched as the game, Hayek said at the time she didn't think the Song Girls were being sexy. "I think we're trying to be wholesome," she said.

"I just thought I'd come back because I came so close," said Hayek, explaining why she persisted in seeking the crown. She attributes her positive attitude for her victory.

Hayek said she has been strongly influenced by her mother, Peggy, a high school counselor at Verdugo Hills High School. "My mom always had high goals."

She hopes to graduate in March before competing in the Miss USA pageant in May in Biloxi, Miss. She eventually wants to be a dentist.

She took over from 1982 Miss California USA, Suzanne DeWames of Thousand Oaks.

This year's first runner-up was Lisa Longacre, 19, Miss Greater San Diego County. Second runner-up was Sharon Jones, 21, Miss San Diego, followed by Alicia Fleer, 18, Miss Brentwood and Mariska Hargitay, 18, Miss Beverly Hills. Miss. Hargitay is the daughter of Mickey Hargitay and the late movie star Jayne Mansfield.

In addition to the title and a chance in the national competition, Hayek received a \$5,000 college scholarship, use of a car for the year and trips to Hawaii and Mexico.