

California Society of Professional Engineers and UCI Host Orange County MATHCOUNTS® Competition

IRVINE, CA (29 February 2005) - Seventeen middle schools from as far north as Brea to as far south as San Juan Capistrano converged at the Student Union of the University of California at Irvine on Saturday, February 19th to participate in the Orange County Chapter MATHCOUNTS® Competition.

This is the twenty-second year for the MATHCOUNTS® Program, a nationwide program designed to challenge and stimulate student interest in math and science at the middle school / junior high school level. The program consists of a series of "coaching" sessions and several levels of competition. The national program is administered by the MATHCOUNTS® Foundation and sponsored by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM), National Society of Professional Engineers (NSPE), NASA, and many large corporations.

The chapter competition was conducted by the Orange County Chapter of the California Society of Professional Engineers (CSPE) and the Department of Mathematics at the University of California, Irvine (UCI). Also helping conduct the competition were other faculty, staff, and students at UCI along with corporate volunteers from Fluor Corporation, Raytheon, and high school students from Los Angeles and Orange Counties.

The morning written round was moderated by Professor Bernard Russo of UCI. The three rounds of written competition consisted of the Sprint Round where the emphasis was on speed and accuracy, a Target Round with more complex, multi-step solution is required, and the Team Round where the team members work together to produce one answer for each problem.

Vernado Middle School, coached by Paula Corbin and Deann Debey, took first place in the team competition. The four team members are Leonard Carrier, Andrew Lee, Kevin Shih, and Mason Yu. Individual trophies were awarded to Andrew Lee and Leonard Carrier as they finished first and second in the individual portion of the competition, respectively.

Taking a very close second in the competition was Rancho San Joaquin Middle School, coached by Pauline Embree. The members of this school team are Zack His, Thomas Kwong, David Lukachovich, and Angie Yu.

Thomas Kwong also received an individual trophy for his third place finish in the individual portion of the competition.

Although no trophies were awarded for third-place, the school team from Dwyer Middle School, coached by Farley Burgess had team members consisting of Aaron Kazan, Catherine Merna, Ben Rothacher, and Jonathan Kwong.

Even though only one team of four is eligible to be counted for each school, the second team from Vernado Middle School, consisting of Ben Dong, Cindy Kok, Yuxi Tian, and Ying Chao Zhong should be commended for their effort. Of the more seventeen teams that were officially competing as the school team, and if they were the eighteenth team, they outscored all the school teams except the Vernado Middle School first team and the Rancho San Joaquin Middle School team.

After a leisurely lunch provided by the on-campus Carl's Jr. restaurant, the mathletes, coaches, parents, and others gathered for the Countdown Round. Mr. Steve Ackerman served as the host for the afternoon session. The Countdown Round was moderated by Professor Steve Franklin. The Countdown Round utilized the "traditional" elimination process where the tenth seeded mathlete goes against the ninth seeded mathlete in a head-to-head oral competition. The mathletes are given 45 seconds to answer a difficult math question. The winner of this set moves up to compete against the eighth seeded mathlete - with the winner of that round moving up to compete against the seventh seeded mathlete, etc. This proved to be a very exciting round - as there were only two mathletes that were able to win at least one set. The ninth seeded Kevin Jain from Serrano Middle School was able to defeat the tenth, eighth, seventh, and sixth seeded mathletes until he finally lost to the fifth seeded mathlete, Johnny Li of St. Margaret's Episcopal School. Johnny Li then went on to defeat the fourth, third, second, and first seeded mathletes to become the winner of the unofficial Countdown Round.

The teams from Vernado Middle School and Rancho San Joaquin Middle School along with Teresa Whitelaw of Serrano Middle School and Johnny Li of St. Margaret's Episcopal School advance to the state competition. The California state competition is scheduled for Saturday, March 12th at the University of California, Irvine for southern California participants and at University of California, Davis for northern California participants.