

PRESS RELEASE

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A GRAND SLAM FOR FIRST COLONY AND MATH WHIZ BOBBY SHEN!

Normally quite shy and soft-spoken, the diminutive Bobby Shen from First Colony Middle School in Sugar Land showed no hesitation—or mercy—in defending his title as state champion of the Texas State MATHCOUNTS Competition. Keeping it in the family with an amazing double grand slam, defending team champions First Colony also won a third consecutive state title as the top-ranked school in the team competition.

Representing the future pioneers of science, engineering and technology in Texas, 283 middle-school students—called Mathletes™—participated in this year’s state competition on Saturday, March 28, after qualifying in one of the many local chapter competitions held across the state in February.

Essentially a “live game show for math brainiacs,” the competition features four person teams competing to establish official school rankings, after which the top ten highest-scoring individuals face off in a sudden-death Countdown Round, in which the tenth-ranked individual goes heads-up against the ninth-place individual, and so on, giving each Mathlete a chance to either move up in ranking or get eliminated.

With the highest individual score from the earlier rounds, Bobby was ranked first going into the Countdown Round and had to face only one opponent—the third-ranked Steven Chen from Canyon Vista Middle School in Round Rock. Steven had already defeated two other competitors, including the second ranked Yury Aglyamov from Kealing Middle School in Austin, to move into the number two slot.

Going into the final round it looked like the defending champ might have a battle on his hands, but Steven proved to be no match for Bobby’s lightning speed on the buzzer. On every question save one, the Sugar Land whiz kid buzzed in with the correct answer before the emcee could even finish reading the question aloud, solving in as few as five seconds a series of complex math equations that many adults in the audience couldn’t answer in five hours, let alone seconds.

The top four individuals—Bobby Shen, Steven Chen, Yury Aglyamov and Lilly Shen (also from First Colony but no relation to Bobby)—will represent Texas at the 2009 MATHCOUNTS National Competition in Orlando, Florida, to be held May 7-10.

As the coach of the top-ranked team, Jeff Boyd will serve as coach to the official Texas State Team at the national competition. It was a big day for Coach Boyd. A 16-year MATHCOUNTS veteran, he also coaches the team from Fort Settlement Middle School in Sugar Land, which placed third—after Kealing in second—in the team competition.

One of the most successful and revered coaches in the history of the program in Texas, this will be his fifth trip to nationals in as many years. Under his guidance, the 2005 Texas State Team secured the first ever national championship title for Texas. In 2007, he helped Texas reclaim the national title after the 2006 team came in fourth, losing the title to Virginia. Last year, with Boyd again at the helm, Texas secured a third national win and Bobby Shen came within one question of becoming national champion. Bobby will have another shot at the national title this year, but as an eight-grader this is his last year to compete.

For over twenty-five years, Texas has supported MATHCOUNTS—a national math coaching and competition program designed to increase enthusiasm and enhance achievement in middle school mathematics—because it fosters the highly advanced problem-solving and critical thinking skills today’s students will need to become tomorrow’s leaders and innovators and help keep Texas competitive in an increasingly technology-driven economy.

The Texas Engineering Foundation and the Texas Society of Professional Engineers sponsor the program as part of their educational outreach efforts to foster the development of the advanced critical-thinking and problem-solving skills that will guide these bright students toward careers as engineers, scientists and leaders.

The program—which is run almost entirely by TSPE member volunteers, many of whom are former Mathletes themselves—also demonstrates the power of cooperation between private practice and industry. Thanks to the generous support of this year’s sponsors (Raytheon, Shell, 3M, the Texas Education Agency and Texas Instruments), tens of thousands of dollars in cash awards and prizes—including new laptop computers with rolling backpacks, gift certificates and a Wii sport system—were awarded to competitors and coaches.

Nathan Cason, from Eustace Middle School in Eustace, also received an award and a \$100 gift certificate for his winning entry in the 2009 MATHCOUNTS T-Shirt Design Contest. His design was featured on the official 2009 MATHCOUNTS State Competition T-Shirt given to all participating students at the competition, thanks to a generous donation from Raytheon.

ABOUT MATHCOUNTS:

MATHCOUNTS is a nationwide math enrichment, coaching and competition program directed to 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students and their coaches, designed to increase enthusiasm for, and enhance achievement in, middle school mathematics throughout the United States. The program's success rests in great part on coaching sessions held at the school level. Texas is one step ahead of the game, as the only state to offer specific training in the use of the MATHCOUNTS materials for its coaches. Local chapter coordinators hold MATHCOUNTS Teacher Workshops throughout the year, typically in the fall before school competitions begin, that include tips and ideas for preparing students for competitions, as well as materials and ideas to improve problem-solving skills in their classrooms. Each year, the MATHCOUNTS Foundation creates the MATHCOUNTS School Handbook , which is distributed free of charge to middle schools across the country. Consisting of 300 creative math problems meeting National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) standards for grades 6-8, this handbook provides the basis for teachers and volunteers to coach student Mathletes on problem-solving and mathematical skills.

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PHOTOS AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST