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Students realize that Mathcounts

Sunday, February 07, 2010
 By STEPHANIE BARRY
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SPRINGFIELD - The sprint round had math whizzes everywhere shaking in the their Uggs.

At the 27th Mathcounts competition at American International College, middle school students jostled over algebra, geometry and probability questions for four hours on Saturday.

More than 60 competitors - with a nearly even boy-girl split - pencil-raced through the sprint round, target round, team round and the final countdown round in an effort to make it to the state competition in Boston next month.

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"The sprint round's especially scary because there's no calculators," said Michelle H. George, 13, an eighth-grader at Williams Middle School in Longmeadow, the event's top-ranked team.

The round includes 30 problems in 45 minutes. Michelle, who comes from a family of mathematically inclined siblings, estimated she got about half right.

Michael Mueller, who ended up being ranked number one individually among the competitors, could not decide whether he was drawn to the event for the competition or his love of math.

"Probably a little of both," said Michael, also of Williams Middle School.

David Desrosiers, a civil engineer from Granby, said the event has grown each year, with about a third more participants this year than last.

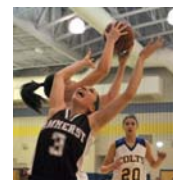
"They're very competitive," he said of the students, who high-fived each other at their respective tables in the Schwartz Campus Center.

The event is sponsored by the Massachusetts Society of Professional Engineers. Mathcounts nationally promotes math enrichment and competition among middle school students in every state.

The schools advancing to the state level are Williams Middle School and Glenbrook Middle School, also in Longmeadow, and Amherst Pelham Regional Middle School. There also were individual students who scored high enough on Saturday to move on to the next level: Drew Lindholm, of Jabish Brook Middle School in Belchertown; Arnab Sarker, of Birchland Park Middle School in East Longmeadow, and Eric Gibson, of Williams Middle School.

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