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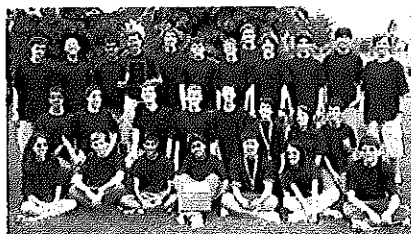
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Davis leads regional math students to national title

Teamwork was the key for the Lehigh Valley high school math team coached by Don Davis. It all adds up to a number one ranking.

A regional team of high school math students coached by Lehigh University math professor Don Davis were recently crowned national champions at the American Regions Mathematics League competition held at Penn State.



The 2005 national champion Lehigh Valley high school math team.

The competition, which is also held concurrently at the University of Iowa and at San Jose State University, featured a field of 95 teams. The previous best performance for the Lehigh Valley team was last year, when it came in 10th.

The Lehigh Valley squad faced formidable competition from all-star teams from major metropolitan areas such as Chicago (2nd), New York City (8th), and San Francisco Bay (12th); states such as North Carolina (7th) and Massachusetts (10th); and prestigious schools such as Phillips Exeter (3rd) and Thomas Jefferson (5th). Jefferson had won the contest the past three years.

"We did surprisingly well," says Davis, who has coached the team since 1993. "We have a group of eight kids who have been on the team for the past three years, and six of them have been on the team for the past four years, so their experience really helped."

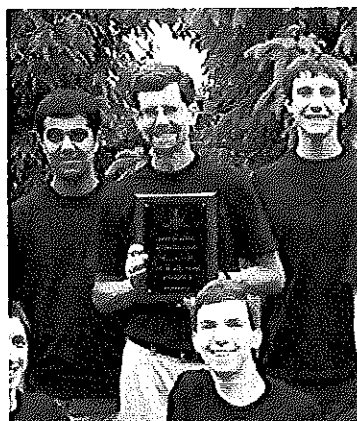
Great chemistry

Of the top 10 teams in the competition, Davis' team members came in 10th on the individual portion of the test, but were far better than their competition in the three sections that involved teamwork.

"They really gelled both personally and mathematically and shared a great chemistry," says Davis.

The team of 30 students (two teams of 15) practiced on Sunday evenings throughout the spring, with some travelling as much as an hour and a half each way to participate, says Davis. "It was a real commitment for them," he adds.

Davis also credits his assistant coach, Ken Monks, a former Ph.D. student of his who earned his doctoral degree from Lehigh in 1989 and is now a professor of mathematics at the University of Scranton.



Don Davis, professor of math, has the plaque to prove his team is number one.



"Ken has been my assistant coach for the past three years, and he shared some very important ideas about strategy on team portions of the contest," he says. "His daughter, Maria, is now an 11th grader and is one of the top performers on the team. He started driving her to my practices back in 2003, and was happy to help me with the coaching."

In addition to Maria Monks of Hazleton, the winning Lehigh Valley team consisted of students in ninth through 12th grade from high schools in Emmaus; Bethlehem; Bethlehem Township; Chester County; Norristown; Voorhees, N.J.; and Delaware County.

For more information, click here.

--Linda Harbrecht

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