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High Schools win the Hydrogen Fuel Cell Model Car Challenge

WASHINGTON, DC – It wasn't The Kentucky Derby, but six teams took their place in the winner's circle at today's second annual Hydrogen Fuel Cell Model Car Challenge, part of the Department of Energy's National Science Bowl®.

University High School of Morgantown, West Virginia, took first place in the Grand Prix speed race; and Chaska High School of Chaska, Minnesota, conquered a 48 degree incline with their hydrogen powered model car to become the "King of the Hill". The two first place teams each receive \$1,500 for their schools' science departments.

Taking second and third place in the speed race were Edmond Home School Co-op of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma and Skyview High School of Billings, Montana. Shasta High School of Redding, California, and Red River High School of Grand Fork, North Dakota, won second place and third place, in the King of the Hill competition. The second and third place teams for each competition receive \$1,250 and \$1,000, respectively.

"The goal of our national hydrogen fuel initiative is to speed the development of hydrogen fuel cell vehicles and the energy infrastructure to support them," Secretary of Energy Spencer Abraham said. "Many of our nation's best minds are currently working to overcome the challenges involved in creating these cars, which will end our dependence on foreign oil and eliminate the harmful emissions of gas-powered vehicles. I hope today's competition has served to spark an interest in these future scientists who may someday help usher in the hydrogen revolution."

The model cars use a fuel cell to convert water into hydrogen and oxygen via a chemical reaction, which then generates electricity to power a motor that propels the car. Since no combustion was involved, the only byproducts are heat and water.

With model car kit components provided by General Motors, the teams designed and built the small hydrogen vehicles with technical assistance from engineers of the Department of Energy. Each model car measured a maximum of one foot wide and two feet long.

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The Model Car Challenge is one of the hands-on activities in which the 64 National Science Bowl teams take part on Saturday Science Day. The 16 teams competing in the Model Car Challenge were selected by lottery from the pool of Science Bowl teams requesting to take part in the race.

On Sunday, May 2, these 16 student teams are joining 48 other teams from across the country competing in the round robin and double elimination matches of the National Science Bowl. In “Jeopardy” like fashion, the teams are broken up into 8 divisions and compete in seven round robin matches each to determine the top 16 teams participating in the double elimination category. Throughout the two-day competition the teams will answer increasingly difficult questions in biology, chemistry, physics, astronomy, mathematics, and earth and general sciences.

This year, thirteen thousand students from 1,800 schools in the United States and the US Virgin Islands participated in regional Science Bowl contests to determine the 64 teams competing at the Nationals. The Department of Energy created the National Science Bowl in 1991 to encourage high school students to excel in math and science and to pursue careers in these fields.

Biographical information on the teams and more information on the Department of Energy’s National Science Bowl[®] is available on the web at www.scied.science.doe.gov