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UMBC Chess Team Fights the Good Fight

Loses to University of Texas, Dallas 5 to 5.5 Points



Wichita, KA – The fierce rivalry between the chess teams of the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC) and the University of Texas, Dallas (UTD) lost none of its intensity this week when 23 teams competed in the Pan American Intercollegiate Chess Championships, the Super Bowl of college chess.

At the 2003 Pan Am, UMBC was knocked off its throne by UTD. This year, the only round UMBC's first team lost was the fourth to UTD – the loss that ultimately meant the championship because UTD lost none, but tied in the fifth round.

"Oddly, the first time we lost to UTD – last year – we also lost 5 to 5.5 points," said Alan Sherman, director of the UMBC chess program and associate professor of computer science. "We have a strong team, so the loss is disappointing, but we're one of the top four U.S. teams that will compete in the President's Cup this spring." The other teams will be from UTD, Miami Dade Community College and Stanford University. The meet will be in Wichita, presumably in April.

The top ten teams were, in rank order: UTD, first team; UMBC, first team; UTD, second team; University of Waterloo; University of Toronto; Miami Dade; Catholic University of Peru; Stanford; UMBC, second team; Yale University.

While the Retrievers were in Kansas, Dr. Sherman learned that UMBC will host the 2006 Pan American Chess Championships, to be held December 27-30 at the Renaissance Hotel in Washington, DC.

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Playing for the UTD "B" team will be Ali Morshedi, 21, of Houston, a senior majoring in electrical engineering; Curtis Brooks, 18, of Houston, a freshman majoring in literary studies; William Aramli, 19, of Terrell, Texas, a freshman majoring in chemistry; Bryan Mihitsis, 18, of Pittsburgh, Pa., a freshman majoring in computer science; and Evan Rosenberg, 19, of New York, a senior majoring in sociology.

The four U. S. universities whose teams finish highest in the Pan Am will qualify for the "Final Four" of Chess competition, which is held in the spring. UTD won that tournament in 2001 and 2002.

The highest rated player on UTD's 2003 Pan Am championship team, Grandmaster Marcin Kanniski, graduated last summer and is no longer on the squad.

"That, along with the fact that two of our other better players have taken the current semester off, will make it extremely difficult for us to beat UMBC, which has essentially the same team as last year," said Dr. Tim Redman, professor of literary studies and director of UTD's chess program. "But who knows -- anything can happen in chess. The players are training well, and our coach, International Master Rade Milovanovic, is an excellent mentor and motivator."

In recent years, UTD and UMBC have emerged as unquestionably the two best college chess teams in the United States and have developed a rivalry that is as competitive as any in intercollegiate competition.

UTD's chess team is part of a much broader chess program at UTD that includes, among other things, on-line chess instruction for teachers and studies on the use of chess in the classroom as an educational tool.

About UTD

The University of Texas at Dallas, located at the convergence of Richardson, Plano and Dallas in the heart of the complex of major multinational technology corporations known as the Telecom Corridor, enrolls more than 14,000 students. The school's freshman class traditionally stands at the forefront of Texas state universities in terms of average SAT scores. The university offers a broad assortment of bachelor's, master's and doctoral degree programs. For additional information about UTD, please visit the university's web site at www.utdallas.edu.