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News Release

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UTD to Renew Heated Rivalry With UMBC in Sixth 'Final Four' of Chess

Tournament in Dallas April 1-2 Also Will Feature Up-and-Coming Duke and Miami Dade College

RICHARDSON, Texas (March 20, 2006) — The University of Texas at Dallas (UTD) will try to regain its standing as the “best team in U.S. intercollegiate chess” next month when it takes on its longtime rival, The University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC), along with up-and-coming teams from academic powerhouse Duke University and Miami Dade College, in the “Final Four” of Chess tournament in Dallas.

The teams earned the right to compete in this year’s Final Four competition by finishing among the top four U.S. teams in December at the 2005 Pan American Intercollegiate Team Chess Championship, the most prestigious college chess competition held each year in the Western Hemisphere. UMBC won that tournament by the narrowest of margins, with 5 1/2 points to UTD’s 5. UTD had won the Pan-Am in both 2004 and 2003 and had tied for first — with UMBC, of course — in both 2001 and 2000.

The winner of the round-robin Final Four, which will be held in Dallas for the second time in the tournament’s six-year history, will take home the President’s Cup, a trophy that has come to be emblematic of college chess supremacy. The event, which is free and open to the public, will be held the weekend of April 1-2 in the Addison Room of the Marriott Quorum Hotel, located at 14901 Dallas Parkway. Both Saturday’s and Sunday’s matches will begin at 10 a.m., and Saturday’s second round will start at 5 p.m.

UTD won the Final Four the first two years with remarkable come-from-behind victories, but UMBC pulled off its own dramatic rally to win the 2003 event and then retained the momentum by winning the tournament each of the last two years.

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Having a second major intercollegiate team chess tournament each spring, with the participants — four in number — determined by their performances in the Pan Am, was the brainchild of UTTD Provost Hobson Wildenthal. The competition was given the name "Final Four" by a university public relations official who, to be charitable in one's choice of verbs, "expropriated" the sobriquet from the NCAA college basketball tournament held at the same time of year.

Although no team other than UTD and UMBC ever has won the Final Four of Chess in the brief history of the tournament, that could change this year, although UTD and UMBC remain the heavy favorites.

"This is chess. Anything can happen. The team that wants it most will win," said Tim Redman, professor of literary studies in UTD's School of Arts & Humanities and founder and director of UTD's chess program. Redman played on U.S. championship college teams at the University of Chicago in 1974 and 1975 and has twice served as president of the U.S. Chess Federation. "Miami Dade has come on particularly strong in the past two years and, in fact, drew its matches with us, 2-2, in both last year's Final Four as well as in the 2004 Pan Am. Having four strong teams in this year's Final Four tournament can only be good for college chess. But it would be nice for a Texas team to win the collegiate championship in brains, having had another just win a collegiate championship in brawn."

UTD will enter this year's tournament as the number one seed, according to Jim Stallings, UTD's associate chess director. "Nevertheless, the UMBC team remains a formidable competitor with two grandmasters in their lineup," Stallings said.

The UTD team will be represented at the Final Four by two grandmasters — senior computer science major Magesh Chandran Panchanathan and freshman Alejandro Ramirez — and International Masters Dmitri Schneider, a senior finance major and Marko Zivanic, a sophomore computer science major. Sophomore Drasko Boskovic and freshman Davorin Kujasevic, both International Masters and both business administration majors, will serve as alternates. The team is coached by International Master Rade Milovanovic.

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.