

Granite Mountain Middle School student Daxton Bryce is county's top speller - again

By HEIDI DAHMS FOSTER Special to the Courier

Some long words made short work of most of the 45 accomplished spellers who took the stage Wednesday in Camp Verde for the 2013 Yavapai County Spelling Bee.

Daxton Bryce of Prescott's Granite Mountain Middle School survived nine rounds to emerge as the county's top speller for the second year in a row.

Notably, throughout the competition, which took place at the Camp Verde School District's Multi-Use Theater, students from fourth- through eighth-grade who had won their individual school bees misspelled words by only one letter, making the mistakes harder to bear. Spellers heard their words from a familiar voice, JoLynne Richter, who has pronounced the bee for 29 years. Judges included Ray Newton, Professor Emeritus, Northern Arizona University, Trena Vannette of Northern Arizona University, and Ken Coleman of Sir Speedy in Prescott.

Round one of the bee took out seven spellers on the words "nostril," "brackish," "typhoon," "giraffe," "dissect," "gristle," and "potash."

Round two was brutal, with 16 spellers falling on such words as "pinafore," "behoove," "formidable," "toboggan," "croquet," and more.

As round three began, only 22 of the 45 spellers remained. Words such as "mercurial," "persimmon," "enthusiasm," "chronology," and "meticulous" stumped 12 more spellers. Bryce successfully spelled "kitsch" to remain in the competition.

Three more spellers left the stage in round four on "trajectory," "patriarch," and "colloquial." Jordan Engelby of Prescott Valley's Franklin Junior High School emerged as an obvious contender in this round, correctly spelling "incriminate."

In round five, only seven spellers remained, with one more going down on "fastidious." Bryce correctly spelled "amenable," and Engelby aced "scampi."

In another tough spell-off, round six perplexed four more spellers on "allegory," "chagrin," "parapet," and "patina." Bryce got it right with "omnivorous," and Engelby stayed in with "hydrology," to make them the only two who had not missed a word.

Scripps National Spelling Bee rules dictate runoffs for third and fourth place, so in round seven Sarah West of West Sedona Elementary School, Abby Booth of Clarkdale-Jerome Elementary School, Naina Misra of Bagdad Elementary School, and Chelsea Yost of Canon Elementary School spelled off to decide third place. Booth misspelled "hedonism," and Yost was stumped on "pyre," tying them for fifth place.

In round eight, West successfully spelled "koan," and Misra missed "salve" to give West the third place if she correctly spelled another word. She sealed it up with "patel."

Bryce and Engelby sparred for the championship through three more rounds on such words as "eulogy," "phenomenon," "didactic," "metaphor," and "doctrinaire." Then Engelby missed on "camouflage," and Bryce had to correctly spell one more word for the win. He carefully spelled "poinsettia" and gave a quiet smile at his accomplishment.

The eighth-grader said he started practicing on his word list at the end of January. He had hoped to win the Bee a second time, he said, but wasn't sure of the outcome.

"I just decided to wait and see if I could do it, and just try my best," he said.

Bryce said he comes by his spelling prowess from his dad Justin.

"He's won a few bees in the past," he said. Justin said Daxton has always "been a pretty good speller." Daxton's mom Brenda asserted with a laugh that her son gets his spelling ability "more from his dad than from me!"

Runner-up Engleby also is a repeat competitor at the county bee. He said his photographic memory and love of reading help him to be a good speller.

"I see a word and my mind stores it," he said.

BMO Harris Bank sponsored the bee, providing \$200 for first place, \$150 for second, \$100 for third and \$50 for fourth.



Heidi Dahms Foster, Prescott Valley Tribune/Courtesy
Daxton Bryce won the county spelling bee for the second year in a row.