

Announcement of South African teams for the International and Pan African Mathematics Olympiads

IMO and PAMO

The International Mathematical Olympiad (IMO) is an annual problem-solving competition for teams of six high school students.

The Pan African Mathematics Olympiad (PAMO) has the same format as the IMO, but is for teams of four only, from African countries.

The teams to represent South Africa at these two events have been announced.

IMO team

The International Mathematical Olympiad (IMO) will be held in Greece, in July 2004. The South African team of six is:

Dirk Basson (grade 12, Hoërskool Diamantveld, Kimberley)
Gerhard du Toit (grade 12, Paarl Boys' High School, Paarl)
Gayle Sher (grade 11, Reddam House, Cape Town)
Jon Smit (grade 12, Grey College, Bloemfontein)
Ingrid von Glehn (grade 12, St Stithian's Girls College, Randburg)
Tamara von Glehn (grade 12, St Stithian's Girls College, Randburg)

Team Leader: Professor Nic Heideman (University of Cape Town)

Deputy Team Leader: David Hatton (University of Cape Town)

PAMO team

The Pan African Mathematics Olympiad (PAMO) will be held in Tunisia in August 2004. The South African team of four is

Divya Babu (grade 12, Ixopo High School, KZN)
Ralf Kistner (grade 10, Paul Roos Gymnasium, Stellenbosch)
Lindsay Hans (grade 12, Kasselsvlei Senior Secondary School, Bellville)
Yumna Moosa (grade 11, Wynberg Girls' High School, Cape Town)

Team Leader: David Hatton (University of Cape Town)

Deputy Team Leader: Bradley Preston (University of Cape Town)

Team selection

The selection of the two teams is the culmination of the nationwide 2003/2004 Old Mutual Mathematical Talent Search, a correspondence course in problem solving that began in January 2003. The Talent Search uncovered a wealth of talent across the country, and in December 2003 the best 50 young mathematicians were invited to a Mathematical Camp at Stellenbosch University where they went through a series of training sessions in high-level problem-solving skills. The programme continued during the first few months of 2004, ending with an Olympiad Selection Camp at Rhodes University in April.

The Director of the Talent Search, Professor John Webb (UCT) commented: "It is often said that girls are not as good at maths as boys. Our teams this year show that this is just not true: three of the six IMO team members are girls, and two of the four PAMO team members are girls."

"The selection of Lindsay Hans for the PAMO team is a major achievement for his school, Kasselsvlei Senior Secondary School," said Professor Webb. "Kasselsvlei School is one of the 102 'Dinaledi' schools singled out by the Department of Education as centres of excellence in science and mathematics. It is encouraging to see that the Dinaledi programme has so quickly borne fruit. Lindsay is a talented young mathematician, and we shall be looking closely at the Dinaledi schools throughout the country in our search for mathematically gifted pupils for future PAMO and IMO teams."

The Leader of the IMO team, Professor Nic Heideman, is very hopeful that the team he will take to Greece in July will perform well this year. "The IMO is an very challenging competition, and our team will be up against the world's best. Over 80 countries will take part and the going will be tough. But with five of our six team members (Dirk, Jon, Gerhard, Ingrid and Tamara) having been in last year's IMO team, we have experience on our side. Countries such as Russia, China and the United States have major programmes for gifted students, and their performance will be hard to match. But we are confident that South Africa will be end up ahead of most Western European countries, as we have done in the last ten years."

David Hatton, himself an IMO veteran and medallist, is equally upbeat about the chances of his team that will take on the rest of Africa in Tunisia in August. "Divya and Yumna were in last year's victorious PAMO team, winning Bronze and Silver Medals respectively" he notes. "But we expect strong competition from the teams from Benin, Burkina Faso and Mozambique."

Maths and the Olympic Games

The International Mathematical Olympiad will this year be held in Greece, just three weeks before the Olympic Games. The Olympic Games were established in Greece over two thousand years ago, and in that same era Greek mathematics flowered in the work of the great Greek mathematicians Pythagoras, Euclid and Archimedes. The first modern Olympic Games took place in 1896, and the International Mathematical Olympiad was first held in 1959. This year the two celebrations of athletic prowess and youthful mathematical genius come together, fittingly, in their common birthplace, Greece.

Biographical information

Professor John Webb is Director of the IMO/PAMO Talent Search programme. He is a member of the African Mathematical Union's Commission on the Pan African Mathematical Olympiad, and is Secretary of the Advisory Board of the International Mathematical Olympiad.

Professor Nic Heideman (IMO Team Leader) is Chairman of the South African Mathematical Olympiad.

David Hatton attended Welkom High School and represented South Africa at two International Mathematical Olympiads. He has a B Sc (Honours) degree in Industrial Mathematics, and is currently working on a Ph D in Chemical Engineering at UCT. David is Director of Training for the South African IMO/PAMO teams, and led the South African teams to victory in the two previous Pan African Mathematics Olympiads.

Bradley Preston attended Stirling High School in East London and is also a former IMO team member. He has an Honours degree in Mathematics, and is working towards an M Sc in Financial Mathematics at UCT. He is currently responsible for the Senior Rounds in the Old Mutual Mathematical Talent Search.

Sponsors

The programme to select and train the South African PAMO and IMO teams is a project of the South African Mathematical Society, and is supported by Old Mutual, which is also the sponsor of the IMO team. The PAMO team is sponsored by the South African Agency for Science and Technology Advancement (SAASTA).

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