

2009 Big Bend High School Brain Bowl John Paul II Catholic High School Wins 1st Place in Flight AA

Article written by Carolina Garrigo

This was it. The time for Florida and Georgia's best and brightest to show what they've got and bring glory to their school. After months of non-stop practices and late nights of studying, it all came down to this. On March 13-14, 28 schools from North Florida and Southern Georgia gathered at TCC to compete at the 2009 Big Bend High School Brain Bowl. Maclay, Leon, Chiles, Bainbridge, and Florida High were all there, ready to divide and conquer. Little ol' John Paul II was there too. We might have been the underdogs, but we had a mission. A goal of as much prominence as those of the other schools. Our mission: to have fun. While Rickards was going over current events and chemistry facts in their heads, we were eating donuts and rocking out to Bon Jovi. It was our way of getting the nerves out. We had a young team this year: sophomores and juniors. We also were not planning on coming back the next day-the championship round day. Truth is-we didn't really expect to do well. We were there for the excitement and the practice. Brain Bowl was our Jeopardy. It's not a competition to see which school has the nerdiest kids; it's a competition for kids who have all these random facts in their heads and need some place to use them. At least, that's what I was there for. This was my first Brain Bowl ever and while I was a little jittery, I was ready to go in there and just go with the flow. Win or lose-we were determined to have fun. In the first round, we found ourselves against a team from Leon. But it turns out we came out with a win. Well that was a nice boost in self confidence. Hey we actually won one. Next few rounds ended up the same way-as victories. We were on a roll. Joey Lepley was our go-to guy for math and science, Annie Bist was our resident literature and music buff, Patrick Mangan was the guy who knew absolutely everything, and I was the one who knew that random stuff that you pick up over the years and then forget about it but in the end is worth something. By round 5 we were undefeated 5-0 and were second place in our division. But tragedy struck, Annie had to go to work. We were a man down, but that didn't stop us. We braved it out and ended the day with another win. That's when we asked ourselves the crucial question: To stay or not to stay? The original plan was to skip Saturday's competition because of prior obligations. But we never thought we'd actually have a chance at winning the whole thing. Sometimes you've got to take the risk. We did. Come Saturday morning, we were pumped. We had our pre-game ritual of donuts and Bon Jovi, and went to the first match of the day. It was our hardest match yet. It was against Maclay. We were down by five with one question left. It was all or nothing. "Who was Time Magazine's Person of the Year for 2008?" Beep. "13B" "Barack Obama"....."Correct" And with that, JPII edged out Maclay by 10 points. The day went on with more tough matches against Bainbridge (who was first in our division the day before) and Godby. At last, the Division AA Championship round between JPII Gold and Taylor County arrived. It was crazy. How did we get here? We weren't even going to come. But boy are we glad we did.

Unfortunately, we had to compete in the round sans-Annie who had to work again. She wished us luck as we ascended the stairs up onto the stage of the TCC Auditorium. Patrick, Joey, and I took our places as the moderator began, "Toss-up 1....." After 15 nerve wracking questions-the winner of the Division AA 2009 Big Bend High School Brain Bowl champion was.....JPII Gold! This was the highest any team from JPII had ever gone too, and the best record by far: 10-0, undefeated throughout they entire tournament. It was crazy, but worth it. We defied the odds and proved that the underdogs can come and win it all.

(photos attached)