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Wheaton College Mock Trial Team advances to national championship

By Josh Stockinger

The next stop is Washington, D.C., for the [Wheaton College Mock Trial Team](#), which will make its debut Friday, April 12, in the American Mock Trial Association's National Championship Tournament.

Only 48 of about 650 teams across the country qualified for this year's final slate of competition, which puts Wheaton College among the likes of Harvard, Yale and New York University.

"The coaches and I are extremely proud of the team to be able to make it this far this year, and excited to see tougher competition," said team captain Trenton Van Oss, who helped assemble the team in 2011.

"To be able to make it to nationals in our second full year is a huge accomplishment, a huge step forward," he said.

The annual, three-tiered series throws college students into real courtrooms where they duke out a fictional case, earning points for their legal arguments, presentation and adherence to the rules of law and courtroom procedure.

This year, the teams are going to trial over a wrongful death complaint against a scuba-diving company.

"One of the fun parts is trying to get out of the zone that this is a mock trial and we're all college students, and try to make it appear as if it's something that happened and something real," Van Oss, a law student, said.

The 48 teams face off in two divisions, with the top performers from each division heading to a final round. The tournament, which runs through Sunday, takes place at two federal courthouses.

Last year, Wheaton College advanced to the Opening Round Championship Series but fell short of making it to nationals. Since then, the team has grown to about 19 members comprising A and B teams, one of which is going to Washington, D.C.

The players are coached by two veteran attorneys, DuPage County Assistant State's Attorney Diane Michalak and former DuPage Assistant State's Attorney Brooks Locke.

"Words cannot express how proud I am of this team," Michalak said. "They have worked incredibly hard all year and I am really looking forward to seeing them in action at the National Championship."

The students going to nationals are team captains Van Oss and McNair Nichols, Dylan Andres, Abby Canfield, Lauren Carini, Jason Chapman, Kelly Farley, John Patrick, Jasmine Stein and Margaret Winchell.

For information on the American Mock Trial Association, visit collegemocktrial.com.