

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – Jan. 6, 2006
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MIAMI DADE COLLEGE CHESS TEAM DEFEAT YALE AND HARVARD TO QUALIFY FOR FOURTH STRAIGHT

FINAL FOUR CHESS TOURNAMENT COMPETITION

MIAMI, January 6, 2006 – Defeating academic juggernauts Harvard and Yale Universities at the Pan American Intercollegiate Chess Tournament held at Miami Dade College recently, and earning a draw against perennial chess power the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC), the Miami Dade College (MDC) chess team has qualified for the prestigious Final Four Chess Tournament to be held this spring.

Also falling to MDC during the four-day Pan American tournament held at MDC's Wolfson Campus in Downtown Miami during the week of December 27-30, 2005 were the University of Puerto Rico, and the University of Toronto.

This will be the fourth straight year in a row that MDC's chess team has qualified for the upcoming Final Four tournament, which decides the top collegiate chess team in the country. It will be held on the campus of defending national champion the University of Texas at Dallas (UTD) in Richardson, a bedroom community just north of Dallas, Texas April 1-2, 2006.

Meanwhile, about 25 teams participated in this year's Pan American Chess Tournament including Stanford University, New York University, Bucknell, Catholic University of Peru, Howard University, and Emory University as well as four teams from Canada.

"This is like beating the New York Yankees in baseball," MDC's top player Renier Gonzalez announced proudly, shortly after his squad earned a draw against UMBC. "We beat one of the best teams in Yale and earned a draw against UMBC. We continue to prove that we are not a surprise anymore. You don't need professional players in chess to be successful, what you need is a collaborative effort and heart."

Hosting the Pan American Intercollegiate Chess Tournament was a major accomplishment for Miami Dade College considering the institution did not even have a team until just three years ago. The Pan American Intercollegiate Chess

Tournament started in 1947 and has long been considered the most prestigious tournament of its kind in the western hemisphere.

“There is not doubt that the Chess Federation showed confidence in us by letting us host this tournament,” said MDC advisor Rene Garcia. “And by every indication, from the feedback we have received, this was one of the best organized tournaments. We take a great sense of pride in that. It’s extra sweet that we qualified for the Final Four again.” Ana Maria Demahy, Director of Student Life at Wolfson Campus, served as the principal organizer for the tournament. “She did an outstanding job,” Garcia said.

For Miami Dade College, hosting the Pan American tournament marked yet another milestone in the team’s history as it continues to morph from an underdog in the chess community to a powerhouse. In August of 2004, the U.S. Chess Federation named Miami Dade College the Chess College of the Year, an honor the team won over more than 120 other schools.

Competing against MDC in the Final Four Tournament in April will be The University of Maryland, Baltimore County, The University of Texas at Dallas and Duke University. Miami Dade College’s top chess team features Alberto Hernandez, Renier Gonzalez, Team Captain Rodelay Medina and newcomer Charles Galofre.

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