



Montgomery Blair High School Magnet Foundation Inc.



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**Montgomery Blair High School Magnet Student Selected as
U.S. Physics Team Member to Compete at
International Physics Olympiad**

Silver Spring, MD—Andrew Das Sarma of Potomac, a senior at the Montgomery Blair High School Science, Mathematics, and Computer Science Magnet Program, was chosen on May 30 as one of five students representing the 2011 U.S. Physics Team as a member of the traveling team at the 42nd International Physics Olympiad Competition. This competition among over 400 pre-university physics students from 90 nations will be held in Bangkok, Thailand on July 10-18.

Das Sarma was previously named as one of 20 members of the U.S. Physics Team, which qualified him to participate in a rigorous ten-day training camp at the University of Maryland. He was the only student from the mid-Atlantic region to be invited. His selection was based on the results of a series of two rigorous tests, the first of which, covering the physics field of mechanics, was taken by approximately 3,600 high school students nationally. The second exam, offered only to the top scorers of the previous exam, covered diverse fields of physics and involved college-level mathematics. Upon completion of these exams, 20 student scholars were chosen by the American Association of Physics Teachers to continue the training process at the training camp in preparation for the international competition.

At the camp, the students were coached on difficult physics concepts through labs, classes, and special lectures. Selection of the traveling team was based on performance on a series of exams and labs that were administered throughout the training camp. Team members met with physicist and Nobel Prize recipient Carl Wieman of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, Jonathan Gardner, Chief of the Observational Cosmology Laboratory at Goddard Space Flight Center (GSFC), and Neil Gehrels, Chief of the Astroparticle Physics Laboratory at GSFC, as well as their congressional representatives on Capitol Hill.

In preparation for the international competition, the five members of the traveling team will be assigned problems to solve independently and will return to camp for additional practice labs in July. During the

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last decade, every member of the traveling team representing the U.S. Physics Team has earned a medal at the international competition. The U.S. team earned one gold, two silver, and two bronze medals at last year's competition in Zagreb, Croatia. Anand Oza, a 2010 Blair Magnet graduate, was awarded one of the silver medals. The previous year in Mérida Yucatán, México, the U.S. team brought home one silver and four gold medals, the same result as the team achieved the previous year in Hanoi, Vietnam. Edward Gan, a rising senior in the Blair magnet at the time, earned a gold medal at the 2008 competition.

Blair Magnet physics and math teacher, Mr. James Schafer, praises Das Sarma, "Andrew Das Sarma is an outstanding student. His love of learning and his ability to absorb and apply new concepts have served him well over the years. Qualifying for the US Physics team is a testament to his academic talents and his passion for physics. This is a great and well earned honor for him." Das Sarma thanks the Blair Magnet and Mr. Schafer, "I'm very excited to have made it onto this year's U.S. Physics Team! I'm grateful to Mr. Schafer for teaching me all the physics that I know, having him since freshman year, and enabling me to succeed on this test. Mr. Schafer has also devoted a great deal of time and effort to supervising Physics Team and ordering and administering all the U.S. Physics Olympiad qualifying tests at Blair every year. If I didn't attend the magnet, it wouldn't have been possible to learn so much physics in so enjoyable a manner (or to have so many opportunities to compete)."



The traveling team representing the 2011 U.S. Physics Team at the 42nd International Physics Olympiad Competition in Bangkok, Thailand, from left: Coach Paul Stanley, Ante Qu, Lucy Chen, Brian Zhang, Blair Magnet's Andrew Das Sarma, Eric Spieglan, and Coach Warren Turner. (Photo

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courtesy of Marianna Mao.)

About The Montgomery Blair High School Magnet Foundation

This organization was founded by a group of concerned students, teachers, administrators, parents, and alumni in 2008. Its purpose is to promote science, mathematics, and computer science education by supporting the Magnet Program at Montgomery Blair High School in its efforts to develop resources and refine practices needed to provide a rigorous and enriched education for students, staff, and the community at large. The Foundation is incorporated in the state of Maryland and is 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization.

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