

# Rocket City quiz bowl sees increase in participation with 24 high school teams competing in 2023

*By Robin Osborne, AIAA GHS Pre-college Outreach Director*

The AIAA Rocket City quiz bowl tournament proved to be more popular than ever in 2023, with 24 high schools from the Greater Huntsville regions of Alabama and Mississippi participating – a 33% increase over last year's numbers. In total, 121 students competed. The tournament was held on Saturday, Feb. 4, in the Business Administration Building at the University of Alabama in Huntsville (UAH). Students from local high schools, as well as ones as far away as Gulf Shores and Mobile, competed for the chance to win trophies along with 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> place cash prizes of \$1000, \$750, \$500, and \$250 for their school's Scholars' Bowl teams. Teams typically use the funds to finance travel and registration fees for national tournaments in Chicago and Atlanta, or to defray the cost of study materials for team members.

The tournament began with four pools of teams playing five round-robin preliminary games to determine which teams would advance to the afternoon playoffs. The eight teams that qualified for playoffs were, in alphabetical order: Alabama School of Cyber Technology and Engineering (ASCTE), Alabama School of Fine Arts (ASFA), Athens High School, Baker High School, Grissom High School, Hoover High School, James Clemens High School, and Southside High School.

The playoffs were seeded based on the results of the preliminary games and consisted of quarter-finals, semi-finals, and double-elimination finals. The varsity team winners are shown below.



**1<sup>st</sup> Place Varsity Team (\$1000 cash prize)**  
**Hoover High School (Hoover, AL)**  
**Coach Anthony Hamley**



**2<sup>nd</sup> Place Varsity Team (\$750 cash prize):**  
**ASCTE (Huntsville, AL)**  
**Coach Kerri Watson (not pictured)**



**4<sup>th</sup> Place Varsity Team (\$250 cash prize):**  
**Grissom High School (Huntsville, AL)**  
**Coach Luke Sheehan**



**3<sup>rd</sup> Place Varsity Team (\$500 cash prize):**  
**James Clemens High School (Madison, AL)**  
**Coach Rebecca Breland (not pictured)**

**Clockwise from top left: 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> place team winners of the Rocket City Invitational.**

Students with the top 10 highest individual scores in the preliminary rounds received medals and Space Launch System pins as part of the tournament All-Star team (see picture on next page).



**The top individual scorers were, in order, Tate Osborne of ASCTE (MVP), Henry Bylinowski (Baker), Charlie Martin (Athens), Erin Howard (Grissom), Ian Lang (Southside), Midhun Sadanand (Hoover), Sam Hellebrand (Decatur), Dalton Stults (Russellville), Yuti Das (James Clemens), Ella Duus - not pictured (New Century Technology High School), and Emily Centamore (Sparkman).**

The tournament questions covered the disciplines of science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM), as well as other areas such as history, government, literature, fine arts, current events, and pop culture. Teams competed by answering tossup and bonus questions related to those subjects. Quiz bowl is akin to Jeopardy! for students. The questions, provided by NAQT, are complex and advanced for students' current grade levels.

The stat reports for the Rocket City Invitational are listed on both the NAQT and Quizbowl Resource Center's websites:

[www.naqt.com/go/stats/13673](http://www.naqt.com/go/stats/13673)  
[hsquizbowl.org/db/tournaments/7859/](http://hsquizbowl.org/db/tournaments/7859/)

Since the Rocket City Invitational is a national qualifier, the top four teams are eligible to compete in national tournaments.

The event was hosted jointly by AIAA GHS and the AIAA UAH Student Branch. All trophies, medals, and cash awards were made possible through the generous sponsorships of Jacobs Space Exploration Group and ERC.



**Hoover High School and ASCTE competing in the finals.**

Tournament volunteers included members of AIAA GHS and the UAH AIAA Student Branch, as well as volunteers from NASA Marshall Space Flight Center, Jacobs Space Exploration Group, ERC, SAIC, Sev1Tech, Media Fusion, Calhoun Community College, Hoover High School, and the Alabama School of Cyber Technology & Engineering. Alabama Scholastic Competition Association (ASCA) board member Claudette Smith served as tournament judge and also moderated in the playoffs.

Thank you to these volunteers (listed in alphabetical order): Mitzi Adams, Dr. Rob Adams, Sarah Andrews, Ella Archer, Annie Catherine Barnes, Alexander Boyd, Allie Brown, Dr. Chelsi Cassilly, John Dankanich, Anna Leigh Gossett, Jeff Haars, Kathleen Hotchkiss, Ched Jones, Dr. Greg Joseph, Sam Kirk, Phil Kitchens, Dr. Matthew Koebbe, Dr. Paul Kovacic, Dave Larson, Sophia Liu, Steven Liu, Ellie Meyer, Jonathan Norris, Robin Osborne, Ashley Penton, Dr. Tracie Prater, Jason Pullias, Veronica Rodriguez, Carolyn Russell, Jared Sauer, Claudette Smith, Leslie Smith, Sophia Thompson, and Dr. Naveen Vetcha.



*All photos taken by Allie Brown*

