

AIAA GHS launches into new year with Rocket City Quiz Bowl

By Robin Osborne, AIAA GHS Associate Fellow and STEM Committee Member

Photo credit: Alan Lowrey, AIAA GHS Treasurer

Nearly 100 high school students from across the state braved the cold weather to gather in Huntsville on Jan. 31 to compete in the 2026 AIAA Rocket City Quiz Bowl tournament. The theme of this year's tournament, held at the Alabama School of Cyber Technology and Engineering (ASCTE), was NASA's upcoming Artemis II mission. The event included both high school and middle school divisions, each with eleven teams. The 1st-4th place teams received 3D-printed Artemis II rocket trophies. Cash prizes were awarded to the 1st and 2nd place teams to help fund their travel to national tournaments.

The six teams that qualified for playoffs in each division were (in alphabetical order):

- High School Division: Alabama School of Cyber Technology and Engineering (ASCTE), Bob Jones High School, Gadsden City High School, Hoover High School, Southside High School, and West Point High School.
- Middle School Division: Buckhorn Middle School, Discovery Middle School, Gadsden Middle School, Liberty Middle School, Valley Leadership Academy, and Williams Middle 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 winning high school and middle school teams are pictured below.



1st Place Team (\$1000 cash prize):
Gadsden City High School (Gadsden, AL)
Pictured with Coaches Shila Miller and Wayne Davenport



2nd Place Team (\$750 cash prize):
Hoover High School (Hoover, AL)
Pictured with Coach Austin Dennis



4th Place Team:
Bob Jones High School (Madison, AL)
Coach Gene Cox (not pictured)



3rd Place Team:
West Point High School (Cullman, AL)
Coach Lee Henry (not pictured)

Clockwise from top left: 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th place team winners of the high school division.



1st Place Team (\$750 cash prize):
Valley Leadership Academy (Huntsville, AL)
Pictured with Coaches Jennifer Nelson and Kelli Battraw



2nd Place Team (\$500 cash prize):
Gadsden Middle School (Gadsden, AL)
Pictured with Coaches Roy Bliss and Sue Bliss



4th Place Team:
Discovery Middle School (Madison, AL)
Pictured with Coach Kristina Dea



3rd Place Team:
Williams Middle School (Huntsville, AL)
Pictured with Principal Dr. Alphus Shipman
Coach Greg Carreker (not pictured)

Clockwise from top left: 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th place team winners of the middle school division.

The top five individual scorers in the preliminary rounds were awarded individual medals. Those students, recognized as the tournament All-Star Team, are pictured below for each division.



High School All-Star Team



Middle School All-Star Team

The top individual scorers (in order of placement) in the high school division were Chris Holder of Gadsden City (MVP), Russ McGlaughn of Southside, Leo Osborne of ASCTE, Sean Harbison of West Point, and Krish Nathan of Hoover. In the middle school division, the top scorers were Sam Nelson of Valley Leadership (MVP), Bronner Skaggs of Gadsden, Julian Toledo of Williams, Jimmie Montgomery of Moulton, and Emilia Ng of Discovery.

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 the National Academic Quiz Tournaments (NAQT), are complex and advanced for students' current grade levels. The full results for this year's Rocket City Invitational are officially recorded on these websites:

<http://www.naqt.com/go/stats/17445> (both divisions)
<https://hsquizbowl.org/db/tournaments/9827/> (high school)
<https://hsquizbowl.org/db/tournaments/9826/> (middle school)

Trophies and cash prizes were made possible through generous sponsorships from Amentum Space Exploration Division and National Space Club – Huntsville. AIAA GHS would also like to thank Chick-fil-A on University Dr./Wynn Dr. and Costco in Madison for their support.

Thank you to this year's 37 tournament volunteers (listed in alphabetical order): Rob Adams, Ella Archer, Eric Blum, Eric Bodlak, Alexander Boyd, Joe Bullington, Chelsi Cassilly, Stephanie Clemons, John Dankanich, Ross DeMay III, Christopher Esker, Caleb Ethridge, Marissa Garcia, Andrew Goetz, Jeff Haars, Matthew Hitt, Greg Joseph, Faiyaj Khan, Sophia Liu, Steven Liu, Camden McCarver, Tina Melton, Ellie Meyer, Zoe Nagel, Robin Osborne, Eshan Pokhrel, Tracie Prater, Jason Pullias, Zachary Rubeor, Jack Ryan, Thein Shi, Nicholas Sifuentes, Aaron Speyer, Darren Tinker, Maria Whitehurst, John Williams, and Jude Williams.

Volunteers were from the following organizations: AIAA GHS, NASA Marshall Space Flight Center, Amentum Space Exploration Division, ASCTE, National Space Club – Huntsville, University of Alabama at Huntsville, Huntsville City Schools, CFD Research, TriVector Services, CACI, AI Signal Research, Stellar Solutions, Bevilacqua Research Corporation, and Hoover High School.

AIAA Associate Fellow Robin Osborne and AIAA Educator Member Stephanie Clemons served as tournament director and assistant tournament director, respectively.

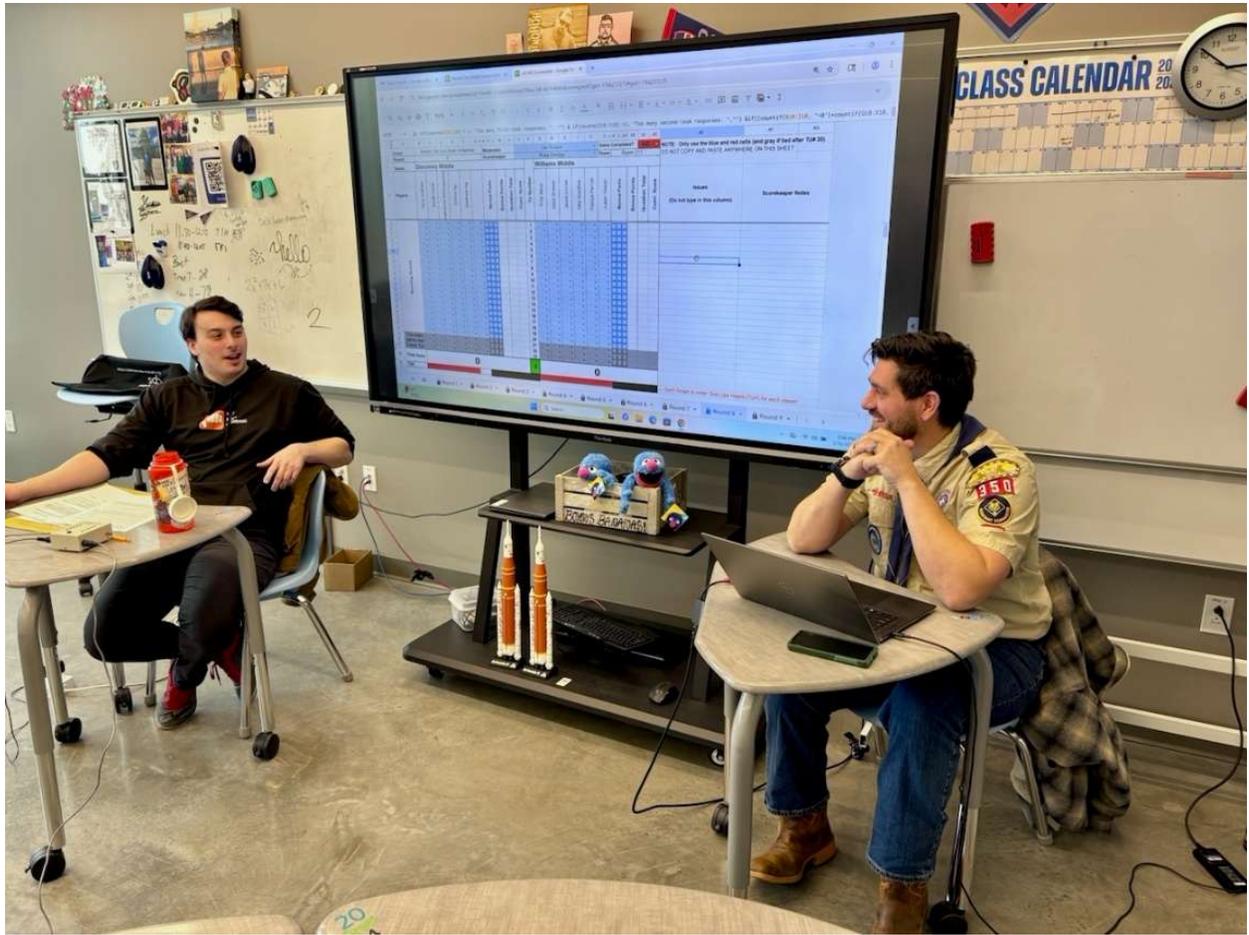
In addition to bringing the students together with members of the Huntsville aerospace community, the tournament provided an opportunity to remind high school seniors planning to major in STEM fields related to aeronautics or astronautics to apply for AIAA GHS's [Robert L. Sackheim Engineering, Science, & Math Scholarship](#) and also take advantage of AIAA's free [student membership](#).

Additional photos are provided in the proceeding pages











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