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# RYE BROOK Westmore NEWS

**Kennedy  
School's 10<sup>th</sup>  
Olympiad  
tests math,  
science and  
technology**  
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## Blind Brook High School Mock Trial team upsets Rye Neck for county championship



The Blind Brook High School Mock Trial team and coaches with their trophy after upsetting Rye Neck for the county championship at the Westchester County Courthouse last Thursday. They are, from left, coach Joel Hecker, freshman Joey DiBerardino, senior Ashley Mango, sophomore Eric Nadasi, freshman Will Saunders, sophomore Karan Das, freshman Josie Yalovitser, sophomore Alex Lubkin, junior Rachel Coby (back row), senior captain Spencer Jardine, senior captain Alex Drechsler, sophomore Jason Adler, junior Julia Klein, junior captain Nikta Daijavad, freshman Justin Cray, freshman Jason Rosenberg, coach Lisa Pellegrino and coach Kenneth Finder.

BY LORI JANJIGIAN

The Blind Brook High School Mock Trial team, led by senior captains Alex Drechsler and Spencer Jardine, junior captain Nikta Daijavad and coaches Lisa Pellegrino, Kenneth Finder and Joel Hecker, became the Westchester County champions last Thursday, Apr. 14. The team reached this final trial after going 5-0 in their previous contests against Scarsdale, Harrison, Ossining, Briarcliff and Ardsley high schools. This is the first time the Blind Brook team has reached county champion status since 2007.

This victory is especially impressive because Blind Brook defeated Rye Neck High School, the county champions in 2008 and 2009 who also went to the county finals last year. In addition, Blind Brook defeated Scarsdale High

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# BBHS Mock Trial team

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School in the first round this year. The Scarsdale team took the county championship last year.

In the county championship trial, Blind Brook was the plaintiff. The lawyers were Daijavad, Drechsler and junior Julia Klein. Drechsler did the opening and Klein the closing for the team. In addition, all three lawyers had to prepare a direct and a cross examination. The three witnesses were sophomore Jason Adler, senior Ashley Mango and freshman Josie Yalovitser.

This meet was held at the Westchester County Courthouse in White Plains. All other trials this year have been held in classrooms at Scarsdale High School. In past years all the trials were held at the County Courthouse; however, due to a \$10 million cut in the state court budget, the teams had to compete elsewhere.

At the county final, a panel of three judges assessed the teams. The winner was the team with the highest collective score after adding all three judges' scores. The chief judge was Alan Scheinkman.

The team has been meeting every Sunday since September to prepare for the trials which began in March. The team practiced what they called "mock mocks." These are cases from past years the team used to prepare for this

the constitutionality of a parking ordinance passed by the Board of Trustees in Empireville. Mango plays the superintendent of the school district, Chris Crangle, and Yalovitser plays a member of the Board of Trustees named Cameron Curtis.

To develop a good understanding of the case, the team met with two Public Works Department members to learn background information. They also met with Blind Brook drama director Christina Colangelo to ensure their performances were believable.

The captains attribute their success to all the hard work the team put into every aspect of their performance. "I think that it is disheartening when you don't do well for a few years in a row," said Daijavad. "This is what made us want to put so much effort into it this year, and this effort really showed through. Looking back on it, based on the effort we put into it, you could see that we were destined for success."

Pellegrino, a math teacher at Blind Brook High School who competed on the mock trial team at her own high school, agreed. "This year has been a lot more focused. We have been very strict with deadlines. We have had the opportunity to do a lot more run-throughs and both our attorneys and witnesses are more comfortable speaking

year's case. They help the freshmen get used to working with a case while honing the skills of the veteran team members.

The team was given this year's official case in December. After they receive the new case, the team practices many more times a week. During these practice sessions, the team works to tackle the case from many different angles. To do this, they need to work on many of the different factors that go into creating a convincing argument. They come up with a solid theory developed after thoroughly analyzing the case. After coming up with a theory, the team must think of the best words to get their point across. They need to work on presenting their argument in the clearest way possible so the judges can understand what they want to say. Then, the team needs to work on their performance. And, finally, they must be able to think on their feet.

Drechsler believes this ability comes with "a deep understanding of the case. We work on responding to objections and how to respond to something we were not expecting." In addition, Drechsler believes "concentration and dedication go hand in hand. We work extremely hard doing everything we can."

This year's case is called *Pat Parker vs. The Village of Empireville and the Empireville Board of Trustees*. Pat Parker, played by Adler, is contesting

extemporaneously.

The team largely believes their success is due to the hard work of Drechsler. "I do not think that all of the progress we made this year would have been possible without Alex [Drechsler]," said Daijavad. "He really transformed the team and put so much effort into it. He definitely deserves a lot of credit for what he has done."

Because of their victory in the county championship, the team is going to the regional competition in Goshen, N.Y on Sat., Apr. 30 where they will go up against Putnam County's Mahopac High School. On this day the team could compete in a total of three trials. If they lose any of the three, they will be out of the competition. If Blind Brook wins all three of these trials, then they will go to the state competition.

Blind Brook will be on the defense side for the first round of the regional contest. Drechsler, Klein and Daijavad will be the lawyers. Drechsler will do the opening, Daijavad the closing. The witnesses will be junior Rachel Coby, freshman Jason Rosenberg and Mango. The team plans to travel to Goshen the day before the competition.

Despite all their success, the team is incredibly humble and is still working extremely hard. "It has been so exciting," said Drechsler. "It is like a dream come true. I never expected we would go this far."