



Following A Winning Team: A Day With Students Competing in The Fed Challenge

By STEVEN KRAKAUER

Specialty Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

On April 26, I arrived at the Westfield Train Station at 9:30 a.m. for an excursion with the Westfield High School (WHS) Fed Challenge team.

The group competes in Fed Challenge competitions, and today it would compete in the regional finals. This was the farthest any team from Westfield had gotten in the four years the club had been around.

The team discussed economics and interest rates. I took a diary of the day's events:

9:32 a.m. — The group gathers at the Westfield Train Station. The group includes seniors Jon Bender, Dan Kagan and Rui Lu, junior Chris Urban and sophomore Ravi Bharadwaj. Also going on the excursion to the Federal Reserve Bank are the team's advisors, WHS teacher Thom Hornish and Computer Consultant Pete Billson.

9:38 a.m. — It's time for the first pep talk. "When you guys win this afternoon, stay calm," warns Mr. Hornish.

9:50 a.m. — I realize I don't actually know what will be happening this afternoon. Dan Kagan attempts to explain. "Basically we're going to talk about some junk," he says.

Jon Bender goes into a little more detail. "We're going to present the economy in terms of macroeconomics."

9:51 a.m. — We board the train.

10:03 a.m. — The team doesn't waste time in last minute preparations for the day's events. Raj Bharadwaj asks, "How were the U.S. Financial Markets in the 1980's?"

"Pretty crappy," replies Jon.

10:05 a.m. — Rui describes Chris Urban as "this Hungarian guy here." Then I realize, this team has a lot of ethnicity behind it. Hungarian (Chris), Chinese (Rui), British (Jon), Indian (Raj) and American (Dan). They'll all be discussing the U.S. economy.

10:22 a.m. — I get the run-down from Dan on how the Westfield team got to this point in the competition. The first round consisted of 125 teams from the New York area, and those teams were narrowed to 25. The top six teams moved on to today's regional finals.

The winner would go to Washington, D.C.

Raj, the youngest member, joined the team just one week before the first round, taking over for a member who quit.

11:02 a.m. — We arrive on Wall Street with 30 minutes to kill. I get the run-down on the practice schedule for this team. Yesterday, starting at two in the afternoon, the team gathered for a final practice. They didn't leave the school until 10 p.m.

They were working on their presentation, a 15-minute "editorial board" simulation on the economy today, as well as the 10-minute question and answer session where they are to be grilled by three judges involved with the Fed.

11:10 a.m. — The team is involved in a heated discussion...about tea. Consensus? English tea, no good, Chinese tea, good.

11:15 a.m. — The team is proud of their diversity. "Immigrants are taking over," says Chris.

11:23 a.m. — They're also modest, with a sense of humor. "We're not the brains of Westfield. The 'brains' are more important than us," says Jon.

Adult Evening School Offers Courses to County Residents

SCOTCH PLAINS — The Union County Vocational-Technical School (UCVTS) is currently registering Union County residents for a variety of courses in its Adult Evening School, which is located on the Raritan Road campus in Scotch Plains. The courses are open to all Union County residents and the fee for most ranges from \$100-\$150.

The evening courses include occupational and technical training programs that prepare students for employment in their fields of study. All of the courses combine hands-on training with state of the art technology.

Courses available to students this spring include: Auto Body, A/C Heating & Refrigeration, New Jersey Inspector Training, Baking, Computer

11:29 a.m. — It's not a stretch to find an enemy for the Westfield Fed Challenge team.

"Montclair is what you may call our archrivals. They won last year, and we want to win this year," says Jon.

The team agrees.

11:45 a.m. — Lunchtime, free buffet. Contestants eat up...they're the first team to compete after lunch. Montclair? They were the first team to present, somewhere around 9 this morning.

12:19 p.m. — Lunchtime is over. The team gathers to do a run-through of their presentation.

12:21 p.m. — The "editorial board meeting" begins. Dan is the "editor-in-chief," while the other four are specialized in different subjects. It's a skit that has to do with interest rates. The team's consensus is that interest rates must remain constant due to a variety of well-presented reasons.

12:30 p.m. — Chris puts his highlighter down for the first time since the beginning of the run-through. Last minute preparations are still underway.

12:36 p.m. — Practice ends. The team is slightly over the 15-minute mark, the ideal time, according to the judges.

12:46 p.m. — Lloyd Bromberg, the Director of Education Programs at the Fed, stops by the table. He's been the director of the Fed Challenge since its inception seven years ago.

He explains that there are six other competitions going on at Federal banks across the U.S. — in Chicago, St. Louis, Dallas, Boston, Cleveland and Richmond. The New York competition is by far the most competitive, fielding 125 teams. The other competitions have about 125 teams combined.

Eight years ago this competition started with 14 teams.

What does he think about Westfield's success, in only their fourth year? "A lot of the success is dependent on the teacher. Pete (Billson) and Thom (Hornish) deserve a lot of credit," he says.

12:58 p.m. — Nikki Candolare, a Westfield member of the Fed Challenge team last year and current Barnard College student, meets up with the team just as they enter the competition room. "I'm excited to see how they do," she says. "It says a lot for our program that they're in the finals."

12:59 p.m. — The Westfield team takes the stage, hooked up to microphones and given water. The fan base includes six or seven parents, two advisors, Nikki and me.

1:06 p.m. — Besides the weekend trip to Washington and the chance to be the best team in the country, Mr. Bromberg announces another quirk of winning. The winning team gets to ring the bell at the American Stock Exchange.

1:16 p.m. — Westfield begins their presentation. Everything is going fairly smoothly.

1:31 p.m. — Dan wraps up as Mr. Hornish checks his stopwatch in the audience. 14 minutes, 55 seconds. Mr. Hornish is ecstatic.

1:36 p.m. — The judges begin their question and answer period. Question number two seems to temporarily stump the team: "How does an increase in interest rates relate to stock valuation?"

Raj begins to answer, but is corrected by Dan. Jon takes over, followed by Chris. "Good Answer, Jon!" whispers

Nikki.

1:42 p.m. — The question and answer session is over, and Mr. Hornish is beaming. "That's not the group I saw four weeks ago. That's as close to perfect as you can get."

The Westfield team had a newspaper they produced prepared for the judges, and Mr. Hornish explains how this could possibly affect the judges decision.

"It could be risky because the judges are used to a meeting format, but the newspaper is organic, and they can actually read it while we presented," he says.

1:44 p.m. — "Economically Incorrect, with Bill Maher" begins, a spoof of the ABC show performed by the next competing group from Long Island. "This is more risky," says Mr. Hornish.

The judges seem confused by the presentation.

2:01 p.m. — The Long Island school ends, over two minutes late.

2:03 p.m. — A tense Mr. Hornish whispers, "Anyone who thought this was a day off from school should come with us," he says.

2:11 p.m. — Dan is annoyed with himself. "I think it the presentation went all right, but Ravi didn't know the answer to the question. I should have found a better way to help him," he says.

2:12 p.m. — Mr. Hornish is getting anxious for the results. "I don't drink, but I'm getting close," he says, laughing nervously. The big announcement is set to come in only one hour.

2:40 p.m. — The judges leave and begin to converse in their conference room. The announcement of the winner is said to be 15 minutes away.

2:44 p.m. — Raj is anxious too. "I think we did really well, but I haven't seen all the other teams. I was nervous during the question and answer, but basically everything was fine," he says.

2:47 p.m. — Mr. Billson liked what he saw. "Out of the three groups we saw this afternoon, ours was the best."

He did have a qualm with that dreaded question two. "We blew one question, but the rest of the team recovered," he says.

3:34 p.m. — 38 minutes after they retired to their chambers, the judges re-enter the room to announce the winners.

3:35 p.m. — All teams get plaques and are announced individually. "Arch-Rival" Montclair stands near Westfield for the ceremony.

3:38 p.m. — The winner is announced: For the third year in a row, Montclair High School takes the win in the regional competition.

3:40 p.m. — Mr. Hornish shakes the hands of his team. "No DC for us," says Jon.

3:58 p.m. — Mr. Hornish tells his team that the judges told him it was the question and answer that they lost on. But he does offer some condolences to his disheartened team. "Maybe we didn't screw up at all, and they were just that much better," he says.

4:06 p.m. — Chris, the junior, is looking towards next year. "We've seen the finals, and next year hopefully we'll find members to replace the three graduating," he says.

4:09 p.m. — Jon is not as accepting. "They must have stolen our newspaper idea. That's the only way they could have won," he says.

4:44 p.m. — "I think we did extremely well. There was just someone out there who did better," says Mr. Hornish on the train ride home.

5:12 p.m. — Trash-talking has already begun for two graduating seniors. "Don't worry Rui, because Johns Hopkins is going down to The College of New Jersey next year," says Jon. "Oh, you watch it," says Rui.

Since that day, Mr. Hornish says he heard "unofficially" that Westfield came in second by a half a point. Either way, the 2002 Fed Challenge team from WHS can always know that they were the first team to make it to the regional finals. And their hard work paid off.

Concepts & Thought



VISITING WESTFIELDER...Immaculata High School Principal Sister Mary L. Birster visited with the many guests present at Career Day 2002. Sister Mary caught up with the activities of alumni Kathleen Hartnett Jacobs of the Class of 1977 from of Flemington, and Susan Myrah Kujawski of the Class of 1978 from Westfield, during a welcome breakfast held for the guests at the school.

Governor's School Accepts Nine Westfield HS Juniors

WESTFIELD — The New Jersey Governor's School has accepted nine Westfield High School (WHS) juniors to five of the six programs.

Emily Chen and Tyler Patla were accepted to the Governor's School in the Sciences, David Eisenberg and William Masker were accepted to the Governor's School in International Studies, Christopher Lynn and Jordan Hyman were accepted to the Governor's School of the Arts, Angela Kim and Marisa Lau were accepted to the Governor's School on the Environment, and Kate Lechner was accepted to the Governor's School of Public Issues.

Applicants to the six Governor's Schools must have been nominated by a teacher and must be in their junior year of high school. Minimum requirements for applications included the writing of two essays and the submission of teacher recommendations.

Jordan was one of 12 students accepted to the theater division of the Arts school. His application process also included an a capella audition and a monologue audition. The theater students will perform two plays: the drama *The Laramie Project* and the musical *Assassins*.

Lynn, a tenor, was one of 16 students accepted into the voice division of the Arts program.

"I am really thrilled, and I can't wait to experience this with the other students as interested in the arts as I am," he said.

Woman's Club to Announce Winners of Scholarships

WESTFIELD — Scholarship winners from Westfield High School, who are to be awarded scholarships from the Woman's Club of Westfield, will be introduced to members at their general meeting on Monday, May 13, at 12:30 p.m. in the Patton Auditorium of the First Congregational Church in Westfield.

Since 1949, the organization has awarded grants to Westfield students for their further education. At that time, a continuing fund was established to aid students in their educational pursuits.

John Hopkins Elects

WESTFIELD — Brandon Albert Doerr of Westfield has been elected to the Phi Beta Kappa academic honorary society at The Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Md.

Brandon is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Tim Doerr of Westfield. He graduated from Westfield High School and is currently majoring in economics at John Hopkins. Brandon expects to graduate this month.

University News

Richardson Named To Headmaster's List

WESTFIELD — Joanna Richardson, the daughter of Philip Richardson and Diana Edkins of Westfield, has been named to the Headmaster's List at Blair Academy in Blairstown. Joanna received this honor by maintaining a minimum 5.0 average on a 6.0 scale in her courses for the winter term.

Drexel Univ. Places

Galitzer on Dean's List

FANWOOD — J. Richard Weggel, Associate Dean of the College of Engineering at Drexel University in Philadelphia, Pa. has announced that Fanwood resident Alexander Galitzer earned Dean's List distinction for the winter quarter 2001.

A freshman at Drexel, Alexander is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Barry D. Galitzer of Fanwood. He is a graduate of The Wardlaw-Hartridge School in Edison.

School District Plans

Annual Art Exhibition

WESTFIELD — The public is invited to attend the 18th annual Westfield Public School District's Fine Arts Show, which will be held in the Westfield High School varsity gymnasium from May 14-16.

A sampling of artwork by students representing all nine public schools and grades ranging from kindergarten through 12th will be on display at the annual show.

On Tuesday, May 14 and Wednesday, May 15, the artwork can be viewed from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., and in the evening from 7:30 to 9 p.m. Visitors are also welcomed on Thursday, May 16, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Paintings, two-dimensional work, ceramic, crafts, computerized art and other pieces will be exhibited.

Linda King, Supervisor of Fine Arts, noted that the annual exhibit has become "an outstanding cultural event in this community. The Art Show is a wonderful opportunity to exhibit hundreds of various art media created by our talented students under the direction of dedicated art educators."

Abigail Speck Inducted Into Kappa Delta Pi

WESTFIELD — Abigail Speck of Westfield was inducted into the Gamma Zeta Chapter of Kappa Delta Pi, the International Honor Society in Education, on April 26.

A member of the Sigma Sigma Sigma sorority, Abigail has been placed on the Dean's List for all three semesters at The College of New Jersey.

She has a double major in elementary education and art, with a concentration in sculpture and photography, and a minor in criminal justice.

Abigail graduated Westfield High School in 2000. She is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Brian Speck of Westfield.

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