

REACH FOR THE TOP

Central goes on tear for national title

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They read, they practised, and they got lots of rest.

They studied, they memorized, and when they needed to build up aggression and intensity for the big game, they shredded phone books with their bare hands.

In the end, all the hard work paid off: Central secondary school's Reach for the Top team won this year's national championships in Toronto after competing against 12 other schools over the weekend, vindicated after beating a rival New Brunswick high school.

"We did a lot of studying and a lot of practising," said team captain Max Trower 17, after the six-member team returned from the final with their coach, Central teacher Mike Pizzuti.

A big stress reliever was collecting phone books that the team would then rip up to build up aggression for the game. The day before the final matchup, Pizzuti walked into a hotel room filled with torn-up phone books.

"We wanted to be intense for the game," Trower said.

The final ended up being a re-match between the Central team and the New Brunswick Kennebecasis Valley high school team that had beaten them in an tournament earlier in the season.

Central's Golden Ghosts won 470-310 in the final yesterday.

Reach for the Top is a national quiz show for high school students. This is the second time in three years Central has won the national title.

Teams are asked questions about literature, science, math, history and pop culture. The first clues to a question given are obscure and worth 40 points. The more clues are revealed, the fewer points a team scores when it answers correctly.

Team members have to audition for Pizzuti, who picks participants based on their diverse knowledge of subject areas.

"Central is the kind of school that naturally draws students who are excited to participate in contests like this," Pizzuti said.

"There is a deep pool of students for me to choose from."

The students won a trophy, medals, many books, \$1,500 entrance scholarships to the University of Western Ontario and "a lot of glory," Trower said.

The Reach for the Top provincial and national challenges are aired on TVO, beginning in September. There are 600 teams in Canada, but only 12 compete at the national level.

For the last five years, Central has won the Top Thames Valley division trophy. The Ghosts won the Ontario title two weeks ago, beating out 42 other schools.



Central secondary school's senior Reach for the Top team returned to London yesterday with the national trophy, its second Canadian championship in three years. Team members include Kyle Arsenault, 17, left, Myrna Moretti, 17, Ming-Ho Yee, 18, Max Trower, captain, 17, Liz Gray, 17, and Jenn Aziz, 18. Mike Pizzuti is the coach. (SUSAN BRADNAM/Sun Media)



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