

El Dorado Hills Telegraph  
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### Academic Decathlon

Yea Team!! Go, Go, Go!!

No, this is not a sports team. It's the Academic Decathlon team from your local high school. These team members prepare, train, and get ready for a contest just like any other team. And, yes, their focus is on winning. Their win, however, doesn't take place with a ball, puck, or javelin. Their win is with their answers, and the competition is from other high school teams who are trying to answer the same questions.

If you've never attended an Academic Decathlon, you're in for a treat. The "games" take place all over the state of California on the first Saturday in February. There is a yearly topic, complete with information and materials given to the team leaders from competing high schools in November. High school teams prepare for months, reading, studying, and answering questions. This year's topic is "The Great Depression", and teams are already hard at work getting ready for February 5, 2011.

On that Saturday, teams will show up at Union Mine High School for the competition. As stated on the Academic Decathlon website: "individuals will spend the day competing in 30 minute multiple choice tests on economics, art, music, language and literature, mathematics, science, and social science. In addition, each team member gives a planned 4 minute speech and a 2 minute impromptu speech, sits through a 7 minute interview, and has 50 minutes to write an essay." Scores are tallied for each individual, and then combined for a team score.

Often the Super Quiz, the last event of the day, is the deciding factor. This is the one event during the day in which the public is invited and encouraged to attend. Here's

where the “Yea Team” becomes a factor. Although perhaps not as energetic as a football game, the fans, usually parents and relatives of the team members, are just as excited when an answer is correct and a team scores.

The questions are tough. Team members have studied, and yet we know that studying comes easier for some than others. However, the Academic Decathlon was never developed just for the A students. A, B or C students can each compete. The questions fit the academic performance levels of the participants. All that said, the questions are still extremely challenging!

Try one of last year’s Super Quiz questions and see how you do:

**Who introduced the theory of punctuated equilibrium?**

- a. Haldane and Wright
- b. Kirschner and Gerhart
- c. Lewontin and Hubby
- d. Gould and Eldredge
- e. Turelli and Fitzpatrick

Sure, you knew all the time it was (d) Gould and Eldredge. Right? Punctuated equilibrium?

So now you know. The Academic Decathlon is where students compete, where studying pays off, and the winning team advances to the next round, just like in any other tournament. El Dorado County high schools are invited to send their top team to the State competition. We mentioned the questions in the County are hard. At the State level, they

move to harder and hardest. And, of course, the El Dorado high schools are up for the challenge!