

## Recipe for a successful Canadian Mining Games

by R. Clarke

### Generosity of sponsors key to annual event

#### Ingredients:

- 10 Teams
- 120 Competitors
- 23 Generous sponsoring companies
- 21 Events
- 3 Banquets
- 1 Dedicated team of volunteers

#### Directions:

Mix all ingredients together, stir vigorously, step back and enjoy.



*Participants from University of Alberta survey as part of a challenge.*

An annual competition between ten Canadian universities, the Canadian Mining Games, showcase student talent in a series of 21 mining-related events. The games are held over three days during Reading Week and see 120 competitors vying for the title of Mining Games Champions.

The Canadian Mining Games began at McGill University in 1991 and take place annually as universities across Canada take turns hosting the event. This event is mining's version of the NHL Top Prospects Game and is used by sponsors to network with future graduates and observe them interacting and competing with their peers. They offer a unique opportunity for sponsoring companies to meet 120 of the country's most ambitious and intelligent mining engineering students at one venue, rather than having to travel to the ten individual universities represented.

I was fortunate enough to compete in the 17th annual Canadian Mining Games held in Montreal in February 2007. I had attended innumerable educational and sporting conferences, but never before had I experienced such an overwhelming sense of camaraderie and purpose. It was at this event — aided by a few beverages — that I first voiced interest in becoming involved if the event was ever held at the University of Toronto. Fulfilling the prophesy, I became the co-chair for the 19th annual Canadian Mining Games held at the University of Toronto from February 19-21, 2009.

### One part perseverance, two parts pride

The Canadian Mining Games are the highlight of every future mining engineer's calendar. They serve as a welcome opportunity to relax after midterm exams and reconnect with old acquaintances from previous work terms or mining games. They also reignite the long-standing rivalry between east and west for

Mining Games superiority. The eastern schools — Dalhousie University, Université Laval, École Polytechnique, McGill University, Queen's University, University of Toronto and Laurentian University — have traditionally won the majority of the competitions based on strong, historical education systems. However, this dominance ended in 2007 when the University of Alberta won its first of two consecutive Canadian Mining Games. The other two western teams — University of British Columbia and University of Saskatchewan — are also emerging as serious championship contenders.

Preparations for the Canadian Mining Games take months, with organization typically beginning in summer and universities picking their teams in September or early October. Long before the scheduled dates of the games, teams begin competing in the Stock Market Challenge, which usually runs for two months prior to the opening banquet. For the Games' opening banquet, held in Hart House on the University of Toronto's St. George Campus, teams arrived decked out in their university colours, eager to begin the competition. The banquet was sponsored exclusively by BHP Billiton Iron Ore and included a presentation by Simon Fleury, superintendent Area C, regarding the company's Australian operations. BHP Billiton Iron Ore also provided the topic for, and judged, the oral presentation event. This year's topic addressed how companies persevere through economic cycles.

### **Let the games begin**

Friday saw teams compete in nine events that included: Jack-leg Drilling, Rock Mechanics, Mineral Processing, Surveying, Equipment Selection, Mineral Identification, Mystery Event — GPS Challenge, Problem Set and the competition's largest event, Mine Design. Strong showings in the first day's competition saw the University of Toronto, perennial powerhouse Laurentian University, and returning champions University of Alberta jump out to early leads over the remaining seven schools.

On Friday night, the teams ascended the CN Tower to get a bird's-eye view of Canada's largest city and partake of the Mining in the Sky Dinner, exclusively hosted by Barrick Gold Corporation. Gordon Fife, executive vice president of organizational effectiveness, gave an overview of the charitable work that Barrick is associated with worldwide. After a cocktail reception at Horizons Café, dinner was served in the 360 Restaurant, where students dined with 50 industry representatives and reflected on the day's events. After dessert and coffee, the action shifted to a popular nightclub in Toronto's entertainment district.

Events began with a bang on Saturday, as all team members were utilized, simultaneously competing in five morning events: the Environmental event, Equipment Handling, Drilling and Blasting, AutoCAD and Mine Rescue Simulation. A career fair, open to competitors and sponsors, was also held during lunchtime. The fast pace of the morning eased off in the afternoon. Competitors could choose between events on Ventilation, Mechanical Design, Remote Control Equipment Handling and the second Mystery Event — Gladiator Jousting. At the close of events, there were no clear-cut frontrunners and the games were abuzz with speculation about who would be crowned this year's champions. Saturday night saw the completion of the 19th Annual Canadian Mining Games with the Awards Banquet at Arcadian Court in the Simpson Tower, hosted by Syncrude Canada Ltd. Mark Wyllie, long-range planning leader at Syncrude, introduced his company's oil sands operations, familiarized students with available career options and provided reassurance about the long-term viability of the mining industry.

### **And the winner is...**

When the dust settled on this year's event, Laurentian University was crowned the 2009 Canadian Mining Games Champions. Strong showings by the University of British Columbia and the University of Alberta bagged them the second and third places, respectively. Queen's University and the University of Toronto rounded out the top five.

This bodes well for competition at the 20th Annual Canadian Mining Games, as neither east nor west can claim complete dominance. Next year's host school will be Dalhousie University, where the mineral

engineering student body is eager to showcase their department and the city of Halifax to the rest of Canada.

On a personal note, I would like to thank each and every one of the sponsors of this year's event. The Canadian Mining Games are only possible because of their generosity. Each of the events was exclusively sponsored by a mining company, consultant or service provider who believes in the purpose and spirit of the games. Despite industry-wide hiring freezes due to the current economic slowdown, our sponsors supported us this year. They have secured a place in the minds of future graduates as "go to" companies, an image that will come to the fore as they set out to seek employment.

Further information on the Canadian Mining Games can be found at [www.canadianmininggames.com](http://www.canadianmininggames.com)

***About the Author***

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