

DeSales has the answers

Mike Latona/Catholic Courier

GENEVA — All Seth Pohorence had to hear was "1973 National League playoffs" and "Bud Harrelson," and his hand went right to the buzzer.

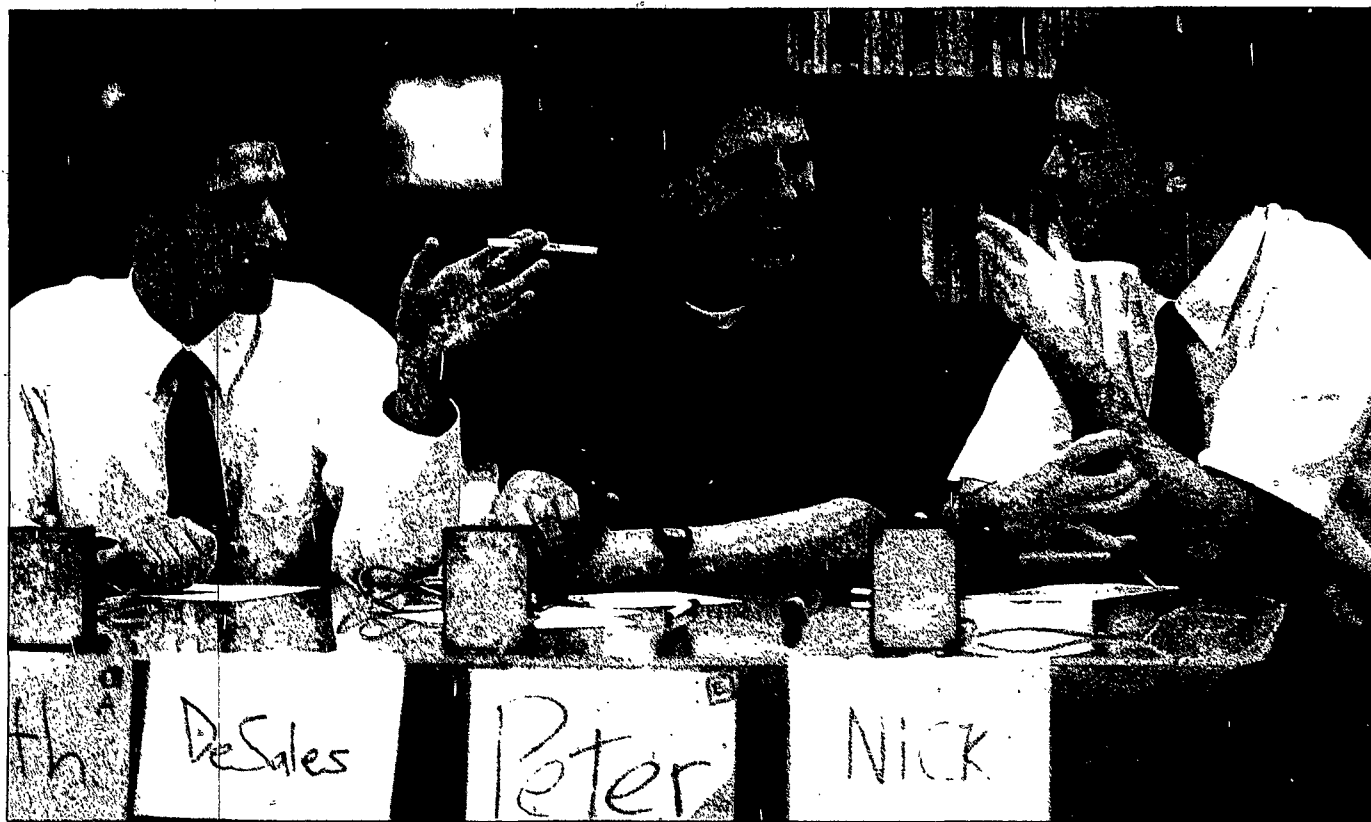
"Pete Rose," Seth declared.

Correct! Before the question was even completed, Seth had connected the scant clues with a baseball brawl that took place between Harrelson and Rose — more than a decade before Seth was even born.

This served as the first question for a recent MasterMinds quiz competition, and Seth's quick response started his DeSales High School team toward yet another victory. Their 170-10 win over Penn Yan followed a 140-115 triumph over Marcus Whitman earlier that day in matches held Jan. 12 at DeSales.

DeSales has posted a 7-1 record to hold down first place in its five-school division. Amazingly, the team also won a division title in 2002-03 — its very first year in MasterMinds — with a 10-4 record. The brainy competitors then finished in the top eight of all Rochester-area high schools in the regional playoffs.

According to Paul Riker, DeSales' coach, the program competed as varsity in 2002-03 and has added a junior varsity this year that is also excelling: They lead their three-school division with a 7-1 record. Competitions are held once per month, with the regular season set to end in March.



Mike Crupi/Catholic Courier

DeSales High School senior Seth Pohorence (left), junior Peter Karski and senior Nicholas Hollon discuss a question Jan. 12 during a MasterMinds match at DeSales against Penn Yan Academy. In their league, Hollon and Pohorence have placed first and third, respectively, in individual scoring and have helped lead their team to a 7-1 record.

MasterMinds is operated in several parts of New York state by a private organization known as CYPRAS in conjunction with area BOCES programs. The program began at DeSales through the sponsorship of Peter Koch, a Geneva-area car dealer who is also on the school's board of directors.

Each MasterMinds match consists of two seven-minute halves, and is run by a moderator who asks questions and tabulates point totals. Four students represent each school at one time, with substitutions allowed. The moderator fires ques-

tions at a rapid pace, and the team that first buzzes in with the correct answer is given bonus questions with the chance for additional points.

As is the case with the popular game show "Jeopardy," questions cover a vast range of categories — sports, literature, history, religion, geography, science, current events. Yet the format is actually modeled after the old "GE College Bowl" television show. In fact, on a historical note, in 1961 a team from Hobart & William Smith Colleges — also in Geneva — earned the rare distinction of going unbeaten for the four-week period the team appeared on the nationally televised show.

Some MasterMinds questions would make people with Ph.D.s shiver in their shoes. And yet, there's precious little time to dwell on a response.

"You have to kind of balance between trying to guess and getting it wrong, or letting the other team get a chance to answer," said Nick Hollon, 17, a senior.

"One question might refer to English literature and then they'll be talking about last summer's blockbuster film," said Seth, 18, also a senior. "I just try to listen to key facts and key words. My brain will just start working like a computer with words, names, dates and events."

Seth, a parishioner of St. Mary's in Canandaigua, said his team leans on him especially for sports-related questions. "I'm a huge scholar in

baseball and I can pretty much hold my own in the four major sports," he remarked.

Nick, from St. Michael's Parish in Newark, noted that "I know more about astronomy, usually, and for some reason children's literature."

Along with team standings, individual records are also kept. Nick and Seth are the leaders of the league thus far, maintaining the No. 1 and No. 2 spots, respectively. Not bad considering that Nick and Seth were not even DeSales' top performers last year.

"I was very pleasantly surprised," Nick said of both the individual and team success, explaining that DeSales lost some key people from 2002-03.

In all, 13 DeSales students participate in MasterMinds. Remaining team members for varsity and JV are: senior — Amber Hagadorn; juniors — Peter Karski, Jasmine Staff and Liz Babiarez; sophomores — Samantha Hess and Ellen Quarmby; freshmen — Nicholas Baston, Erica Smith, Gavin Karski, Laura Corona and Laura Mantelli.

Riker, a math teacher at DeSales, said their accomplishments are made more impressive by the fact that DeSales constantly competes against schools with much larger enrollments.

"It's pretty much David versus Goliath. Sports are grouped by the size of the school, but MasterMinds are all on the same level," Riker said.



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