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## Acalanes High School team ranked third at CCC High School Mock Trials

Submitted by Jonathan Lance



Acalanes High School Mock Trial Team Photo provided

same evening's consolation match.

During seven Tuesday and Thursday evenings last month, 15 Contra Costa County high school Mock Trial teams, including those from Acalanes, Campolindo and Miramonte high schools, battled it out with each other inside the superior courthouse courtrooms of Martinez. As like their fellow Mock Trial Teams throughout the nation, the teams presented *People v. Davidson*, a criminal case involving first-degree murder and a pretrial argument on the Fourth Amendment.

This year's top four teams were ranked: 1) California, 2) Alhambra, 3) Acalanes, and 4) Monte Vista. The California High School team beat Alhambra High School Feb. 20 in the final round of Mock Trials, inside the Bray Courthouse, in Martinez. The final match was judged and scored by First District Court of Appeal, Division Five, Justice Terence Bruiniers, along with seven Bay Area attorneys, serving as Mock Trial scorers. Acalanes High School defeated Monte Vista High School during the

Honored guest Judge Mary Ann O'Malley was on hand to address the large crowd with accounts of this year's Mock Trials. "You proved that nothing substitutes for hard work. During the past month, many of my fellow judges who participated with your Mock Trials, said over, and over, and over again, how you guys were so much better than the professional attorneys they saw earlier in the day." O'Malley continued, "I've always been impressed with the participants of Mock Trials ... but this year, it was really something extra special with your outstanding preparation and delivery."

For numerous Mock Trial seasons, O'Malley has always been known for providing a very positive learning environment in her courtroom, taking and passing along useful notes, and giving motivational comments to every participant, after the trial concludes.

Most of the teams begin their Mock Trial training when they began the new school year - which makes Mock Trials one of the longest seasons of all the participating schools' sports and academic activities.

The purpose of the Mock Trial program is to teach students about the law and the workings of the legal system. To prepare, the students conducted legal research and received guidance on courtroom procedures from their schoolteachers and volunteer attorneys and judges, to acquire a working knowledge of the judicial system.

This year, an impressive 91 Bay Area practicing and retired attorneys, senior law students, and sworn judges volunteered their time to serve as Mock Trial Attorney Scorers and Judges. These volunteers represented judges from Bay Area Superior Courts, the California Bankruptcy Court, the California Supreme Court, and the California Appellate Court. Attorney Scorers included Bay Area attorneys from county District Attorney and Public Defender offices, the State Attorney General's Office, and the California Department of Justice. Also assisting, were nonprofit, public, private, and corporate attorneys. In addition, senior students from five Bay Area law schools lent a hand in scoring.

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