



Melody Hampton answers a question correctly against Medford. Despite winning both of their first round matches, Cassville's overall score was not enough to get them into the championship round.

Cassville has strong showing at Civics Games finals

Average score costs them championship slot

Last Friday, high school teams from across Wisconsin descended onto the state Capitol for the championships. Not in a sport, although some wore uniforms - it was for the first-ever Wisconsin Newspaper Association Civics Games.

Grant County was represented by two schools in the contest, Platteville and Cassville, which were the top teams to come out of the UW-Platteville regional in February.

Cassville was represented by senior Melody Hampton, juniors Ezra Okey and Kendra Rouse and sophomore Moria Kasper-Theisen. Platteville was represented by seniors Liam Rienicke, Alex Sonsalla, Spencer Olds, and junior Jacob Sherer.

First Cassville faced Ashwaubenon, and the contest was neck-and-neck up until the end, as the score was tied up until the final two questions, when Cassville edged out their opponents. Cassville took questions like what were the largest and smallest counties, based on population, which Ezra Okey successfully stated were Milwaukee and Menominee counties. They also took the question of tallest building in Madison, which is the State Capitol building where the competition took place.

Next up was Medford, and Team Captain Melody Hampton came out on fire with answering the first three questions correctly.

Travis Tranel, a trio of representatives that acted as judges for the competition, joked with Okey as he named only four of the five freedoms that are in the First Amendment, listing freedom of religion, speech, to assemble and petition, but missing the freedom of the press, ironic given the event was being put on by the Wisconsin Newspaper Association.

In an unfortunate twist, despite taking both opening

rounds, Cassville found themselves in the consolation bracket, as their average scores were not in the top four to move to the championship round.

In that bracket, Cassville faced Waunakee, and got a great start, answering questions like the impact of Act 10, and U.S. Senator Joe McCarthy was censured by his colleagues during the Red Scare of the 1950s.

The turning point was likely when Cassville missed Treasurer on the list of constitutional statewide officers, which Waunakee added to get the point, ultimately edging them out, 8-7.

Platteville took a loss in the first round, 12-6, to Madison Memorial, but stormed back to win the second round, 16-2, over Black River Falls, to punch their ticket into the championship round.

That created a three-way tie for first, and gave Platteville the third seed and a semifinal matchup with second-seed Northland Pines, while Memorial, which blew through the preliminary round like the 2015 Kentucky men's basketball team blew through the NCAA tournament to the Final Four, got the number one seed and a semifinal matchup with Muskego.

The 2015 Wildcats and 2019 Spartans had one thing in common — they both lost in the semifinals. Platteville, meanwhile, squeaked past Northland Pines to win the semifinal.

The clinching question for Platteville to win the title was what food was legalized in Wisconsin in 1967. Muskego answered the question wrong, selecting Spam, and Platteville came back with the correct answer: Colored margarine.

Before competition began Friday, Wisconsin Supreme Court Chief Justice Patience Roggensack provided opening remarks, addressing the importance of civics education in preparing young

adults for participation in the democratic process.

"Maintaining democracy requires that we be knowledgeable about democratic practices," Roggensack said. "We need to remember those practices that were required to begin our democracy and are required now to sustain it."

Gov. Tony Evers also stopped by mid-morning to commend the students.

"I believe that civics education is frankly more important than ever, and the newspaper association's work to make this opportunity available to the school districts in this state is a great step forward," Evers said.

"The fact of the matter is it's a much more complicated society to engage in civically. And having this competition is a good reminder that our young people are ready to be good citizens in the state of Wisconsin and in our country."

The WNA Foundation Board of Directors launched the Games in hopes of addressing a decline in civic education and engagement and inspiring a new generation of leaders to become involved in the political process.

Civics Games | SEE 12A