



South African Institute of Physics

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Media Release

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Learners excel in Physics

On Friday, 7 September 2018 the South African Institute of Physics (SAIP) will announce the South African Physics Olympiad (SAPhO) results to the media, the schools involved and the learners who excelled in the SAPhO exam.

Over 100 learners from 69 schools were selected from almost 30 000 learners who wrote the SA National Youth Science Olympiad (SANYSO) to write SAPhO 2018.

“South Africa, like every other country in the world, has amongst its youth, a latent talent that needs to be identified, nurtured and monitored, to allow them to reach their full potential”, says Case Rijdsdijk, SAPhO Convener. “There are talent scouts for potential sportsmen and women, why not for maths and sciences? After all, our future lies in education and a technologically based economy. Identifying future scientists and engineers is essential, and SAPhO is one pathway to success.”

Learners who do well in any other recognized science competition or Olympiad were invited to take part in SAPhO 2018 which was held on Monday, 13 August 2018. The results for SAPhO 2018 were most satisfactory with an average mark of 41%. The range of marks was from 76% to 21%. The organisers hope to increase the SAPhO footprint by attracting closer to over 300 learners to participate in the Olympiad next year; it might become an on-line Olympiad, in which case, more learners will get the opportunity to write SAPhO.

Matthew Johnstone, a grade 12 learner from York High School, George, Western Cape, was the top scoring learner in this year’s Olympiad with a score of 76%. He will receive a Gold Certificate, R2 000 and the SAIP Medal, which will be presented to him at the Annual SAIP Conference dinner at the University of Venda in July 2019.

His teacher, Mr. Koos van Tonder said that “Matthew is one of the bright young minds in South Africa. His understanding of scientific problems and analytic mindset is outstanding. Above all, he is willing to help other students and has the ability to explain complex substance in a way that makes it easy”.

Matthew himself said; “Physics is my passion. I want to study theoretical physics, not because of a job I can get, but because for as long as I can remember, I’ve had questions about the universe that only physics can answer”.

In second place was Graham Mitchell, a grade 12 learner from Pretoria Boys High, Gauteng, and last year’s Bronze Certificate winner, who won this year’s Silver Certificate with a score of 75% and R1 500.

He will also receive a Special Award Certificate for this remarkable achievement. Adri Wessels, from Curro Durbanville, who with 71%, scooped third place with a Bronze Certificate and R 1 000.

SAPhO will also award those who scored between 70% and 60% Merit Certificates for their achievements and those who scored between 59% and 50% will receive Honourable Mention Certificates. The remaining learners will receive Participation Certificates to acknowledge their participation in the Olympiad.

The SAPhO Convener, Case Rijdsdijk, has said that he is grateful to the Department of Science and Technology, DST, and the South African Agency for Science and Technology Advancement, SAASTA, for their support and funding. In addition, he also voiced his thanks to the SAIP Executive Officer, Mr. Brian Masara, and the Project manager, Ms. Ndanganeni Mahani for all their efforts in making SAPhO a success, and finally, Mr. Peter Waker from Interware, for Analysis of the results.

SAPhO is hosted by the South African Institute of Physics (SAIP) with the aim of identifying young Southern Africans with ability in Physics, in the hope that these students will continue to study Physics at tertiary institutions and Universities within South Africa.

SAIP is the voice for Physics in South Africa. It is a professional body for practising physicists in a variety of disciplines ranging from Cosmology to Medical Physics. It has several goals, one of which is raising the awareness of Physics and its importance to our daily lives; much of which can be achieved through education.

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