

Portland Tribune

Raleigh Hills student in full 'bee' mode for national contest

UPDATE • Connor Aberle advances to contest's semifinals

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Raleigh Hills home-schooler Connor Aberle used his full "bee" mode Wednesday to make it to the semifinals of the Scripps National Spelling Bee in Washington, D.C.

His black and yellow striped "lucky" rugby shirt complemented his black and yellow rubber bands that Aberle's orthodontist added to the boy's braces before the competition.

It might have helped. Aberle correctly spelled "mutual" during the spelling bee's second round. During Wednesday afternoon's third round, he successfully spelled "macroscian."

He now competes Thursday morning in the semifinal round with 40 other spellers from across the nation for a shot at the national finals Thursday night on primetime television.



Connor Aberle of Raleigh Hills wore his "lucky" rugby shirt Wednesday in the Scripps National Spelling Bee second round in Washington, D.C.

TRIBUNE FILE PHOTO

Aberle, a 13-year-old seventh-grader known as Speller No. 218 in the national contest, took the top prize in the Portland Tribune/Comcast Regional Spelling Bee. He was one of 42 students from schools (and home schools) in Multnomah, Clackamas and Washington counties who competed in the sixth-annual spelling bee at the Hollywood Theatre.

He also wore the same black and yellow lucky shirt during the regional contest.

Aberle takes classes at the Village Home Education Resource Center in Beaverton. When he's not in school, Aberle holds a green belt in Tae Kwon Do and studies the violin.

'I can do this'

The national spelling bee includes 293 students from across the country who took a first round test on Tuesday and then spelled words on stage Wednesday.

For each correct spelling in rounds two and three, spellers earn three points that count toward their preliminaries scores. After the third round, spelling bee officials will select 50 semifinalists based on their preliminary scores.

The semifinals begin early Thursday morning, with the championship round Thursday night.

The early rounds were broadcast on the Web on www.espn360.com. Thursday night's championship will be shown on ABC TV in primetime.

Aberle and his family arrived in Washington, D.C., Friday, May 22, and rested up for the competition before visiting several of the top museums and restaurants in the nation's capital.

This is Aberle's second trip to the national spelling bee contest. Last year, he placed third in the regional competition in the Bahamas, earning him a trip to sit in the audience of the national event. While they watched the contest, Connor turned to his mother, Shelley Aberle, and said, "I can do this."

So, beginning last fall, Aberle studied at least an hour a day using the Spell-it study guide in hopes of improving his skills. Early this year, he cranked his study up to four hours a day, according to his mother.

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