US TEAM PLACES SIXTH IN INTERNATIONAL MATH OLYMPIAD

(Washington, 7-21-88)....A team of six American high school students placed sixth in the 29th International Mathematical Olympiad (IMO) held July 15 and 16 in Canberra, Australia, with five of the team members receiving silver medals.

The Americans had a team score of 153 out of a possible 252.   Ahead of them were teams from the Soviet Union (217), China and Romania (tied for 2nd with scores of 201), West Germany (174) and Vietnam (166).   In all, 49 nations and 268 students participated in the Olympiad.

The Olympiad teams competed by working on solutions to six challenging mathematical problems in two, 4 1/2-hour sessions.

"The US team turned in a strong performance earning 5 silver medals and a bronze on what was an unusually difficult set of problems," said US team coach Gerald Heuer in an interview immediately after learning the results.   "While we are somewhat disappointed at placing sixth, we have to admire the superb scores of the top five countries and we look forward to a stronger showing by the US team in West Germany next year."

The IMO judges awarded individual first, second, and third prizes to deserving team members.   Five US team members received second prizes: Jordan Ellenberg of Potomac, Maryland, and John Woo of Pepper Pike, Ohio, each only one point short of the gold with scores of 31 out of a possible 42, Samuel Kutin of Old Westbury, New York (26), Tal Kubo of Brookline, Massachusetts (24), and Eric Wepsic of Boston, Massachusetts (23).   Hubert Bray of Houston, Texas, received a Bronze medal (18).

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The US team was chosen on the basis of performance in the United States of America Mathematical Olympiad (USAMO), held this year on April 26, and on an evaluation of their work at a rigorous 4-week Training Session. The winners of the 1988 USAMO, including US team members Bray, Ellenberg, Kubo, and Wepsic, were honored on June 7 at the National Academy of Sciences and the US Department of State in Wasington, D.C.

The Olympiad Training Session was held from June 8 to July 6 at the US Naval Academy at Annapolis. The US team members will return from Australia on July 21.

The Mathematical Olympiad activities are sponsored by seven national associations in the mathematical sciences with arrangements made by the Mathematical Association of America. Financial support was provided by IBM, the Army Research Office, the Office of Naval Research, and Hewlett-Packard, and the Matilda R. Wilson Fund.

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A sample problem from the 28th International Mathematical Olympiad held July 9-20, 1988.

If a,b, and $(a^2 + b^2)/(ab + 1)$ are positive integers, show that the last of these must be a perfect square.

Sponsors of the USA Mathematical Olympiad and the US team are:

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