



# BULL & BEAR

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## MM what? ICC!

*Putting McGill on the case competition map*

MARY ANNE HE

The seventh annual McGill Management International Case Competition (MMICC) took place from March 20-24. Welcoming eleven schools from all over the world, MMICC has recently gained recognition as one of the top international case competitions. The National University of Singapore took first place honours, while Simon Fraser University and the University of Washington rounded out the podium with second and third, respectively.

An entirely student-run event, MMICC 2007 was co-chaired by Peter Chow, U3 international management and finance, and Jean-Louis Nguyen, U2 international business. Peter, Jean-Louis, and their team of nine committee members have been working diligently since September 2006 to plan the competition.

“Our committee really represented the McGill name well by showing dedication, leadership and above all, an inclusive spirit during the competition. There was an air of true teamwork throughout the year and I can honestly say that there was no weak link, and that it was the best team I have ever been a part of,” affirmed Chow.

MMICC is characterized by a balance between social and academic events. Participants are given the opportunity to network with other students and experience Montreal while many other case competitions still hold the traditional and mundane ‘do case, go home’ approach.

The competition started on Tuesday, March 20, with the Chubb Insurance Cocktail held in the Bronfman sixth floor lounge where participants mingled over wine and finger-foods. After some quick speeches and a presentation from Chubb Insurance, the teams headed back to the hotel to change for a night of pool and karaoke at Trix Bar et Billards.

Each team was assigned an ambassador who acted as their Montreal guide and conference FAQ section. Because the executive committee was often occupied with the logistics of the event, the ambassadors ensured that every team made the most of their time at MMICC.

Wednesday, March 21, began with Professor Donovan’s case briefing where the rules and regulations of the case were spelled out in detail. MMICC tries to level the playing field for all teams by ensuring that every team has access to the same tools and information. One rule that differentiates MMICC from other case competitions is the “passive use of internet.” No site that requires a login or password can be used, meaning that schools with access to more extensive databases cannot use them to gain an advantage over other teams.

The case briefing was followed by the Amazing Race, a scavenger hunt that allowed out-of-town participants to see the city’s sights. With twelve clues that led to locations ranging from the statue of James McGill to Chinatown,



participants had to take creative pictures to prove they had found the location. Prizes were awarded for fastest time, most creative pictures and most bonus points.

After some much needed rest, the participants attended the Opening Ceremonies held at the Pointe-à-Callière Museum in Old Port. After official portraits were taken, MMICC was given a multimedia show and short tour of the museum. During dinner, the order of the case presentations was drawn by random lots and participants appreciated that the speeches were kept to a minimum. Much more entertaining were the creative, and sometimes incomprehensible, team names and cheers that had been carefully concocted.

“It seemed perfectly fitting for us to host the opening ceremonies for the first time at Pointe-à-Callière Museum. This initiative was part of our efforts to showcase Montreal as a unique city, and to make our guests feel as though MMICC is also a unique case competition. We were pleased to hear from the participants and representatives of HSBC Canada that they were impressed to attend such a formal and high-profile event at the birthplace of Montreal,” Nguyen explained.

The day of snow-tubing at Mont Avila on Thursday, March 22, was the highlight of the social activities. Spirits were high despite the occasional torrents of rain. For many students from warmer climates, snow was a rare and refreshing experience. After the morning of repeated runs down the mountain, many were cold and wet and the wait at the Sugar Shack seemed longer than it was. Despite this, participants enjoyed the chance for a traditional Canadian meal.

After returning to the Marriott Residence Inn on Peel, participants had to change quickly for the HSBC Cocktail at the Sofitel. Being the title sponsor, HSBC took this opportunity to explain the benefits of a career with HSBC and network with students. Mr. Lindsay Gordon, the President and CEO of HSBC Canada, attended with a dozen of his colleagues.

After a full night sleep, participants were both nervous and excited about the main event of MMICC, the case itself! On Friday March 23, the teams picked up the case in the assigned order drawn on Wednesday. As soon as they received the case, they had exactly 24 hours before their first presentation. The McGill team was represented by Amy Boyle, U3 strategy and IB, Heather Kaptein, U2 marketing and strategy, Maxime Rivet, U3 marketing and finance, and Jean Zhang, U3 accounting and finance.

MMICC is known for not using the traditional system of dividing the schools into pools. With the pool system, your chance of advancing to the final round depends on who is drawn into your pool, as only the winner of each pool advances. Professor Donovan explains, “You could be second best and not make the final round.”

There is no pool system at MMICC. Instead, the ten judges are divided into two groups. Each team presents twice, once to each group of judges. As a result, every judge will have seen every team’s presentation. This year’s judges were from various backgrounds including companies like Freedom 55 Financial, Deloitte & Touche, L’Actualite Medicale, McKesson Canada, and National Bank Financial. Previous years have seen judges heavily skewed towards the finance area.

Selected by Professor Robert David and Professor Donovan, the case concerned Shimano Corp. and the high-end bike industry. Shimano is a Japanese manufacturer of high-performance mechanical parts for bicycles used by professional cyclists for racing. Shimano currently holds 80% of the market share, but has been faced with stagnant growth in recent years. Teams faced the challenge of devising a strategy to give Shimano a new competitive edge.

The first team presented at 9am on Saturday March 24. The morning presentations went smoothly, but a miscommunication resulted in the disqualification of Georgetown University. However, they demonstrated excellent sportsmanship by completing their afternoon presentation despite the circumstances.

After the completion of the presentations, judges gave feedback to each team individually and then proceeded to determine the winners. This process has taken between one and four hours in the past, with this year lying somewhere in the middle.

The mood at the closing ceremonies at the St. James Club was tense as teams eagerly awaited the results.

With lengthy thank you and farewell speeches, teams wondered if the big announcement would ever be made. Finally, the outcome was met with mixed reactions as some teams were ecstatically surprised and others deeply disappointed.



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The after-party at Orchid was the last chance for participants to revel in the MMICC magic. Regardless of whether they placed or not, every team went home with great memories of Montreal and MMICC. Although they had no idea at the time, there would be numerous stories of accidentally missed flights and sincerely missed friends.

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