

Mackay Muckers to pan gold for glory in international student competition

By Jennifer Durnan

Reno will soon be busting at the seams with 49ers and they won't be the football-playing kind. Old-time mining will be revived at the University of Nevada, Reno when teams from across the United States and Australia meet to compete in the 27th Annual International Intercollegiate Mining Competition, beginning at 8:30 a.m. April 1 at Rancho San Rafael Park, adjacent to the University. The competition will run through April 2 and culminate with a 6 p.m. banquet at the Silver Legacy Hotel-Casino in downtown Reno.

The winning team will muck, pan, jack leg and hand steel their way to victory, among seven events that reflect traditional mining methods.

Mucking is a traditional method of cleaning out a blast round. Before the advent of air- and diesel-powered loading equipment, the only way to load broken rock onto an ore car was by hand. Student muckers will run an empty car down a track and back to the start, mucking two tons of "ore" as fast as they can.

In other events, students will pan for gold, drill shot holes in a block of concrete using an air-powered drill, use hammers and steels to drill holes, saw 6 inch by 6 inch timbers with bow saws, build and tear down a 15 foot section of rail as quickly as possible, and use an engineer's transit and steel tape to survey a point 300 feet away.

The competition will be split into men's, women's, coed and alumni divisions. The University of Nevada, Reno's Mackay Muckers will vie to win the title of best mining team against teams from the University of Arizona; Montana Tech; University of Missouri, Rolla; Western Australia School of Mines; Colorado School of Mines; University of Alaska, Fairbanks; and Virginia Tech.