

72nd Scripps National Spelling Bee

The **72nd Scripps National Spelling Bee** was held in Washington, D.C. on June 2–3, 1999, sponsored by the E.W. Scripps Company.

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Winners

Fourteen-year-old Nupur Lala, from Tampa, Florida won the competition by correctly spelling the word "logorrhea".^[2] Notably, the 1999 bee was covered by the Jeffrey Blitz documentary Spellbound.^[3]

Second place went to David Lewandowski, a 14-year old speller from Schererville, Indiana who placed 39th in the prior year's bee, and who misspelled "opsimath".^[1] Third-place was a tie between 11-year old George Abraham Thampy of Maryland Heights, Missouri (who would win the next year) who missed "kirtle", and 13-year old April DeGideo of Ambler, Pennsylvania who missed "terrene".^[1]

Competition and new rules

There were 249 spellers this year, ages 9–15. Thirty-three were eliminated in the first round, which began on June 2, followed by 10 in the second round, and 36 in the third round.^[4] Fifty-five spellers were eliminated in the fourth round, and 105 contestants made it to the second day of competition.^{[1][5]}

A new policy this year tried to encourage faster spelling, with 90 seconds for easier words on the first day, and two minutes for harder words in the later rounds, though the judges had some flexibility in applying the limits. The policy was adopted after reviewing time and round statistics for six prior years and finding a trend of spellers using more time.^[4]

Although Jamaica's contestant had won the prior year, the second student outside the United States to ever win the bee, Jamaica was excluded from this year's bee under a new rule that all qualifying bees could not occur before February 1, to allay concerns that some spellers could get a greater head start on preparing for the national bee. This caused a fair amount of controversy, with public figure such as Jesse Jackson calling the change "exclusionary".^{[4][6][7]}

Lala won \$10,000 and other prizes for her first place showing. Lewandowski received \$5,000.^[1]

See also

- *Spellbound* (2002 film), based on the 1999 Bee.

72nd Scripps National Spelling Bee	
Date	June 2–3, 1999
Location	Grand Hyatt Washington in Washington, D.C.
Winner	Nupur Lala
Age	14
Residence	Tampa, Florida
Sponsor	<i>The Tampa Tribune</i>
Sponsor location	Tampa, Florida
Winning word	logorrhea
No. of contestants	249 ^[1]
Pronouncer	Alex Cameron
Preceded by	71st Scripps National Spelling Bee
Followed by	73rd Scripps National Spelling Bee

References

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