

People

Battle Ground welders sweep competition

Students from Battle Ground High School took the top five places in a regional skills welding competition held March 1 at Clark College.

Blake Byers won the competition, followed by Richard Barnes, Cody Strong, Kyle Boden and Tim Walker. All are students of Jim Drake.

Drake said the competition involves reading blue prints and then creating the described project.

Students need to be prepared to perform oxygen-acetylene fuel cutting, metal inert gas welding, tungsten inert gas welding, and shielded metal arc welding with a stick electrode. Certain types of welding are used on various metals, he said.

For more than 15 years, Pro Tech, a Hazel Dell company, has provided the project materials, supplies and blue prints for the contest at a cost of about \$700 annually. Dave Wager at Pro Tech said the company is happy to be involved in the contest which produces skilled welders, some of whom have become Pro Tech employees. Pro Tech also supplies contest judges.

Drake credited other area companies with supporting the



BLAKE BYERS, a Battle Ground High School senior, took first place in last week's welding competition held at Clark College. Battle Ground students swept the top five places in the contest. Standing are Kyle Boden and Richard Barnes.

welding and machining competition with prizes, including Dan's Tractor, Elite Collision, Battle Ground NAPA, Dick's Tire Factory, Les Schwab, and Punk's Mufflers, all of Battle Ground.

Cody Beebe of Prairie High School finished ninth in the welding category, with Ryan Zika, also of Prairie, eleventh.

Battle Ground finished first as a team, followed by Centralia High School, Evergreen, Mountain View, Prairie and Washougal.

Drake said this was the first year his students have swept the welding competition, although the school has taken four of the top five places in past years.

Derek Heugel and Brian Herwi, both graduates of the Battle Ground High School welding program, now own their own companies in welding-related fields, said Drake, who has taught at Battle Ground for 28 years and tutored more than 5,000 welding students.

The regional skills competition also included a machining category. Three students from Mountain View High School--Camden Thrasher, Alex Korkokov and Colin Lease--were the top finishers in machining.