Inter-America: Adventist youth from The Bahamas wins territory-wide Bible Bowl

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Hours after he was declared this year's Inter-America's Bible bowl winner, Waylon Johnson of the Atlantic Caribbean church region, was still in a state of disbelief. The three-foot-tall trophy, the first place medal, the $8,000 dollar scholarship, and the iPad2 he earned in this year's competition reminded him of his journey to get to the finals. That journey, began in 2008, made his last-minute victory all the more shocking.

Johnson competed alongside 13 other top winners from throughout the Inter-American Division (IAD) territory in the Bible bowl final competition. Seven finalists were absent due to travel visa issues. The special event was held at the Eliezer Melendez Vazquez Youth Center in San Juan, Puerto Rico, on Sabbath, Dec. 10, 2011. The IAD Bible Bowl is an initiative which began more than seven years ago as an annual competition which has inspired thousands of youth throughout the territory to study their Bibles for a chance to compete locally, regionally, and division-wide.

Johnson, 27, from Grand Bahama Island is the first winner to grab the Bible bowl title from among the four English-speaking church regions in the IAD.

"Every step of the way has been a surprise," said Johnson. Johnson confessed he was very nervous as the first block of questions popped out on his laptop.

"He went from second place, to fourth, to sixth," said Pastor Al Powell, youth ministries director for the church in the Atlantic Caribbean Union, who quietly observed the list of results displayed during the live program.

Finalists not only had to answer 35 questions correctly but in the least amount of time to remain at the top.

When Powell had the opportunity, like the rest of the youth directors, to go near their finalist during a question to offer support, Johnson told him he was nervous and had delayed in answering. "I just told him to forget about the time and just focus on getting the answers right," said Powell. "I had full confidence in him because I had witnessed his potential before."

Moving from the sixth spot to the first spot meant Johnson had to get the last set of questions right and faster than his five fellow competitors ahead of him. He ended with a top score of 165 points with a time of six minutes.

For Johnson, beating the odds was a surprise yet it's another one of his many experiences to get to victory. Johnson missed his regional competition weeks ago after he was stranded at the airport for seven hours. The competition went on without him but when he finally arrived, he was able to take the test and beat his three other competitors, according to Powell.

With only one month and three weeks of studying this year's assigned Books of Luke and Acts, Johnson said his experiences have only made him love the Scriptures more.