

WIPP mine rescue teams win top honors

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CARLSBAD — If Buddy Webb were a gambling man, he probably would have cleaned-up last week during the bi-annual National Metal/Non-Metal Mine Rescue Contest in Las Vegas, Nev.

That's because the odds-makers probably would have given Webb, training coordinator for the WIPP mine rescue teams since 1985, 10-1 odds on the unlikely outcome of the 2000 contest.

Not only did the Blue team's Joe Baca repeat as the national champion in the benchman's contest for the Drager BG-4 apparatus, his counterpart on the Silver team, Richard "Stik" West, was crowned the national champion benchman for the Drager BG-174 apparatus. The benchman competition tests the skills required to maintain and repair self-contained breathing apparatus used by team members in areas where air is not breathable.

The WIPP squads also fared well in the team compe-

tion. The Blue team, which won the national championship in 1994, narrowly missed out on its first team title of the new millennium, finishing second to OCI of Green River, Wyo. The two teams were separated by only six points in the final team standings.

The Silver team, meanwhile, also performed admirably, finishing fifth overall.

The icing on the cake was Webb's induction into the National Mine Rescue Hall of Fame.

Mine rescue competitions are designed to test the knowledge of miners who might be called upon to respond to a real mine emergency. The contest requires six-member teams to solve a hypothetical mine emergency problem — such as a fire, explosion or cave-in — while judges rate them on their adherence to mine rescue procedures and how quickly they complete specific tasks. Thirty-one teams from the United States and seven international teams competed in the three-day contest.

2000 National Mine Rescue Contest

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usmra_rob
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