The Olympic Games’ iconic symbol of five intertwined rings has nothing on the OCA Estimating Competition, as the association’s annual event has also gone full circle. Symbolically showing how the theme behind the OCA competition is taking college students 360 degrees by introducing them to the world of “real” project estimating and preparing them for careers in heavy-highway construction, the 2014 event featured just that—a former competition participant who now as a construction professional played a major role in this year’s featured project.

Coinciding with the world’s greatest winter athletes being on display at the Olympic Games in Sochi, Russia, 60 of Ohio’s top college students in civil engineering and construction management were vying for team honors at OCA’s Estimating Competition, held February 14 and 15 at The Hilton Columbus at Easton.

Since 2001, OCA has organized a two-day competition where student teams produce a bid of an actual project that has been constructed by an association member. The teams have approximately eight hours to perform the project’s take-off and pricing of individual items of work, and scheduling of specific activities and work methods in submitting their bids. The teams are also judged on how they answer specific contract questions and how they perform during their oral presentations.

Brittany Amy, a project manager with the Beaver Excavating Company and who served as the project presenter at this year’s competition for faculty members and students, was a competitor herself only five years ago. The University of Toledo graduate, with a degree in construction engineering technology, is a two-time veteran of the OCA Estimating Competition. Roughly three years after joining Beaver Excavating, Amy worked on the project featured at this year’s competition—Prospect Industrial Park No. 1 in western Stark County (see featured project, page 43).

“Brittany went through the competition twice, and here she is on the other side of the table actually presenting. So there are some success stories coming out of our competition,” said Great Lakes Construction Company’s George Palko, who served as the competition’s moderator.

Along with Amy, fellow OCA members who formerly competed in the event and this year served as a team advisor were Great Lakes Construction’s Matt Blesi,
who assisted Cleveland State University; John R. Jurgensen Company’s Kate Holden, who worked with the University of Cincinnati; and Shelly & Sands’ Nate Smith, who assisted Ohio University.

“To me, it is very, very rewarding to see them come back and help the other students,” said OCA Director of Member Services and Education Rachel Sirca, who served as the competition’s co-organizer with Joe Prus of Prus Construction Co. “They understand what it’s like to be there, to be standing up in front of their peers, in front of faculty, in front of the judges, and the stress that goes on behind it …

Amy said that being back at the competition brought with it a lot of memories. “When I went around to the rooms and delivered quotes to the colleges, it took me back five years ago being in the same situation.” She recalled how she felt as a student competitor: “Stress,” quickly adding, “but it was a good stress.” However, she remembers how that anxiousness dissipated once the teams submit their bids. “You feel a great sense of accomplishment and sense of achievement when the estimates are turned in to the judges,” she said. “You finished your goal, and whether you were in last place or first place, just the whole experience being down here and talking with other gentlemen who have been in the business for 40 years, it gives you a realistic idea, even though you’re in college, about what it would be like to do this for your career.”

Located in western Stark County in Perry Township, near the City of Massillon and Village of Navarre, this year’s OCA Estimating Competition’s featured project was constructed by Beaver Excavating Co.

The project was bid and awarded in August 2011 and work on the 12-month project began in October 2011. The Prospect Industrial Park No. 1 was one of five projects in the state that year to receive a grant by the Ohio Department of Development (ODOD) as a Job Ready Site. The project entailed, along with earthwork and drainage, the construction of a 1,400-foot road extension and a 250-foot-long bridge over the Wheeling & Lake Erie Railway and Fohl Creek.

In preparing their bids the student teams had to estimate various portions of the project’s demolition, earthwork, pavement, erosion and sediment, bridge items and incidentals. “The judges gave the students an entire project to tackle this year as opposed to components of a project in years past,” said George Palko of The Great Lakes Construction Co., who served as the competition’s moderator. “The students were forced to utilize time management skills, delegating and organization … The great thing about this program is the students got a real-life experience.”

Although the bid items accounted for just more than half of the competition’s scoring, five teams submitted bids within $250,000 of Beaver Excavating’s actual winning bid of $1,896,670.25.
The teams from Ohio State University, University of Cincinnati and University of Akron seemingly held their stress levels in check the best among the 10 schools, as they finished first, second and third, respectively. Led by students Obada Alsagga, Austin Davis, Dan Eschliman, Troy Nissen, Mike Oeters and Caleb Smith, the Buckeyes captured their third team title – and second in three years. The Ohio State team was led by Team Advisor Ken Kerns of EMH&T and OCA Advisor Andrew Norman of Kokosing Construction Co.

“The great thing about this program is the students got a real-life experience,” Palko said. “… The 60 students who participated now have an experience that they can market to contractors as they seek employment either as a co-op student or full-time employee.”

Amy, like other estimating event veterans now working in the industry, is proof of the competition’s goals. “As a student competing in the competition, you get a good feel about real-life circumstances,” she said. “It really helped me get a foot in the door to get a career going.” Thanks in part to her participation in the 2007 competition, Amy received a co-op with Great Lakes Construction. “Just having the field experience at Great Lakes really helped out with estimating, learning how to build crews and develop good numbers for bid items.” Following her second year at the OCA Estimating Competition, which ironically featured a project built by her future employer, Amy earned a full-time position at Beaver.

Further proof that life sometimes takes us full circle, one of Amy’s professional highlights has been advancing into a project manager’s position at Beaver Excavating. In that role, she had a chance to work on a project that included her father, a laborer in the Lorain County Union Hall. “He and I got to work together before he retired,” she said.

For Amy, coming back to the 2014 OCA Estimating Competition was like going full circle. “… Even though it took me five years to get back here to the competition, I’m still passionate about its work.”

‘EYES OF THE BEHOLDER
Ohio State University’s team title in the 2014 OCA Estimating Competition is the third for the Buckeyes, which ties it with the University of Akron as the only three-time champion in the event.

2014 Ohio State University
2013 University of Cincinnati
2012 Ohio State University
2011 Cleveland State University
2010 University of Akron
2009 University of Akron
2008 Ohio Northern University
2007 Ohio State University
2006 University of Dayton
2005 Cleveland State University
2004 Bowling Green State University
2003 University of Akron
2002 University of Cincinnati
2001 University of Dayton

OCA MEMBER PARTICIPATION

Team Advisors

Judges
Dave Guzzo, Double Z Construction Co.
Andy Leffler, Shelly & Sands Inc.
Bart Moody, Kokosing Construction Co.
Rob Steier, John R. Jurgensen Co.
Ted Wellman, Beaver Excavating Co.

Moderator
George Palko, The Great Lakes Construction Co.

Program Presenter
Brittany Amy, Beaver Excavating Co.

Competition Sponsors
Crestline Paving & Excavating Co. Inc.
Kokosing Construction Co.

Job Fair
The Great Lakes Construction Co.
Kokosing Construction Co.
E.S. Wagner Co.
Tom and J.D.,

I just wanted to pass along this email that I received from a former estimating competition student. While OCA can thank you a hundred times for all of your efforts in working with the students, I feel pretty sure that it is notes like this that really mean the most.

Thank you both.

Rachel Sirca  
Director, Member Services and Education  
Ohio Contractors Association

Rachel,

I am a graduate of Youngstown State University and currently a project engineer with StateLine Paving (A Lindy Paving Company). Over the years at YSU, I participated in three OCA Estimating Competitions (2009, 2010 and 2011). First I want to thank the OCA and all members for putting this competition on and assisting students before, during and after with the knowledge of heavy-highway construction. During my academic years I was fortunate to have mentors like Tom Metzinger, J.D. Badyak, Kenny Day and Frank Obhof. These four guys gave me knowledge and a better understanding of the construction field.

StateLine Paving and I would like to give back and assist with the Estimating Competition in some way. I was wondering if you would be able to provide me information with the Estimating Competition.

Thank you,

Jarrod J. Satmare  
Project Engineer  
StateLine Paving