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Richard K. Taylor  
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Note: This year's luncheon for winners will be held on campus May 14 at noon. Speaker will be Prof. Ralph Blackmore, the game's founder

WATERLOO, Ont. (CP) -- Wilfrid Laurier University's school of business and economics has discovered a vast, untapped pool of raw capitalist talent in Canada -- the high school student.

The school made this discovery through its Stock Market Game, created 13 years ago by Prof. Ralph Blackmore, former financial editor at the Globe and Mail, as a simulated stock investment exercise for his business students on campus.

Since then the game has spread to 165 high schools in Ontario. Next year, the game is to be offered to high schools across Canada.

The game is much like Monopoly. Instead of using a board, dice, tokens and cards, however, the players use the financial pages of the Toronto Globe and Mail, transaction sheets and Laurier's large computer system.

The goal: To make the biggest profits over a 12-week period for a top prize of \$250 plus a trophy.

This spring, 6,000 high school students--operating in teams of three to five--competed to make the biggest stock-market killings with imaginary start-up capital of \$100,000 per team. And in the past, profits have been substantial. A team in Beamsville, Ont., for instance, once ended up with a "portfolio" of \$947,325.

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"It familiarizes them with the mechanics of the way the stock market operates," explains Prof. James McCutcheon, the game's supervisor. At the same time, he adds, the potential university students become aware of Laurier's school of business and economics.

"Not only are they bright enough to make the investment decisions; they're also bright enough to come up with flaws in our computer program," McCutcheon reveals. "Half the battle in the first two or three years was to close the little loopholes they found in the program."

This abundance of latter-day Rockerfellers hasn't gone unnoticed by Canada's moguls of big business and high finance. Bell Canada and the Toronto Stock Exchange, the game's sponsors, are holding talks with WLU officials to make the game available to schools in other provinces sometime in 1983.

McCutcheon says WLU is negotiating with Bell for the use of the company's Datapac data-relay network which would allow schools to keypunch transactions directly to the WLU computer on their telephones, thus bypassing the mails. And the TSE has increased its financial backing to \$25,000 a year to defray annual operating costs totalling about \$30,000.

"They haven't put any strings on the money other than to say it is to be used for the purpose of expanding the boundaries of the game," he says.

Two competitions are held each year--one in the fall and the other in spring.

The teams "invest" in stocks or options listed on the TSE, basing their trades on price quotations in The Globe and Mail. They submit their buy and sell orders through their teacher who mails them weekly to WLU.

The school of business and economics then keypunches the transactions into Laurier's computer system deducting regular brokers' commissions.

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The average parent who grew up believing a bank account was a sufficiently aggressive way to invest paper route profits might be overwhelmed by the mind-bending forms of investment. But McCutcheon says the teen-agers handle short-selling, trading in margined stocks and buying and exercising put and call options or straddle combinations with ease and panache.

High school teacher Jim Johnstone of Waterloo, whose students won a provincial championship in 1980 and a regional championship in 1981, says he makes participation a requirement in his Grade 11 business classes (average enrolment: 70) because "students need a realistic atmosphere...Motivation is the most critical aspect of teaching.

Johnstone's efforts have paid off.

He says more than 15 Grade 12 students a year want to repeat the game on their own time. But the heavy amount of paperwork forces him to limit the number to six, so he selects those with the greatest interest and aptitude and turns the remainder away.

"Because it's so realistic, they get very involved," he says.