

## 2016 SCRIPPS NATIONAL SPELLING BEE

### SPELLERS CONTINUING IN THE FINALS



#### **Speller No. 13, Cooper Komatsu**

Los Angeles Spelling Bee Collaborative, Los Angeles, California  
Age 13, 8th grade  
School: Culver City Middle School  
Hometown: Los Angeles, California, United States of America

Cooper has studied Japanese since he was a kindergartener, and likes how it connects him to his ancestors' culture. He has a passion for geography, maps and discovering new places. Social studies and math are his favorite subjects. In his free time, Cooper participates on his school's cross country team, on the Lego Robotics team, and in Boy Scouts of America. He is a Los Angeles Clippers fan, but he loves the Los Angeles Lakers too. The best board game, in Cooper's opinion, will always be Scrabble. After a fourth-place finish last year, Cooper and his teammate, playing as "Lucky 13," won the North American School Scrabble Championship tournament out of 85 teams from across the United States and Canada. Cooper tied for 11th place in the 2015 Scripps National Spelling Bee, and his grandfather Robert Rosenberg competed in the Bee in 1955.



#### **Speller No. 16, Snehaa Ganesh Kumar**

*The Sacramento Bee*, Sacramento, California  
Age 13, 8th grade  
School: Folsom Middle School  
Hometown: Folsom, California, USA

Snehaa started off her spelling bee journey as a kindergartner competing against 5th graders, placing second in a Spanish language spelling bee. She went on to win the school Spanish spelling bee for four consecutive years. She was the Central Valley Regional Spelling Bee finalist in 2011, placed 5th in 2012, 7th in 2013, 2nd in 2014, and won the title in 2015 and 2016. She also claimed the title of school champion in the National Geographic Bee in 2015 and 2016, and competes in Academic Pentathlon. Outside of academic competition, Snehaa is a commissioner in the Sacramento County Youth Commission and is an active participant in the National Junior Honor Society. She has been taking dance lessons for five years in jazz, contemporary and ballet. Snehaa tied for fourth place in the 2015 Scripps National Spelling Bee.



#### **Speller No. 20, Rutvik Gandhasri**

KPIX-TV & KCBS Radio AM & FM, San Francisco, California  
Age 12, 7th grade  
School: Chaboya Middle School  
Hometown: San Jose, California, United States of America

A voracious reader, Rutvik names Fablehaven as his favorite book series. He also loves playing racing games on his Xbox One. Not just an indoor kid, Rutvik also enjoys biking, hiking and running in nature. His favorite hobby is to build Lego Technic sets, and the biggest set he's built is the 42009 Mobile Crane MK II, which has 2,606 pieces and took about two days of nonstop building to complete. He spreads his passion by volunteering for Lego Robotics classes at his elementary school and at local underprivileged schools. Rutvik loves to challenge his palate with spicy Indian, Mexican, Chinese and Middle Eastern food, and he's proud to be a lifelong vegetarian. He hopes to attend Harvard University and be a neurosurgeon, and also create his own automobile company. A natural comedian, Rutvik likes telling jokes and making people laugh.

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**Speller No. 30, Sylvie Lamontagne**

*The Denver Post*, Denver, Colorado  
Age 13, 8th grade  
School: Creighton Middle School  
Hometown: Lakewood, Colorado, United States

If Sylvie isn't busy spelling, you can find her reading Harry Potter books. Her favorite Harry Potter book is Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix, and her favorite movie is Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 1. Her other hobbies include dance and listening to Twenty One Pilots, her favorite band, to which she has trouble assigning a genre. Once she is done with spelling, she wants to try coaching other spellers or learning to play the ukulele. Sylvie tied for ninth place in the 2015 Scripps National Spelling Bee.



**Speller No. 38, Sreeniketh Vogoti**

*The Florida Times-Union*, Jacksonville, Florida  
Age 13, 7th grade  
School: Fruit Cove Middle School  
Hometown: Saint Johns, Florida, United States of America

Sreeniketh discovered his love for spelling when he enrolled in a local spelling bee and won the gold medal with close to zero preparation. However, his interests are eclectic. He found his love for chemistry, his first area of passion, in the 2nd grade, and he can now sing the elements of the periodic table in order! At about the same time, he also realized he loved math. He understands and appreciates fundamental concepts of algebra, geometry, trigonometry and calculus. He ranked 10th in the United States in the International Math Kangaroo competition in 4th grade, and 18th in 6th grade. His latest passion is physics, and he loves reading Richard Feynman's famous lectures. A self-taught and still-learning computer programmer, Sreeniketh is fascinated by JavaScript. He dabbles as a part-time author and has written some prose and short stories, but he dreams of becoming a scientist or researcher in the future. In his spare time, Sreeniketh enjoys playing clarinet and watching television programs that feature humor, banter and lots of puns -- his favorite is Phineas and Ferb. He also enjoys tennis, chess, swimming and carom billiards.



**Speller No. 74, Jashun Paluru**

*Administrator Assistance*, Brookston, Indiana  
Age 11, 6th grade  
School: Battle Ground Middle School  
Hometown: West Lafayette, Indiana, U.S.A.

Jashun plays French horn in his school's band, which he thinks helps him stay focused. Because his goal is to be a neurosurgeon, Jashun names Dr. Ben Carson as his role model. He spends much of his free time listening to music and reading, and his favorite books are probably those in The Enemy series by Charlie Higson. Jashun is on his school's Mathcounts team, and he recently qualified for the state competition.

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### **Speller No. 114, Mitchell Robson**

*The Daily Item*, Lynn, Massachusetts  
Age 14, 8th grade  
School: St. John's Preparatory School  
Hometown: Marblehead, Massachusetts, United States

Mitchell loves to play basketball and flag football, and plays in leagues for both sports. He is very interested in many fields of science, such as quantum mechanics, molecular biology and electrical engineering, and he also has experience in seven programming languages. An avid athlete, he won his school-wide AMC 8 and Mathcounts competitions. Mitchell is proud to have been recognized by the Johns Hopkins Center for Talented Youth several times. A big fan of rap and hip-hop, he frequently listens to artists like Eminem, Lil Wayne and Drake while he studies. He is an active member of his Boy Scouts of America troop, and he currently holds the rank of Second Class. Mitchell previously competed in the Scripps National Spelling Bee in 2014 and 2015.



### **Speller No. 152, Jairam Hathwar**

Corning Rotary Club, Corning, New York  
Age 13, 7th grade  
School: The Alternative School for Math and Science  
Hometown: Painted Post, New York, USA

Jairam is fan of American professional golfer Jordan Spieth. In addition to golf, Jairam follows politics and elections devoutly. He also travels to India annually during the summer, and this year he is looking forward to seeing Mount Everest. At school, Jairam is especially interested in math and social studies. He hopes to attend Harvard University to study medicine someday so that he can become a physician. Jairam's brother Sriram competed in the Scripps National Spelling Bee in 2008, 2009, 2011 (tied for 6th place), 2013 (tied for 3rd place) and 2014 (co-champion). Jairam tied for 22nd place in the Scripps National Spelling Bee in 2015, and this year he hopes to improve his final standing.



### **Speller No. 229, Smrithi Upadhyayula**

*The Dallas Morning News*, Dallas, Texas  
Age 13, 8th grade  
School: Coppell Middle School West  
Hometown: Coppell, Texas, USA

In addition to spelling, Smrithi is interested in writing. She has written a book and is currently working on the sequel. Her favorite food is macaroni and cheese, and she likes it best with scrambled eggs. She's learning Indian classical music, and really likes to swim, play piano, roller-skate and ice-skate. Her favorite book is *The 5th Wave* by Rick Yancey, and her favorite movie is *Interstellar*. Playing flute is her first passion, but when she's not doing something musical, she loves learning to do intricate hairstyles and writing short stories. Smrithi previously competed in the Scripps National Spelling Bee in 2015, tying for 22nd place.

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**Speller No. 232, Nihar Janga**

Houston Public Media, Houston, Texas  
Age 11, 5th grade  
School: River Ridge Elementary School  
Hometown: Austin, Texas, USA

Nihar loves spelling, and he puts a lot of determination and dedication into learning new words. He also enjoys playing football with his best friends and playing video games -- especially his favorite, Batman: Arkham City. Nihar likes movies that motivate him to become "a beneficially influential citizen." His favorite movies are Akeelah and the Bee and the Star Wars and Mission Impossible films. In the future, Nihar aspires to be a neurosurgeon who can develop many cures for serious brain disorders.



**THE 2016 SCRIPPS NATIONAL SPELLING BEE**  
**CHAMPIONSHIP FINALS**

THURSDAY, MAY 26  
8:00 P.M.  
LIVE ON ESPN