sports

By Julian West

A four-player team from MIT may have qualified for a place in the national finals in a college bridge tournament. The team placed third in the Atlantic Conference of the North American Collegiate Bridge Championship, held on Tuesday. The winning team in the region, New York University, is one of five teams to qualify for the final, to be held in St. Louis in March.

Because one of the six conferences had no competing teams, officials are looking for the second-placed team with the highest score. The University of Toronto, which placed second in the Atlantic Conference, is likely to be disqualified. Pending late or contested results, MIT would then be the highest-scoring second-place team.

Twenty-two universities in the United States and Canada fielded eligible teams for the competition. To be eligible, players had to be full-time university students. North-south and east-west pairs competed separately in the contest, and the top pairs were combined to form the official school team.

Kevin J. O'Donnell G and Ethan Rappaport '87 were the top east-west pair at MIT, and Mark A. Ediburn G and David G. Pickering G were the top eligible north-south. There is, however, some question of Ediburn's eligibility as a "special graduate student." A higher placing pair in the open competition were not students.

The tournament was an unusual "pair bidding" competition, in which players at each competing school played the same 24 deals. After the bidding on each hand, a slip of paper was opened which awarded a certain number of points to one pair for reaching one of a number of correct contracts. One player was then instructed to play a particular contract, regardless of the contract actually reached. Further points could be gained for correctly making the contract, or for correct defense.

The play therefore resembled a series of "bridge problems," akin to chess problems, rather than actual random deals.

The two MIT pairs scored a total of 248 points. The full unofficial results from the six competing schools in the Atlantic conference were: NYU 282, Toronto 253, MIT 248, Yale 211, Connecticut 192 and Harvard 183.

Other conference winners were the University of Virginia in the eastern, the University of New Mexico in the western, and the University of Western Ontario in the central conferences. Michigan State appeared to have won the Great Lakes region, pending some late returns. There were no competitions in the Southern region.

MIT had been considered a "sentimental favorite" in the Atlantic conference by officials trying to predict the winners, according to Matt Guagliardo of the American Contract Bridge League in Memphis, TN.

The championship was sponsored by the ACBL and by the Association of College Unions-International. The winner of the St. Louis competition will go to represent the ACBL at the World Junior Team Championship in Amsterdam in July.

The ACBL has not been represented at the World Juniors for several years. Although North American collegiate par bidding competitions were once held annually, the championship has not been contested since the 1970s.