

## Contest reveals local man's stock picking prowess

High school counselor gains following on Zacks.com blog

BY PAT FERRIER

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Donovan Dreyer never had to contend with the likes of Simon Cowell, but the Loveland high school counselor recently finished second in what he likes to call the "American Idol" of stock pickers.

Competing to win \$100,000 against nearly 10,000 other amateur pickers in the Zacks Investment Research contest, the Fort Collins resident said he impressed the judges with his stock-picking prowess and blogging capabilities.

The winner, an editor and writer from New York, finished with an 81.7 percent gain in his portfolio, during a time when the S&P 500 could only manage a 5.5 percent return, Zacks Investment officials said.

In explaining the contest, Zacks said it looked outside the realm of professional research and analysis. "We knew that within the audience of Zacks.com there must be a vast resource of

untapped stock picking talent. Thus began the Zacks Challenge, a yearlong talent search to find the best of the best."

Dreyer, who didn't get interested in the stock market until 2000, said he wanted to use the contest as "a measure of where my skills were."

He opened a trading account with a minimal amount at the top of the bull market that was beaten and battered for the next couple years.

"I got in when everything was going nutso and it looked easy to make money in the stock market. I didn't feel a lot of the pain that others did because I had very little invested at the time. But it was eye opening because I thought that a small amount of money would turn into a lot."

In 2002, he started listening to "Winning on Wall Street," a program produced out of Boulder and got "turned on" by reading stock charts and technical analyses.

Met with mixed results, Dreyer became even more intrigued and immersed himself in book after book on the stock market and choosing stocks.

"I found there was more to it than just fundamental and technical analysis. That only tells you what to look for to find a good stock," he said.

"There's more to it, such as how much to buy, how to diversify and when to get out."

The contest came around just as "I felt I was starting to get it," he said. "I wanted to give myself a good test and see if I had absorbed all that I had read and experienced."

Along with the competition came ability to blog on [www.Zacks.com](http://www.Zacks.com) sharing his tips and picks with Zacks' online audience.

"I thought, if nothing else, it would give me a little bit of a profile and get my name out there."

As the competition wore down, Dreyer said he weaved in and out of the top 100, finishing 96th.

But the popularity of his blogs combined with his top 100 stock picking finish propelled him to among the top 10 people interviewed through written questions.

Those 10 were whittled down to three and a telephone interview.

"They made me wait a painful two weeks before informing me I was second choice, but by the slimmest margin," Dreyer said.

The winner is now filling a job at Zacks as championship trader.

In the first two months of competition, he picked the No. 1 stock gainer four times and once was able to choose the top four gainers out of the top 220 stock list.

"I had some really good fortune on my selections and established a readership of what I had to write," he said.

Dreyer is still blogging on Zacks' community site, listed as among the top amateur stock pickers, and he's wondering what his future may be in the stock market.

"I had no idea what level of skill I had at this. I didn't know where or how I measured up. But obviously finishing second in the American Idol for stock market has opened my eyes."

Dreyer says he loves his day job as a counselor at Mountainview High School in Loveland.

He can't see giving up his day job unless he were to get "something awfully, awfully good."

Yet, with a 2- and 4-year old, he wonders how far the market could take him.

"If there is a potential to find something that paid significantly more, it would be difficult to pass up."



Michael G. Seamans/The Coloradoan

Donovan Dreyer, posing Sunday in front of his laptop computer at his Fort Collins residence, recently finished second in what he calls the American Idol of stock picking.

Donovan Dreyer
> Age: 37
> Residence: Fort Collins
> Occupation: School counselor, Mountain View High School, Loveland