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DENVER AND THE WEST

18-year-old's "Tic Tac Tag" wins Sports Authority "Move It Challenge"

By Kirk Mitchell
The Denver Post

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All in all, it was an epic day for "Tic Tac Tag" inventor Nicholas Fornario, whose game soon could be sold in Sports Authority stores across the nation.

On Saturday, the 18-year-old's picture was taken with his arm around Miss Colorado, Melaina Shipwash, he was scheduled to throw out the first pitch at the Colorado Rockies game, and he won the grand prize for the national Sports Authority-sponsored "Move It Challenge."

But maybe the best part is that the \$10,000 check he won may only be the beginning. Fornario, of Pearl River, N.Y., could soon be getting a royalty check once the retailer starts selling his game.

The Move It competition generated game inventions by 4,000 kids across the country. The goal of the competition was getting kids to be more physically fit, Sports Authority spokeswoman Jamie Schumacher said.

Five finalists from around the country between the ages of 9 and 18 competed Friday including Adam Zussman, 12, of Denver, who invented the Sweet IMPACT.

His pressure-sensitive tape wrapped around the "sweet" part of the bat helps kids know immediately why they got either a bad hit or a home run. Good hits leave marks on the tape.

"It shows you how to adjust your swing," said Adam, who attends Denver Academy of Torah.

Other finalists were Will Klepper, 9, of Sherwood Forest, Md., inventor of the Extreme Toss, sort of like horseshoes on steroids; Sierra Bouthner, 13, of Westminster, Md., designer of VB Buddy, which helps volleyball players practice the basics; and James Trujillo, 17, whose Dunk-N helps hoopsters stylize their slam dunks.

"Kids usually have the best ideas," Fornario said.

He started inventing stuff when he was 8. Tic Tac Tag melds two ho-hum games — tag and Tic Tac Toe — to make one very exciting one.

Players wear a vest that has a Tic Tac Toe board on the back. Each square lights up when tapped. A player is eliminated when other players tap three squares in a row on his board. There's no limit of how many people can play. Last person standing wins.

"It's a lot harder than it looks," Fornario said.

It's not easy to tap the right square when someone is running as fast as they can and ducking and dodging, he said. And his game does what it was designed to do: gets kids to run around like crazy.

Kirk Mitchell: 303-954-1206 or kmitchell@denverpost.com

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