

## Harmony drives barbershop quartet's success

### Fireside singing in national finals

By Rick Sobey  
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CHELMSFORD — They ran into the powerhouse barbershop quartet backstage.

"There's no way we can win," recalls David Adams, of Lowell, a member of Fireside Quartet, the group based in Greater Lowell. "That quartet always beats us."

"They beat us like a rented mule in October," adds Daniel Schwartz, of Brookline.

Think of it as the Red Sox versus the Yankees before 2004.

But this year was 2004 for Fireside — as the quartet finally broke through at the Boston Regional Harmony Sweepstakes A Cappella Festival.



From left, Manoj Padki, Daniel Schwartz, David Adams and Jesse Heines, members of Fireside, a barbershop quartet, rehearse one of the songs for today's national competition in California. **See video and a slide show at [lowellsun.com](http://lowellsun.com).**

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"Flabbergasted," Jesse Heines described the win in his North Chelmsford

basement last week. "A complete surprise to us." As a result, the local

quartet qualified for the

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national finals.

This weekend, the group is competing in California against seven teams from across the country. They'll perform tonight in front of celebrity judges and an estimated 2,000 a cappella fans.

Their mindset is just like at the Boston festival.

"There's no possible way of winning," Schwartz said last week.

"We want to maximize fun," added Manoj Padki, of Berlin. "We all love to entertain."

The group has been together for almost four years, but the origins go back to a computer science conference seven years ago.

Adams and Heines were both attending the conference, but didn't know one another. Heines began his presentation by singing, and Adams immediately knew that Heines was a "barbershopper."

Out in the hallway, Adams began talking to



Members of Fireside ham it up for the camera during a recent rehearsal. They are, from left, Manoj Padki, 53, Daniel Schwartz, 49, David Adams, 41, and Jesse Heines, 69.

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him, and they started to sing.

Fast forward a few years to Adams becoming a computer science professor at UMass Lowell, where Heines was already a computer science professor. They joined together with Schwartz and Padki to form the quartet.

"It's been a blast," said Heines, 69, who is now retired.

"There's no internal bickering," added

Schwartz, 49, a software engineer with Google Travel in Cambridge.

"Many groups sound really, really good for six months, but then they can't stand one another. We all still get along, though."

Fireside has a coach from Vancouver, Canada, who teaches them over Skype.

John Newell, an international barbershop champion, is a great coach teaching them new ways to

sing with one another, the members said.

"He's trying to help us get to the next level," said Adams, 41, the group's lead singer.

"Teaching us how to make subtle changes to blend together, and bring out the strengths of the quartet," added Padki, 53, a Realtor with Realty-Smarts in Westford.

The group performs at retirement homes, outdoor community events and private parties. They've been part of numerous a cappella shows, most notably those put on by The Gentlemen Songsters, Lowell's own barbershop chorus. They're all members of the International Barbershop Harmony Society, and they compete in barbershop contests throughout the Northeast.

"At the end of the day, it has nothing to do with the contests and scores," Heines said. "Just making people happy and spreading joy, it's so rewarding."

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