



## Crown 6L

### Technician team:

Chris Ramirez, model and die technician; Johnny Bernal, metal finisher; and Mike Estrada, ceramics

**Laboratory:** Oral Designs, Inc., a 40-person, full service laboratory in San Antonio, Texas, owned by Dirk Albrecht, CDT; [www.oraldesigns.com](http://www.oraldesigns.com)

### Getting inside the judges' heads:

With 320 active

accounts, Mike Estrada, who is operations manager of the laboratory, knows a thing or two about varying client preferences. "All of our customers are so different. One dentist wants tighter contacts, another wants looser contacts; there's no standard," says Estrada. So to get some insight into our evaluation process, Estrada read up on what the judges had to say about the nine crowns in our *Crown Experiment*. "I tried to get a feel for the judges' perspective on model work, contacts, vitality and other aspects of the crowns," he says.

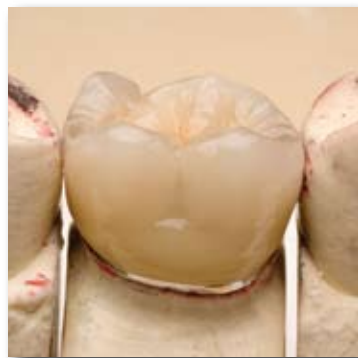
Other than that insight, the laboratory's commitment to education undoubtedly gave this team an edge in the competition. The laboratory's founder, Horst Albrecht, was diligent about training when he opened 32 years ago, and that's still a focus today. In addition to sending technicians outside the lab to perfect their skills, they often bring experts into

the laboratory and the staff has benefited from the instruction of ceramists from around the world. "It's so valuable to watch how other ceramists handle porcelain to get the color and effects just right," says Estrada. But he points out that it's about more than skill: "It's our employees' loyalty and commitment that make the difference. We're blessed to have a great staff."

### On the lab's newest

**"fan":** In addition to winning the distinction of being a finalist in the *Crown Challenge*, this crown immediately earned the admiration of one of our dentist-evaluators. "I think I've found a winner," said the dentist during the final round of judging. He even begged us to tell him the name of the laboratory so that he could get in touch. (Of course, our lips were sealed until the finalists' identities were announced in last month's issue!) **LMT**

"We're a tight-knit group," says Mike Estrada, operations manager (left), about the staff at Oral Designs, including Chris Ramirez (middle) and Johnny Bernal, (right).



This crown earns the highest points among the finalists in the occlusal contact category with one judge saying that the contacts are "right on the money." Evaluators also like the realistic anatomy, especially the natural grooves on the occlusal, and the use of the clear translucent enamel on the cusp tips.