

Hawking's rival says Higgs wager win is icing on cake

Chris Wickham, Reuters

(Reuters) - The U.S. scientist who won a \$100 wager with Stephen Hawking over whether the Higgs boson would ever be found said on Friday winning was the icing on the cake of a major scientific discovery.

Scientists at Europe's CERN research centre announced on Wednesday that they had found a new subatomic particle which appeared to be the boson imagined and named half a century ago by theoretical physicist Peter Higgs.

Hawking, Britain's most famous living scientist, said the discovery should earn Higgs the Nobel Prize, but admitted in an interview that it would make him \$100 poorer.

"I had a bet with Gordon Kane (of the University of Michigan) that the Higgs particle wouldn't be found," Hawking told BBC News on Wednesday. "It seems I have just lost \$100."

Kane told Reuters Hawking had thrown down the gauntlet and he had quickly accepted.

"I was confident a Higgs boson would be found. The Higgs discovery feels fantastically wonderful. It completes the description built up over several centuries, and points the way to strengthen the foundations of the Standard Model. Winning the bet is a very nice frosting on the cake," he said.

Kane recalled the bet was made at a conference where several physicists were discussing over dinner whether CERN would extend the life of its Large Electron Positron collider, a forerunner to the Large Hadron Collider in which the new particle was found.

Kane was canny. The bet was about the discovery of the particle - a basic building block of the universe and key to the formation of stars, planets and life itself - not about which machine would do it.

Higgs said Hawking had contacted him in the wake of the announcement and confirmed the cheque was in the post. "I'm not the one he owes money to. I think he is sending a hundred dollars to Gordy Kane at Michigan," Higgs said.

Higgs confessed that he was given the news the night before it was unveiled to the world, when a bottle of champagne was opened at a dinner organized by CERN researchers on Tuesday.

His celebration after the event was more low key, according to physicist Alan

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Walker, who offered him a glass of Prosecco on the plane home. "He said 'I'd rather have a beer'," Walker said.

Kane said he plans to spend his winnings wisely. "All funds go toward research. I would love to have other bets but I can't find anyone to bet against me," he told Reuters.

(Editing by [Janet Lawrence](#) [1])

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