



Let the Games Begin!

The main sports hall of the Tsukuba Capiro Arena, is now plugged in to the Olympiad matrix. Basketball nets are gone and the varnished floor sheeted. Cable highways are routed around the hall and rows of work stations set out like transistors on a processor chip. They begin in Argentina and finish in Vietnam. This event is to be a very different kind of contest than usually played here by the likes of the Cyberdyne Ibaraki Robots (local basketball heroes).

The contestants, algorithmic gladiators, one and all, began to arrive at Capiro from 8:30am Monday. Nervous excitement was palpable as each country team waited to gain entry, their volunteer guides as anxious as their charges. "I woke up 10 times during last night" revealed one Scandinavian contestant. "I'm one minute nervous, the next minute relaxed" said another. "I forgot my mascot.. left it at the dormitory", said another in despair. "We don't need mascots.. just a comfortable keyboard" noted one European. Those who had attended previous Olympiads seemed calmer than most. "We avoided jetlag this time by coming to Tokyo a few days early.. though we're a bit tired from so much fun". One first-timer was philosophical, "I don't have high expectations

for my result, so hopefully I'll surprise myself". A Swiss Olympian had a more concrete goal in mind. "I got a low bronze last time, I'm aiming for high bronze or silver this time".

On Sunday the teams had come to the practice session and tried out the practice tasks. Though the start was delayed, this was now the real thing. "10,9,8,7,6,5,4,3,2,1 - open your envelopes" was the starting command. Hundreds of laptop screens flickered to life and 10 x 341 fingers became a hovering blur above keyboards. Mascots (pandas, bears and various other creatures), silently cheered their owners on. (Team New Zealand had thought about bringing a giant bear but could not bring it on the airplane. Just as well - there's no way it would clip onto a computer screen).

It was early morning Japan-time. Back home, contestant families in different time zones, are doubtlessly rooting for their youngster's success over a lunch, dinner, during prayers, or in their dreams. Here in Tsukuba, the hosts and volunteers have one word to say in Japanese "Gambatte" (good luck, do your best)!! With 5 hours of grueling combat ahead, the digital clock is ticking, pulses are racing, solutions being imagineered, code generated and personal scores - hopefully - rising.



IOI Conference: The 12th IOI Conference, opened by organizer, Valentine Dagiene, began with this year's special guest lecture. Tim Bell, a computer scientist from New Zealand delivered an insightful 1 hour talk on "Computer Science in K-12 Education: The Big Picture". This was followed by a series of 20 minute case studies with reports on education projects, or the current education status, from Japan, Italy, Macedonia, Slovakia and others.



IOI 2018 JAPAN
TSUKUBA, IBARAKI

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Today's Guest IOI President

Greg Lee on CS Education, AI and IA

IOI President Greg Lee had a few words for the IOI 2018 press team to reflect on the current state of Informatics Education and what the current trends in computing science tell us.



Here are some excerpts from his comments. "Currently the hottest topic in CS everywhere is AI - certainly the catchphrase of the past year. Of course it covers many different fields - data analysis, speech processing, motion vision, etc. So, because robots have to be able to think and act like a human, researchers in all these fields have to come together. Currently, what IOI students are capable of is programming and solving problems. But that's not enough. For them to become good in AI they still need to learn the knowledge of these various fields. So I want to encourage them, when they go to university, to take the next step".

Asked about the significance of IOI 2018 being held in Japan, President Lee was euphoric (in reference to IA, the virtual artist). "For IOI to be held in this particular city of Tsukuba is very meaningful, and the animation [at the opening ceremony] was fantastic. Non-CS people probably don't realize how much effort goes into even a short amount of animation and speech synthesis. That technology can be applied to many fields in the future. And holding the IOI in Japan now, in the run up to the 2020 Olympics, is significant. We are beginning to see snippets of news about the applications of AI for the Olympics. For example, in translation machines that you simply speak into, in Japanese, and get the language back in English [and vice versa]. Very exciting!"

Monday's Schedule September 3, 2018

Time	Contestants	Leaders	Guest
06:10~	Transfer by Bus (KEK→NITS)		
06:30~08:00	Breakfast 6:30-8:00	Breakfast 7:00~9:00	Breakfast 7:00~ (Each Hotel)
08:00~08:30	Transfer by Bus		
08:30~09:00	Entering Contest Hall		
09:00~14:00	Contest	IOI Conference (Convention Hall 300)	Departure from TICC@9:00 Guest Excursion Edo Wonderland (Transfer by Bus)
14:00~16:00	Lunch (Multi-Purpose-Hall and Conference Room101.102)		
16:00~17:30	Analysis and Appeals		Dinner 18:30~20:30 (Multi-Purpose-Hall and Conference Room101.102)
17:30~18:00	Transfer by Bus	Transfer on foot	
18:00~18:30	Dinner 18:00~19:30 Transfer by Bus (NITS→KEK)	GA Meeting 4: Review Appeals	Dinner 18:30~20:30 (Multi-Purpose-Hall and Conference Room101.102)
18:30~19:30		GA Meeting 4: Review Appeals	
19:30~20:30	Free Time	Dinner 19:30~20:30~ (Multi-Purpose-Hall and Conference Room101.102)	Free Time
20:30~21:30		GA Meeting 4: Review Appeals	

■ TICC - Tsukuba International Congress Center ■ TSUKUBA CAPIO ■ NITS ■ Excursion

Our Volunteers - Behind the Scenes

As well as the event staff behind the logistics, more than 100 volunteers are serving as 'Team Guides' or supporters at IOI 2018, (one third coming from overseas). The guides are assigned to taking care of contestant teams at every part of the program. Each one is helping as a guide, rescuer, best friend, and cheer leader. The assignment to their country team was random. The guide assigned to Team USA was delighted to be working with such high-level English, although keeping up with her team's humor is a challenge. Another (Yuki K, from Tsukuba University) has already taken his team to Akihabara to hunt down hard-to-find manga collectibles and eat Japanese 'tonkatsu' (cutlets). Jun Y is in charge of Team Austria and, as a programmer himself, is really happy to meet people with similar interests.

Identifiable by their turquoise blue T-shirts and wide smiles most IOI 2018 team guides are university students. They were all selected for their enthusiasm, reliability and energy. In addition they need to have English-skills and - even more importantly -

an ability to empathize and communicate with others. For the contestants, while a visit to another country is thrilling, some can be disoriented by the unfamiliar culture around them on top of being nervous about the contests. Sae K (from Tokyo), an international relations student, is looking after team UK. She knows nothing about informatics but is taking a responsible, big sister-like approach to her team. Ruriko Y's biggest task (so far) has been to look after the Mexico team sombrero hats while they attended the Practice Session on Sunday.

The Organizers have put a great deal of effort into making everyone feel comfortable, (e.g. arranging for halal and vegetarian meals), but it is the human interface of the volunteer team guides that is keeping spirits high this week. "I'm really looking forward to taking my team around on the excursions tomorrow" was a popular sentiment shared by many, "...and it's great to meet so many people from other countries, as well as my own team," added Sae K.

Places to Visit

Nikko Edo Wonderland:

Guests today enjoyed a visit to Nikko - a famous national park area of lakes, hot-springs and world heritage sites in neighboring Tochigi Prefecture. Within the mountains there is also an amazing cultural theme park called "Edo Wonderland", an old-style town which showcases traditional Japanese culture from the 17th century of the Edo Period. Here visitors, if they wished, could become one of the town's citizens by dressing up in kimono or warrior costume. There were several entertainment shows and the IOI visitors could try Japanese-style archery, the 'shuriken' throwing skills of the ninja, and discover how 'katana' swords are made. It was also a good place to shop for traditional woodblock prints, utensils and replica weapon souvenirs. Thrills, illusions and trickery were also waiting to be discovered in a haunted temple, prison block, ninja house and maze of secrets.

