Closing Ceremony

Everyone's a Champion

That was the shared sentiment in comments made by both IOI President Greg Lee and IOI 2018 Chair Kazuo Furukawa at today's closing ceremony. The special event began with the energetic pounding of Japanese 'taiko' drums to pump adrenaline levels among the audience. Chair Furukawa then asked if everyone this week had "enjoyed the experience of Japanese culture". He received wild applause. Next, Kan Hiroshi Suzuki, Special Advisor to Japan's education ministry, thanked country team leaders for working all night to present contestants with "the best possible challenge. The Olympiad was a great success, its meaning achieved in full". To conclude the speeches, Acer Japan's Managing Director, Bob Sen, expressed his appreciation that his company was able to be such "an integral part of the Olympiad". Acer had "provided the notebooks and servers powering the two contests at this truly stimulating event."

The highlight of the week, the presentation of medals, then began. Each bronze, silver and gold medal winner was recognized on stage and on screen. Some almost ran to the stage, a few individuals almost stumbled. Indeed, IOI contestants are certainly one and all individuals', not just teams. A myriad of unique personalities were expressed in dress code, hair style, gesture, confidence and charisma. In between the medals a flash-back video, introduced by virtual artist IA, was shown to remind us what has been achieved and enjoyed in Tsukuba. Finally, the "Top 1 Award" winner was announced, Benjamin Qi from the USA. Chair Furukawa presented him with his medal, President Lee with the coveted trophy. Benjamin was asked how he had felt during the contest when he knew he was in the lead. He had felt "good" - but "not as good" when he saw challengers on his tail.

This was an especially warm natured ceremony. Lasting almost 60 minutes, and with more than 80 medals bestowed, the audience did not let up in their exuberant, generous applause as each medalist was announced in turn. This was acknowledged in Greg Lee's closing words, "Respect from others starts with respect for others... Remember that there are many others out there just like us - and they also have similar difficulty using chopsticks". He officially declared "the closing of a very successful IOI 2018. Thank you, Japan!"

The final scene was the formal handing over of the IOI flag to the hosts for next year, the Republic of Azebaijan. After a dramatic video, "Land of Flames" to introduce this nation which is next to the Caspian Sea and on the border of Russia, Azebaijan's Deputy Minister of Education, Dr. Firudin Gurbanov, accepted the flag from Japan and invited everyone present to attend. IOI 2018 was complete. Streams of endless metallic ribbons exploded across the hall in celebration.

Today's Guest

Comments from Official Sponsor Acer: Bob Sen

Bob Sen, Acer's Managing Director for the Japan and Korea Market, presented at Acer's Knowledge Fair and then talked with the newsletter team.
Acer has about 7000 employees in 70 countries, probably a third of whom come from a computer science background. Acer values IOI greatly and is committed to sponsor the Olympiad for 5 years. The company has an unusually long history (over 40 years) so mostly known for its PCs. But Acer is also involved in, and expanding its gaming, VR/AR, and AI/Cloud technologies. IOI provides an opportunity to make this better known. The company mission is about "breaking barriers between people and technology" and Acer's seminar this morning showed some exciting innovations and new projects, e.g. cooling patents (based on the human circulatory system), "bionic blades" that make PCs quieter, a bartending robot and 'Smart Taxi' system. On top of this "the Best is Yet to Come".

Friday's Schedule
September 7, 2018

Time	Contestants	Leaders	Guest
6:10~	Transfer by Bus (KEK→NITS)		
06:30~08:00	**Breakfast 6:30~8:00**	**Breakfast 7:00~9:00**	**Breakfast 7:00~** (Each Hotel)
08:00~09:00	Transfer by Bus		Transfer on foot
09:00~13:00	**Knowledge Fair**	**GA Meeting 7: Voting Session**	Departure from Frontier @9:00 **Free Excursion** (TokyoSightseeing) Transfer by Tsukuba Express
13:00~14:30	**Lunch** Multi-Purpose-Hall and Conference Room101.102)		
14:30~15:00	**Entering the Closing Ceremony Hall**		
15:00~16:40	**Closing Ceremony** (Main convention Hall)		
16:40~17:00			
17:00~18:30	**SAYONARA Party**		
18:30~	**18:30~18:45 Departure** Transfer by Bus **Free Time**	Transfer on foot **Free Time**	Transfer on foot **Free Time**

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

Glow-sticks, Grab Bags, Fast and Furious

A "Knowledge Fair" was held on Friday morning with parallel-running presentations and workshops. Acer explained the software and hardware changes during its 40+ year history using a quiz with grab-bag prizes. Eugene Shen gave a thought provoking talk about how AI has the power to do great good, e.g., for search and rescue, or in combatting global warming but also cautioned on the dangers of weaponized AI. Next door, Rakuten's Satoshi Egi revealed the inner workings of the Egison pattern-matching programming language in a talk rich with esoteric concepts around "twin-primes", "Riemannian Geometry" and more. Outside Room 201, eager fans queued to gain entry to a film concert by virtual artist IA. (First in the queue were Team Luxembourg, 2nd Bangladesh, 3rd UK). Over a hundred glow-sticks were waving excitedly by the time IA gave her encore. On the 2F concourse SCSK held an IOI-style Contest - an AI task called "Deep Traffic". Students experimented with deep-reinforcement learning code to drive a virtual car as fast as possible in traffic. By mid-morning a Tunisian contestant had reached 84mph.

Later in the morning app-makers Mercari introduced their world mission to "Reduce waste and create value" by helping people sell unwanted stuff and the fun side of its employee culture, (it even has 'smoothie' and 'splatoon' interest clubs). Software developer Yuichiro Saito explained the difference between the worlds of competitive programming and real-world engineering. Brilliant young problem-solvers, just like IOI athletes, had solved Mercari's slow page-load times. Ultimately this helps reduce the world's volume of poisonous landfill. Takuya Akiba, aka "iwiwi" from Preferred Networks showed how he persevered to win many programming contests worldwide despite a dismal IOI performance in 2006. He showed how PFN has been working on deep reinforcement learning for drone control and automating Amazon's warehouse operations by developing code for picking robots. He demonstrated that competitive programmers make great business

A Word about IOI's Sponsors

This year's Olympiad is an especially popular one for sponsors. In addition to the Official Sponsor, Acer Inc., and Special Sponsor, the National Institute of Informatics (Japan), there are; 4 Diamond Sponsors, 9 Gold Sponsors, 14 Silver Sponsors and 20 in the Bronze category. Another 14 organizations are providing support. Even though this Olympiad's contestants are not about to start their professional careers for a few years yet, these are the kinds of company many will ultimately work with.
The sponsor list in each category can be seen on the IOI 2018 website top page at: https://ioi2018.jp