



Romanian Master of Mathematics

7th Edition, Bucharest, February 25th-March 1st of 2015

NEWSLETTER ISSUE 2

THE TEAM

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An interview with Po-Shen Loh

“Math and science enthusiasts of the world, unite!”



Professor at Carnegie Mellon University Dr. Po-Shen is much more than a mathematician. Polite, enthusiastic and of course very intelligent, he is one of the few who make the world a better place.

I had the opportunity to interview him and find out a little bit about him and his work:

CD: What is your opinion about Romanian Master of Mathematics contest?

PS: I think it is one of the hardest competitions compared to all Olympiads but this is what makes it a nice experience.

DM: Do you like the hotel you are staying at?

PS: Yes, I'm very happy with it.

DM: Did you have enough time to form an opinion about Romania?

PS: Yes, this is the third time I have come to Romania and I like it. In fact, I travel to various places in the world and I think every country had its own unique feelings and I like to experience them.

CD: Have you visited any of our museums?

PS: I think I did, 16 years ago but that was a very long time ago.

DM: What did you do after you took your PHD?

PS: After the PHD, I did a few things: I became a math professor at Carnegie Mellon University, I was also coaching this math competition teams in my University to become ultimately the university team rank second in North America and recently I've started a website, more specifically an interactive version of Wikipedia for Math and Science. The site it is only in English right now but the design of it is such that everyone in the world can post explanations on it, which unlike those on Wikipedia are interactive. It's global, it's free and it's open, you can visit it anytime.

CD: Have you encountered difficulties in you work?

PS: It's always difficult, if it is easy then it's not worth doing it. I only like to do things that sound impossible. When I work on research problems, I work on questions that nobody has ever solved before and sometimes, you solve them and this what makes my work beautiful. Some mathematicians have said: a problem is only worth solving if it is difficult.

CD: If you could take life from the beginning, you would choose the same path?

PS: I would not be able to choose the path I've got, I've got very lucky but this is life when you have plans and dreams and you are always awake. If I saw a great opportunity, I jumped to get it.

DM: Could you tell us about some competitions you attended when you were in high school?

PS: Yes, I participated in a lot of competitions and I remember that at that time in USA you were not allowed to go to both internationals teams (for international Olympiad of Mathematics and Informatics) but I got to the stage where I could choose to which I want to participate.

DM: That's all. Thanks a lot!

Interviewers: Claudiu Dan (CD) and Dragos Martac (DM)

Mr. Po-Shen Loh – PS

Brazilian impressions

After the first day of competition, the Brazilian team along with their guides took advantage of the beautiful sunny day and went for a walk in the Cismigiu park. As the sun went down, the team headed for Piata Unirii in order to buy some souvenirs for their loved ones. They finished their day with a laser tag competition. Then they had dinner at a Romanian traditional restaurant.

The guides interviewed 4 students from the Brazilian team: Alessandro Pacanowski, Lucas Barros, Daniel Braga and Gabriel Domingos.

1. Q: What do you think so far about Romania?

A: I really like Romania, because it has a very rich history and beautiful architecture, but what I particularly enjoy is the weather which is really nice. It's much colder than Brazil; normally in our country, the weather during the winter is mild with temperatures averaging around 18 degrees Celsius. So basically, you can swim during the winter.

2. Q: What are your plans for future?

A: First, I want to work on a social entrepreneurship project, similar to the one I created with some mathematics olympians. I find it very satisfying to teach students from public schools in Brazil. I want to continue doing something related to it in the future, maybe not exactly teaching. I want to help people academically, by supporting their development and not only by donating money.

L: I want to study economics, maybe in a college from USA, I also consider some universities from Brazil as very good options. However, I'm also thinking about studying in Europe, maybe even in Romania.

D: I intend to study in a USA college, then to come back to Brazil and be with my friends and my family.

M: I have applied for some universities and I have already got accepted at Princeton in USA, I might choose to go to another university, but still in the same country. I might return to Brazil, but I am not sure, because I would also like to visit a lot of places and stay for some months, as for mathematicians is quite common to travel to other countries and collaborate with different people.

3. Q: What other activities do you do in your free time?

A: I am really into sports, but I also play the saxophone.

D: I play tennis, but honestly I am not really good. I can play the guitar, most of the time with my friends in a religious choir.

G: I learn French. I have a social project too, I like teaching math to students and I play a little bit of piano, I'm still learning.

4. *Q: Did you know the guys from your team before?*

D: We used to participate together in a lot of Brazilian competitions. We don't spend much time together as we live in different cities, but when we get together we talk a lot. It's awesome.



Interviewers: Barbulescu Catalina, Moraru Miruna

Alessandro Pacanowski(A), Lucas Barros(L), Daniel Braga(L) and Gabriel Domingos(G).

American impressions

Here are the answers of two members of the American team, Brian Huang (B) and Shyam Narayanan (S).

1. *What do you think about Romania?*

Brice: I think Romania has a very interesting history and culture! I really enjoyed learning about Romania during the historical tour yesterday.

Shyam: Very nice place! Lots of friendly people (though less friendly drivers).

2. *What is your opinion about the RMM contest? Is it well organized?*

B: I really enjoyed today's problems. I think the contest is very well organized and I really appreciate the opportunity to compete here.

S: Seems well organized, with concise ceremonies, tours and free time.

3. *Today was your first day of the contest. How hard were the subjects?*

B: It was a hard test but I liked it a lot. I was really satisfied when I solved the second problem, which was particularly nice.

S: The first question was relatively easy, the next two were harder. The problems were essentials combinatorics, not a strong but not a weak subject for me.

4. *Did you spend time with participants from other countries? What about the Romanians?*

B: Yes! I had a lot of time talking to people from other countries. The Romanians are so nice!

S: We spent some time with the British and Russian teams (as well as with many of the guides).

5. *Have you participated in other international competitions far? If so, what prizes did you get?*

B: This is my first international competition.

S: I have not participated in other international competitions.

6. *What did you like the most about our high school "Tudor Vianu" ?*

B: I'm very, very grateful that "Tudor Vianu" is willing to host such a wonderful competition for math enthusiasts around the world.

S: Everyone seems friendly and very accommodating towards us.

7. *What do you expect from tomorrow's contest?*

B: I expect more interesting problems, hopefully as challenging as today's.

S: Geometry and number theory problems to be more likely.

8. *Would you return in Romania?*

B: Definitely

S: This is the only year I am eligible to compete, so probably not.

Interviewer: Dobrinoiu Monica

Russian impressions

The next team that we interviewed is from The Russian Federation and here are the answers from 5 students: Nikita Gladkov, Ivan Bochkov, Andrey Sergunin, Alexander Zimin and Kirill Tyshuchuk.

1. *Q: How do you feel about the contest?*

A: We feel quite nervous given the fact that it is a very difficult international contest. However, we have been through many olympiads so we are confident.

2. *Q: From 1 to 10 how do you rate the organisation of the contest?(be honest)*

A: 8

3. *Q: What is your feedback regarding the opening ceremony?*

A: The ceremony hall was great. We were honored to be there and listen to the speeches of important people. We were very pleased with the gifts which we, even though we had problems with the size of the T-shirts.

4. *Q: What is your opinion about Romania?*

A: Despite its small area, Romania seems like a beautiful and interesting country. Mother Nature offers us some spectacular views and its history never ceases to fascinate us. Romanian people are awesome!!!

5. *Q: Do you enjoy your stay?*

A: Yes, meeting people from all over our country and even beyond the boundaries is a truly amazing experience. Also, the hotel rooms are comfortable enough and the staff are very kind and helpful. Our biggest disappointment is the lack of a Wi-Fi connection.

6. *Q: What do you think about the food?*

A: It's quite unusual for us to eat Romanian dishes, but we have to admit that both the quality and the quantity please us. The only aspect we don't like is that we have the same food every day.

7. *Q: Did you have fun in your free time?*

A: Yeah, we walked a lot but we enjoyed that mainly because we got to know this town better. Playing different games and meeting new people has really made us happy.

8. *Q: What are your thoughts regarding the guides?*

A: It's really great to have guides who are about the same age as you. This explains why we are never bored with them.

9. *Q: If you were to add something, feel free to tell us.*

A: We love our guides!!!They are indeed very cool!!!

Interviewer: Octavian-Alexandru Grosu