

## **Question Answers - IAM International Board**

**- Akash Rupela**

**1. What is your take on there being several memory associations presenting themselves as being global? Where does the IAM fit in?**

I think that what makes IAM special is our democratic governance. This is reflected in a large amount of really passionate athletes preferring IAM competitions. I think it is not our concern what other organizations do though we can keep learning from everyone to become a stronger organization.. As an organization, we must always strive to hold true to being transparent and accountable to all our members and our staff must continue working hard, to always keep our virtues intact and be incorruptible. IAM is still new but there is a lot of room for structured expansion to improve our processes and outreach, some of which I highlighted in my motivation letter.

**2. What would be your top two ideas to help broaden the memory competitor base?**

**3. Some motivation letters talked about the high entry level into the sport. Can you point to some successful efforts in that field and / or ideas you have for making it more accessible.**

**4. What is your approach to bringing new members, especially young ones, into the sport?**

I am going to answer these questions together since there is a considerable overlap among these.

1. My first idea would be Increasing the number of competitions. In most countries, there is just one IAM competition held per year in one specific city. This keeps a large section of competitors who may have been otherwise interested away from competing. I would like the IAM board to research into how can we make our competitions more easy to organize so more competitions can be organized in more countries while maintaining the quality.
2. The second idea would be to make our sport more accessible to new competitors in general who do not know much about memory sports. As outlined in my application, one of the things I want is to improve the user experience on our website since that extremely impacts how a user knows about us and potential opportunities to compete in the future. For example, currently it is difficult for competitors to filter upcoming competitions by their region to quickly see what is going to happen around them. Another idea I highlighted in my application was to have FAQs and proper tutorials for new competitors to ease their entry barrier. Another big thing is how most good memory training websites are paid

and there is almost no free software until recently to practise most events for a competition. This can be a big barrier to new competitors getting serious about our sport. Of course our new WMC training software has already helped a lot in this. In general, I think we can improve our communication a lot to the community in general by being active on social media and regularly posting about our sport and keeping competitors engaged.

To bring more young members into the sport, I think it is more about improving our outreach to young members of the community and giving those already aware of our competitions more incentive to participate. One important step would be to have separate rankings for young competitors to IAM which is currently missing. I would propose recording everyone's date of birth and displaying these so the young members don't feel any complex when they compare themselves to older members.

**5. Some motivation letters referred to the value of memory sports for education and implied a role for IAM extending beyond sports to promoting the broad benefits of memory training. Do you see this as a role for IAM? If so, to what extent?**

No, I don't see this as a role for IAM. I personally think that it will be better if the IAM focuses on memory sports alone and does not get into the benefits of memory training. However, it would be helpful to have 'IAM official' starter guides and tutorials for new members to ease their entry into the sport.

**6. What is your opinion on the ongoing digitalisation of memory sports? Yay or Nay? Why?**

I think digitalization is a very significant progress and lays the foundation for a new era for memory sports. While it does add some extra infrastructural requirements, the workload it takes away from huge arbiter requirement and manual error chances are completely taken away. This is a positive step to make our systems more scalable as our competitor base continues to grow. However, we would need to work on very strong prevention of any potential hacking into software code to any competitor's advantage. Some of our tools are very newly developed and could be hacked by writing a few lines in javascript console in the web browser.

**7. The IAM is currently looking for a host for the IAM World Memory Championship 2019. The DL for applications is the 7th of December (so before your answers to these questions will be published). What do you think about the feasibility of organising an IAM World Memory Championship in your country, either next year or sometime in the future? What are the the biggest obstacles? Is there anything that could be done or changed to make it easier / more convenient in order for someone to host it in your country?**

I think that next year might be a bit early for my country (India) applying for an IAM world memory championship. I think we should go step by step, and first aim for a Asia Open Memory Championship before doing a WMC. However, there should not be huge obstacles and it should definitely be possible a few years in the future from now. If the IAM can have arrangements with long term sponsors or other corporate sponsors to generate fixed recurring revenue for our flagship competitions, this will make the process more convenient.

**8. The memory sports community has many dedicated volunteers who are contributing to it in many different ways, both internationally and nationally. If you could highlight one such person today (who is not also running for the IAM International Board right now), who would it be, and why?**

My pick would be Katie Kermode. Originally, I knew her just as the world record holder for names and faces, but I had the privilege to know her more when I tested some software that she was working on. Shortly after, I ended up working with her for the new IAM Stats website. I was marvelled to see her passion and how much time and effort she puts in making our memory sports community beautiful despite her personal schedule and family commitments. I think the whole community really owes a lot to her and I have personally been inspired a lot.

**9. How do you consider your own potential contribution to the board to be unique, compared to the other candidates?**

As outlined in my motivation letter, I possess a lot of unique skills because I have worked in a similar organization working for a sport, but which is not memory sports, and these skills can be really very beneficial to the growth of the IAM in my term as a board member, if I am appointed. Please make sure to read my letter before voting.