

Lance Tschirhart

From: Sylle Arvidieu

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

There are three organizations presenting themselves as global. The IAM has its place, aiming to be more of a community and more democratic.

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

Not to risk boring the reader with all of the ways that adding more digital elements will solve the major problems of infrequency of championships, the distance needed to travel to them, and the exposure to them, I'll just ask that they form an image of memory league championships organized like the XMT, but where the entire championship takes place over a week, and we move between the disciplines rapid-fire, every next match set up in advance, without the milling around and lunch breaks that come with doing this in person. We can knock out a whole day of competition in just a few hours. Stream this whole thing over a YouTube channel that is regularly maintained and grown with the contributions from top athletes (and otherwise just enthusiastic athletes) offering a lecture on some memory techniques, just once in a blue moon for each person. Along with all the others, we would tackle the biggest roadblock of all, exposure, on a potentially unprecedented scale.

There's another, subtler point that crosses my mind often.

The way that prize money is distributed is so important. If broadening the competitor base is to be prioritized, then we've misapplied this powerful tool almost without fail. It is a question of our values: if we want to, we can use that prize money to motivate newcomers above all else.

Take a look at what we lose, and at what we get. To take the first question first, "we" don't lose much, unless "we" are among a very small group of people overall, and just three people on that day. If it's some consolation, the number of victims there is small. Do we risk losing our superstars if those payday's are cut significantly? No, of course not. We all know that if they weren't seriously motivated from the inside, they never could have gotten so far.

Say we took this idea of widening the distribution to its extreme and distributed the money evenly, with every rank just being a \$25 notch higher than the one before. The person in 40th place would finally have some monetary motivation (for the first time!) to move up to 35th, grabbing \$25 those per rank along the way. Just because they aren't as good doesn't mean they aren't deserving of having an equal amount of motivation to move up each rank above their one than the very best athletes. Those at the top will stand to gain more of a reward anyway, aiming for the honors of first, or second, or third, or top-tenth place. Note that I'm describing something totally beyond the pale. Looking closely though, even the most extreme example of widened distribution is defensible, and certainly more useful than the norm is, to this end.

A counterargument could be that the amount of money is so small that the motivation is negligible. I suggest anyone who finds this convincing to get their friends together for a poker game some night where each person throws in \$20. It's more fun than playing with chips alone, even if the amount of money they win per hand is counted in cents. Anyone would have more fun when there is some small motivation. Even before taking off, they will buy plane ticket and wonder if in the end, all things considered, that ticket really is going to have cost them \$500. Maybe it'll come out to \$450, or \$400, or even a mere \$250-- WOW! :) It may not be a huge deal for most people, but it is fun to think about...

From: Lynne Kelly

3. 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?

It could be. I am skeptical (or maybe just ignorant?) that we have a good grasp on how to apply these techniques for broader applications to achieve results in the ballpark of the effect size seen in the competitive disciplines. Perhaps that's setting the bar too high. It doesn't need to be as effective as the disciplines, just significantly more effective than not using the techniques would be. There may only be a handful of us who are qualified to handle that kind of thing, and you're probably high on that list, Lynne.

IAM's role in this though, is hard for me to spot. As much as I hate to answer negatively to something so important here where I should be offering positive solutions, these topics are really out of the ordinary for the IAM. Perhaps they shouldn't be, but the IAM would need to evolve a bit in order to incorporate them well. One small thing is that these would be excellent topics for the YouTube example from the question above, if it were to be executed. This is a conversation worth having, but I would be more comfortable passing the microphone back to you, personally.

4. 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?

I don't agree about there being a high entry level into competition, at least not for everyone, and that's one of the great things about memory sports. There are first steps which newcomers need to be taught how to take, such as building memory palaces and constructing sets of images, but the people I teach build a set of a 100 images using the major system, and then they're set for every single discipline with a powerful method. Since PAO does not produce better results with any consistency, teaching a method that is easy to build and easy to learn lowers the bar.

From: Kelly Knight

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

Most of the serious difficulties around trying to bring in new members can be mitigated on digital platforms. The greatest difficulty in bringing in new people may seem to be how long a newcomer would have to wait before being able to participate in their first tournament or championship, but I think the real difficulty is actually how long they would have to wait before being able to participate in a meetup of any kind with the community. If this is true, then we may be able to improve at holding a newcomer's attention long enough for them to begin to form relationships with other athletes with more live meetups of some kind, such as with a discord server and live streaming. To attract children, consider awarding cash prizes in the form of candy.

From: Florian Minges

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

The first point: it is inevitable, period. There is no possible future of memory sports which stay on paper forever and can enjoy the kind of popularity and success that we all want to see for the IAM. There are valid concerns about this transition, and even though I am the champion proponent of digitalization, I may be more sympathetic to them than most.

The friendly user-interfaces mean that we are now able to better measure the memory capabilities of our athletes. Until now, memory sports were a combination of who has the best memory, plus who can write the most quickly, plus who is least likely to fumble with their transparency, and some

other stupid stuff. Maybe some of us can split off and form a splinter group where people race to turn pages and align transparencies accurately and quickly. Some people might find that interesting, but in a memory championship, they are nothing but noise.

Unhindered by those inconveniences, athletes are able to memorize information nearer to their best abilities more often. That means that the digital scores are going to outstrip the paper scores by virtue of the platform. But the entire history of the sport, every record, year after year, has been done on paper, and that makes paper memorization worth preserving, in some form at least. I am in the process of creating designs for memory sports software which mimics the experience of paper as much as can be done in a purely digital format. At the moment, it is only partially complete, and the highlighter can be used on paper instead of only the "transparency lines." There are some really exciting changes planned for its future; some pieces have not been created yet, and some other pieces I have already created but Katie had to remove in order to get the program ready for use in time for the WMC, where it will be used for hour cards! She and I make a perfect team: she diligently fixes bugs and makes sure that everything runs smoothly, and I break it repeatedly so she always has something to do.

-Cool timer that breaks the program

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 organizing an IAM World Memory Championship in your country, either next year or sometime in the future? What are 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?

USA is not the ideal country to host a World Championship in the near future. It just comes down to America being so far out of the way for the vast majority of competitors. Therefore, if there is an American venue that may be worth looking at seriously, the obvious one is New York City. New York is on the border of the US and Canada and is about as close to Europe, Northern Africa, and India as any American city could be. Scouring New York City for a venue to host the IAM US Open may be a very worthy endeavor though.

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?

It would have to be Katie K. She tends to fly under the radar, but I suspect that the number of people who appreciate or even detect the scope or depth of her contributions is nearly zero. I'll describe just one representative example of her efforts from my perspective, and in my words. I noted this elsewhere recently, but I'll be a little more specific with my words here.

Note that she only has the free time that she makes. To evidence this, consider that in the more than ten years that she has been one of the most highly skilled athletes, if not the most highly skilled in Names and Words disciplines, she has never had the time to get around to attending a World Memory Championship. The WMC in Vienna in a few days will be her first.

Not too long ago, Katie and I learned that the memory software we had been putting together at a leisurely pace as a personal side project would be useful for the World Memory Championship. In the weeks and months leading up to her only WMC, she was working hard to get the software ready for the WMC, obliging to build in every feature, preference or quirk mentioned to her, and prioritizing all of this over being able to train for the WMC she could finally attend. She should be a role model for anyone contributing to the IAM.

From: Anonymous

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

The first and most obvious is that of those running to represent North America, I am the only one from the USA. I've been to championships of all sorts, from the Memoriad to World Championships in Asia, XMT, USA Memory Championship, MAA, and International Standard championships, I co-created the software being used for hour cards in Vienna, and I hold a world record or two, but the thing that sets me apart the most right now is that I am devoting all of my time to improving various programming skills, and I'm going to be doing just that for several months more, so I could tailor my studies and projects to align with whatever will be most helpful for the IAM.