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?

The IAM was founded in 2016 with the promise to create something better, to be democratic and give people a chance to participate and to shape the memory world via their own efforts. I feel this is still a distinguishing factor. Without the chance for participation, mainly via elections of the people who decide things, it can become stale and static rather soon.

Of course I think that the supreme goal should be to work together with other organizations wherever possible to create common ground. Unity is superior to having multiple organizations. We can be better than boxing in that regard, after all :).

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

A very common problem for newcomers, in particular younger people, when they get in contact with the sport for the first time, are the very harsh penalty rules. Historically these might be have developed in order to promote some of the first tournaments better in terms of "accuracy" or something, but in the end, when you think about it, it is all rather random: Why should someone, in particular, a young person, who has correctly remembered 38 out of 40 digits, get a score of 0? It gets more pronounced the higher you go: 76 out of 80 etc... During my work for the Board the last 2.5 years there were people who had approached us who said these rules are very harsh for newcomers and can be demoralizing. So what we had been thinking about a few months ago was to experiment with more lenient penalty rules. The Memory League experience shows this can feel much different: Not like a tightrope walk every time you fill a row in numbers or binary, but getting a perhaps fairer feedback of your efforts when every correct data counts. Of course this does not mean that we wanted to change all the old rules, people love tradition also, after all, but the thought of experimenting with such a new format to let people see how it goes, first in online events or with our new digital software, would have been a first and, I feel, exciting step. By the way, to people like Alex Mullen and Marwin Wallonius: The 1,000 correct digits in 5 min challenge is still out there :).

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?

Of course I agree that memory techniques can be a valuable tool in education and learning. I guess many of us would have been happy to have known about them during our school days. And I also think that IAM could increase its efforts in that area. On the other hand, IAM's main expertise is as a sports organization and I think the main energy should be concentrated on that aspect: Helping IAM grow in a sports sense, by increasing the number of national associations and by inviting more people into the sport, will also make it easier to promote memory techniques on a more general level.

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 can reiterate my answer above that experimenting with new penalty rules can be a great way to get people motivated and to help them stay motivated.

Also the IAM Level system that Katie Kermode, Johannes Mallow, Clay Knight and me have developed last year and this year can help to make every result count to raise your IAM Level, even if a tournament as a whole had mixed results. This can be very motivating in particular in the beginning, when your scores still improve fast.

Also one might think, as in chess, about rating sections within bigger tournaments, like sub-2000 points in the world ranking, to give people a chance to compete against their peers for prizes.

From: Kelly Knight

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

I can refer to my answer to Lynne: Experiment with new and easier penalty rules, promote the IAM levels, rating sections. Also intensifying our cooperation with the people from Memory League (shoutout to Simon Orton and Josh and Issa Cohen) can help to get people interested in the first place. We make the experience that many of the new participants had their first contact with memory sports via Memory League, which is no wonder because it is so easy and accessible.

From: Florian Minges

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

Digitalization? A definite Yay! Absolutely.

Ultimately, the sport is made to be digital and this should be the future. It allows a whole new level of spectator involvement and visualization during an event, with the Memory League online live viewing during the last XMTs having been quite a trailblazer there. Memory sports lends itself to digital for many other reasons, too: Immediate and clear results, saving of resources for arbiters and thus making tournament organization easier and more feasible, and the ability to introduce an interactive element between participants if needed.

We are very happy that we have developed our own IAM software (iamwmc.com/training.html and iamwmc.com/competition) in 2018 (a huge shoutout to my board colleague Katie Kermode and to Lance Tschirhart for having invested so much time and effort in that regard). That software will be memo and recall in digital form which is very exciting. We also have the luxury at the moment to also have another software solution, namely Daniel Andersson's (www.standard-memory.com). We will use both solutions at our 2018 World Memory Championship. Very excited about that. In total, memory sports has been on the verge of going digital for years now, and with these concerted efforts we intend to finally make that a reality in 2019 and have as many ranked events as possible. The intention is that we would leave organizers a choice if they want to use Katie's or Daniel's software and see where the preferences of organizers and athletes go over time.

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 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?

Applications for World Championships are always crucial. Taking past experiences into account, it seems easier to get tournaments (and thus also big tournaments) going in Asia because many structural factors are more promising there: A bigger interest by the general public in topics of learning, leading to a higher prominence of learning and memory related topics in the media and making sponsors more open to support such events. Compared to that it feels harder in other areas of the world because the focus seems to be a bit different sometimes. Having said that, a world championship in my own country would of course be amazing and we are getting close this year with the WMC in Austria :). Much valuable information has been learned this year, I think. Let us see what 2019 brings :).

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?

Volunteers have always been the backbone of this sport. It seems hard or almost impossible to pick one person among them: All of our organizers around the world are doing such terrific work, the helpers group on Facebook is always there if you need something, arbiters, and not the least the election committee who are doing a fabulous (and not easy) job to make the elections a reality. If I needed to pick some people who have been very dear to me the last years (and who are not candidates), among would definitely be: Gaby Kappus, our long-time arbiter who has done so much to promote memory sports and make it professionally organized. My board colleagues Katie Kermode and Clay Knight, who both in general, and Katie with her latest software work in particular, have sacrificed countless hours of their time to bring the IAM forward, to bring memory sports forward. Also my good, good friend Johannes Mallow, who has supported the board so often with his incredible and knowledgeable input. And it is also great if the sports grows around the world: Tansel Ali did the IAM Australian Open this year and Darren Michalczuk did the first IAM Canadian Open which was fantastic. Canada in general seems to grow fast, with Francis Blondin and Braden Adams (who are both candidates) also having created with much effort their own tournament that hopefully can be IAM ranked next year, great work! I would also name Nathalie Lecordier (who will also be the main arbiter at our upcoming World Championship) if she was not a candidate. I would love and be thrilled to work with her, if me and her managed to get elected :).

From: Anonymous

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

I feel it is always not so easy to speak about what one has done/"achieved" in the past. But I can say with a good conscience that, during the past 2.5 years, I have worked very hard with many others to let IAM grow from a fledgling idea into something real and tangible: Into a new free place for memory sports that is looking forward and not backward, that puts the athletes front and center together with organizers and helpers, that strives to improve and get digital, and so much more.

It was not always easy but, in the end, it was a very fulfilling experience and I would be very happy to be able to continue this work in the future.