

## 2020 IAM Board Election Answers - Akash Rupela

### ***Questions for all candidates from Sylvain Arvidieu:***

**What can be done and is it in your opinion necessary to make it possible for athletes from different continents to compete together? It happens too seldom at the moment, possibly because of travel costs and lack of incentives (financial or others). What do you think?**

I think the community aspect of our sport needs serious improvement. There is very less community interaction between athletes of various countries amongst each other. In such scenarios, it's hard to imagine many people looking forward to travel to compete in other places, except for the world championship, to meet people/friends. But I think this question is also a bit misplaced. There are very few memory athletes in Europe and some of them travel to Asia. I am positive that many athletes from Asia would travel outside Asia if there was another World Championship outside Asia with good prizes and easy visa process.

**Is it the IAM's goal to help spread the memory techniques to the masses (i.e. making resources available for free, I guess) ? How is it then possible to coexist and collaborate with professional memory trainers?**

No. It is not the IAM's goal to spread techniques but the sport itself. Maybe in the future when IAM is able to perform all it's essential tasks, training can be considered.

**Should the current 10-event formats be kept? Why?**

A lot of athletes have spent a lot of effort training the 10 disciplines. The 10-discipline formats should definitely be kept, at least unless there is a strong community demand to change it. Experiments with new formats, and new ranking systems can definitely happen in parallel, without taking away any of the 10 disciplines.

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### ***Questions for all candidates from Boris Konrad:***

**How would you like to see the IAM interact with other memory sports organizations in the (near) future?**

Talking of Global Organizations, IAM is always very open to collaborate and co-exist with other organizations in a democratic way. I understand it does not go well with interests of few other organizations, and honestly there is not too much we can do to partner with anyone except open our doors for collaboration and even public discussion. I condemn the

actions of WMSC and anyone sane will not work with them. I hope we can work with GAMA/AMSA again in 2020 as we have common goals and can achieve more for memory sports together and resolve our differences, I believe the people there are really nice people and cannot wait to work with them personally.

Talking of regional/national organizations, IAM will continue to partner with them this year.

**Is it a goal for you that memory sports gets an official sport?**

I am unsure what do you mean by official sport. It is not a goal to add this to olympics or anything. I think it has it's own niche, Considering even something like chess has repeatedly failed bids to go at the olympics, I don't think that is a reasonable goal.

**How will you help making memory sports more appealing for beginners and media?**

In my understanding, the purpose of IAM is to give a platform to people interested in memory sports to compete in a good environment. There are some ongoing discussions regarding a standard beginner format, but there are no specific plans to make it more appealing for beginners. Of course, titles are now awarded at every few levels and I think that is a good incentive for anyone remotely serious. We are welcome to ideas, as well as volunteers who want to work with us to realize the ideas.

Regarding media, I think the change has to come from spectator friendliness of the sport as well as conscious efforts to get media at our events. The media won't automatically write about it. Considering the rather lack of volunteers that form the basis for IAM, it is not easy unless more people start helping out as volunteers for the IAM.

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***Questions for all candidates from Florian Minges:***

**In your opinion, what are the two most important things the IAM has to work on in the next two years (so basically during your mandate, if you should get elected)?**

The IAM needs to make their software better - easier collaboration, better statistics, secure pages, more automation, more scalability. The IAM needs to make digital competitions easily accessible to the masses (having a free training software website is not enough. For example, most athletes from Asia have their own language and there is no support for any of that in the software right now)

**What is something that the IAM could learn from AMSA/GAMA (ie what is something they are doing very well)?**

It is hard to answer this because there is not a lot of public information available about their working style in my knowledge. I hope the AMSA/GAMA joins us for discussions this year regarding how we can work together and about potential new disciplines.

**There are many things and projects that volunteers within the IAM need to work on to operate, manage and develop the organisation. If you had to pick one thing among all of these that you were the most passionate about, which one would it be? (For example: maintaining the website/database, developing the competition software, working on an arbiting certification system, establishing national organisations, developing new competition formats etc)**

For me, maintaining the website/database/software would be the top priority because it forms the basis for most of our work, and I can think of very few people who can manage this other than me.

**This is kind of an expansion on a question by Sylvain: AMSA/GAMA have developed and proposed some new potential memory disciplines (spoken flash numbers, fantasy map, flight plan). At the same time, we also have the Memory League format. How do you think the IAM should go about integrating new disciplines and competition formats into memory sports, or is that something that you think should be avoided?**

There is no need to avoid this. However, with any merging or integration process, 2 factors are most critical. The first part is community support. It is useless to introduce or scrap a discipline if it is not going to be accepted by a large part of the community. The second part is continuity of results/rankings. Adding any new event/format must not break the current rankings completely and there should be nice methods to have a smooth transition for all competitors. Any matter of removing a discipline should be dealt with utmost sensitivity. Any matter of adding a discipline must also account for increase in organizational workload for potential organizers. Regarding Memory League Format, IAM is already in a partnership with Memory League and we recognize their results for our levels and titles, provided competitors have also competed in at least one IAM competition.

**Same question as last year: The IAM is currently looking for a host for the next World Memory Championship (application deadline is 15th of January, 2020). What do you think about the feasibility of organising a 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?**

It is hard for me to answer this because I have not been involved in any kind of organizing work. I think it is quite feasible for the organizing team of 2019 National Championship and

the main bottleneck is going to be funding. If funds can be managed, it should be feasible to do a world championship in India.

**Same question as last year: 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 answer would be the same as last year. Katie Kermode continues to work very hard for our community every year, preparing competition data, managing the training software and other projects. In fact, she does more work than most of the elected Board Members. I hope the community recognizes and appreciates her for her continuous service, and I wish she stood for the board as well.

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***Question for all previous board members (Simon, Mohamed, Charifa, Sanchit, Nathalie, Akash, Corinna) from Florian Minges:***

**Working in a volunteer organisation with people from many different time zones and backgrounds is bound to be tricky. In terms of working together, what is something that didn't work quite as well as you expected, and what would you suggest to the next Board to make it better?**

Time zones are not really that tricky. Everyone knows everyone's timezone and it is easy to find time slots that work for at least few members. The main thing that doesn't often work well is that some people often do not have intent or incentive to work enough since it's voluntary and people have different priorities. I do not see any direct way for the next Board to make it better since everyone is doing the best given the constraints they have. At the end of the day, the Board is an elected group of people who stood for elections and took up responsibility for the community, as compared to most others who did not stand or help. In that sense, we are doing the best we can and we should just have more reasonable expectations from board members and non-elected members must support them more in their free time.

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***Question for Akash Rupela from Florian Minges:***

**You have been quite heavily involved with the World Cubing Association. If you had to name one thing that the IAM could learn from them, in how they operate or manage their organisation and sport, what would it be?**

The biggest thing is definitely the community aspect of it. People are so friendly and helpful. There are many channels for people to openly discuss and share their personal bests. In

memory sports, people are very competitive and many do not prefer to share their methods or improvements. Hundreds of people volunteer a lot of their time. In the IAM, it is very hard to find volunteers and public calls for volunteers usually go absolutely ignored which I personally find a pity. I find more people are rather selfish here. Unfortunately, the absence of any volunteers might mean serious growth issues for our organization, and I would urge all IAM members to try to spend 10% of their practise time volunteering in some way or the other, to make the 90% of their time worth it.