

2020 IAM Board Election Answers - Johannes Mallow

Question for European candidates from Gordon Cowell:

Numbers at competitions are often very small. What would you do to try to increase the popularity of memory competitions in Europe?

I think numbers are small since this kind of exam style competition is just not attractive for many people here in Europe. So I think we should extend the work on digital solutions and maybe add new kind of competitions like ML or even other formats to the regular schedule. Digital competitions give us the freedom to let the audience actually see what we are doing. They could potentially follow also online. Bringing our skills closer to the audience and making it more visible might be a great way.

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 it's natural that in a sport which doesn't generate much money it is very difficult for many people to travel through the world just for competing. As long as the sport isn't recognized more by the public this will hardly change. So making the sport more popular and more accessible for the audience should be our goal. With better recognition from the public more media and more sponsors which would generate more prize money and maybe also pools for travelling costs. One could also think about creating more online competitions but actually not a big fan of that. Meeting for competitions in real life should be always the way to celebrate our sport at the highest level.

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?

I don't see that as IAM's primary goal. For the next years, it should be its goal to improve the current organizational structure of memory sports. It's a sports federation and not a memory institute.

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

The 10-event format is a classic and many people are really loving it. Everything, like ranking, certificates etc. is based on it. I think it should be kept but it shouldn't be the format which is used in almost 100% of all competitions.

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?

The IAM should be in constant conversation with other organizations, evaluating what is best for the sport and for the competitors. The dialogue should be always active. Still, it's important to focus on its own goals and activities and grow the IAM's reputation. I would like to see a joined Word Championship again one day.

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

I think that would be a great step for memory sports and the IAM should keep that in mind. But as in e-sports as the first step, it must be to grow the sport itself. As long as it is under the radar like nowadays I don't see any chance for that. I think a potential first step could be to connect with other kinds of mental sports and create some kind of m-sports community first.

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

I would like to think and test other formats which are more friendly for beginners and also entertaining for the audience.

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)?

Creating a way to get some sort of income for expenses. I.e. Having a small members fee on which everyone can decide how high it should be. Maybe from 1€/month onwards. "Select your fee".

Extending the digital format and making it a standard. Maybe also organizing Laptops for everyone.

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

Their venues seem to be always fantastic. Not just the venues themselves but also the setup with posters, very nice trophies etc. It was always a pleasure to visit competitions in Asia. I also like their service to put up the material from old competitions. I

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)

Developing and testing new formats.

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?

Good question. To be honest I'm not a fan at all of trying to create disciplines which are "close to real applications". The main argument for that seems to be that this would make more sense to the audience and would help us spread the sport. I don't agree with that. Which other sport tries to create disciplines in this way? Memory sports is supposed to be a sport and doesn't have to be more than that! I mean what sense does it make to throw a spear as far as you can? Or run 100 m as fast as possible? Who needs that in real life? People still watching it. So instead of trying to invent some new so-called "real-life disciplines" we should focus on making watching memorizing numbers, words, cards etc. more exciting. I think there is enough potential to create cool disciplines with classic stuff. Of course, new ideas are welcome but with a different focus. (See my answer including high jump and long jump style disciplines)

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?

First I think there should be already an application deadline for 2021 in March (or something like that) of 2020. We need to improve on that to have more breathing room. Also, this would make it already easier for organizers.

Second, yes I can imagine having a WMC in Germany. But since its a huge amount of work one should need more time(see above) also to approach sponsors etc. and one would need a team of people doing it.

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?

There are so many. I just want to name Idriz Zogaj who is constantly organizing memory competitions in Sweden.

Question for Johannes Mallow from Florian Minges:

I think you made a great point about how digitalisation can help make the sport more equal (which I hadn't even considered). To kind of expand on that: you mentioned that you "would love to think about how to make the sport even more accessible to other people with different disabilities". If you had to think about something right now 😊, could you give an example of a disability and one thing that we could do to make competing easier for people with that disability (apart from the current state of digitalisation)?

An obvious disability someone would have problems with in memory sports is to be blind. With the current state of the software, this can not be handled. I'm not an expert but I think there are already software solutions out there who could help these people. Also, different formats could handle this problem even better. Again like my proposed high jump or long jump style. The memorization could be adapted more easily to each competitor since he/she is memorizing alone. The recall could be done orally. Of course, we would have to get rid of the spelling mistake rule... But disabilities are so variable that it's difficult to say what a specific person would need.