

2020 IAM Board Election Answers - Simon Reinhard

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 it is important to make memory sports attractive for people. With your emphasis on digital championships in 2019 and with our new title system, I am positive we have made two important steps in this direction. We will try to add more of such innovations in the future to bring more people to this fascinating sport.

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?

One way that we are always trying to explore are travel incentives for athletes, be it cheaper hotels on site or even travel contributions by sponsors. In particular the latter is always a goal of ours but not easy to realize. We are also always focusing on providing prize money for athletes because that can make a huge difference for many. For memory competitions, it is of course still a fact that it is required that everybody is at the same place, so our digital online age has not yet lead to fully online competitions. This is mainly to prevent cheating because competing from home is obviously not the most secure way. It is not easy to find a satisfying solution for that, we would be happy for input. But what we have done in 2019 and what we will also try in 2020 is to do some digital (non-ranked) event for everybody that they can do from home, in their own time, and just have fun and compete against others. We had a good feedback on these in 2019.

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?

The IAM's main goal is to promote memory sports and to increase the number of memory competitions and to continue to work on improving the athletes' memory sports experience by the way of new innovations. Currently, that takes all of our time. Regarding resources, our IAM training page is free and we are happy to provide athletes with this resource.

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

Of course this is always a recurring question. I think the traditional format is very established, people have trained much with it and it is rather well-liked. That makes changes not easy. Is it perfect? Surely not, in my personal opinion. The XMT (now Memory League) format has shown that also other things are possible and can be very exciting. And it has shown that a memory event can exist that has much a more lenient penalty rule. So, what I could imagine is that we simply experiment (just for people to try, not with the intention to replace anything!) with an additional series of non-ranked online tournaments that have the same times for memory and recall but a much different penalty rule, like no penalty at Words and only a -1 for a wrong digit, a -2 for a wrong binary and a -1 for a wrong card. It would be thrilling to see what scores the best in the world can get with such a penalty rule: Could someone crack a 1000 digits in 5 Minutes, for example? :)

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?

I think that the IAM is always open for friendly interactions with all memory sports organizations that also have that approach.

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

If this is meant in the sense of being recognized as a sport by, for example, a body like IMSA (International Mind Sports Association): Yes, that can be a goal. According to my understanding, for that we will need a much wider net of national associations world-wide, but make no mistake, we are working on that :).

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

I think with our digital events we have already made a huge step towards making the sport more accessible for beginners. And our new title system with its ten different titles, coupled with the IAM Levels System, guarantees that also beginners will get positive encouragement and will always have something to aim for. We will of course try find more of these additions in the future.

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)?

It is hard to pick two, but if I had, I would say: 1. Getting a good world championship and 2. Working together with everybody who shares our goals and ideals in order to make memory sports better.

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

I have the deepest respect for all that AMSA/GAMA have done in the last years and I am happy to count many there among my friends. I find it impressive how much experience they have with large championships and how smooth that is done. I have seen it first-hand with our world championship that more competitors is always also much more work. Respect.

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)

Again, hard to pick: I think for me one of the most interesting things is to experiment with new competition formats, not in order to replace the existing one, but just to see how it is received. That can be nice.

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?

I think innovation is almost always positive and creativity is what brings everybody forward. When we speak about integrating something, it maybe can be seen more in the sense of expanding what exists. Memory League, for example, is a hugely successful format and we have already been in talks with the people in charge of it about co-operating closer. One idea could be, for example, to potentially recognize the Memory League format as a second official format next to the traditional 10-event format. I think the Memory League format deserves to be brought back to where it already was from 2014 to 2016/2017, and this might be something that we might try to tackle in 2020.

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?

A world championship in Germany is a bit like the white whale of memory sports, at least in the sense that people have been talking about it for ages. The point is that in order to realize such a thing, is it always necessary to have a sponsor with at least a minimum contribution. Doing a world championship with the participation fees alone might be feasible (we came close to doing that in 2018 in Austria although also there it was not financed solely from that) but of course it is much better to work with a strong partner who can support the event. Also, having a sponsor allows prize money which in turn makes it easier for people to travel there which in turn increases the national diversity of the event. We have already tried to find sponsors in Germany, as a trial balloon for the German championship in 2018, but it was not easy. The market in Germany is not as open to memory and memory sports as it is in other countries, for example in many Asian countries. That makes it more difficult. But you never know, if an opportunity presents itself, we will try to seize 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?

I think all of our volunteers deserve the same praise, may their contribution be big or small, because every single sacrifice of time and effort deserves respect. But if I had to single out one person, I think it would be Katie Kermode who is doing so much for us with her help with the software and with many other things. Huge thanks, Katie!

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?

I think what we have clearly learned from our work in the board before and also in the 2019/2020 board, is that Whatsapp alone is not a feasible tool to plan and organize such a big organization :). Our colleague Akash had the fantastic idea to switch to Slack and Trello (a communication platform and a task management platform) and I think we have tripled (or more) our efficiency and output since that switch. It is so much more convenient and also so

much more motivating for everybody to have stuff organized. To be sure, these are not the only good platforms that exist, these are just the ones we have used - and it worked out nicely.