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They had 24 hours to program a robot and bring it to life. Their robotic sumo wrestlers placed among the six best robots at Imagine Cup, Luboš Perůtka's one winning the whole contest, while Imro Živčák's placing sixth. On April 7, 2010, both contestants, who were students of the Charles University Faculty of Mathematics and Physics at the time of the Cup, were awarded the Award for Representation by the rector of Charles University, Mr. Václav Hampl. This award is granted for achievements and activities that have contributed to the reputation of Charles University among general public.

When the students left for Cairo to take part in the final round of Imagine Cup, they were not new to the competition – it was the third time they signed up. In both previous years, the two of them had got into the finals as a team. “But then a new joint skill category was introduced, called Robots and Algorithms, and we became interested in that”, Imro Živčák reminisces.

Upon their arrival to Cairo, they took part in a briefing which revealed the basic information on where the programming will take place and the rules of the competition. “We only found out what we were to program the night before the contest. Information is kept secret until the last moment, so that no one can prepare in advance”, says Imro Živčák.

After the competition's launch, they could not access the Internet, but could otherwise freely come and go, have something to eat, take a swim or even take a nap. Neither one of them took a nap, however, because there was a long way to go. “Our first task was to program a simulation of a sumo wrestling robot, then we had an actual robot, which we had to program to be able to wrestle. But a real robot behaves differently than a simulation”, says Lukáš Perůtka who ended up as the winner. Was it because he was better prepared? “I think that luck played a role. My strategy was to primarily work on the simulation of the sumo robot and only then start playing with the real robot. That one was very hard to master and I pretty much waited until the others had learned how to do it. After that, I could solve the problems faster”, says Lukáš. “Still, school had provided us with useful skills. We had had many opportunities to work with new technologies during our years at the faculty.



To be successful, another thing is essential, though: your dedication to the field and the willingness to spend your free time working in it. On weekends, both of us would go and study materials and technologies related to robots”, concludes Imro.

Originally, you intended to take part in this year's installment of the competition as well, in the category of Software Design. Why did you change your mind?

Our work and school commitments unfortunately did not enable us to spend enough time on the competition this year.

Have there been any changes in your career since last year? Did you join any new projects?

We are not taking part in any projects at the moment. What is an interesting change are our achievements both at school and at work and the experience they provide us with.



The winners at the final ceremony. Lukáš Perůtka (on the left) continues at the faculty as a doctoral student, working on factorization algorithms, while Imro Živčák graduated from the Master's programme in Information Science.

(Lucie Kettnerová)

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