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# UCF team takes 3rd in computing contest

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Every year, IBM sponsors an international programming contest for college students known as the Association for Computing Machinery International Collegiate Programming Contest.

One UCF team, Gilgamesh, took third in the Southeastern regional on Saturday at Florida Tech.

University of Miami's Hard Boiled finished first and University of Florida's Irrelephant took second.

Florida Tech was one of three sites for the regional competition.

During the five-hour contest, teams of three students compete to write computer programs to solve a series of nine to 11 problems.

From 11 a.m. to noon, teams were able to practice. At 1:30 p.m., the teams all met in the competition room and the contest began. The teams worked till 6:30 p.m. with no breaks.

Each team had one computer, and the questions are handed to them in a manila envelope.

Although they did not have to answer the questions in order, when one team solves a problem, they are given a colored balloon representing which problem they correctly solved.

This allows teams in the room to see which problems other teams have solved.

The group UCF teams comprises 18 students, chosen out of about 95 people who tried out this year, according to Ali Orooji, a faculty adviser.

Orooji volunteers to be the coach the students out of his passion for computer programming.

He says that being a computer science professor still doesn't mean that he is a better programmer than the students he coaches. He likes coaching college students, and he compares his talent and passion to those of a basketball coach.

The competition would be incredibly difficult for even computer science majors.

David van Brackle, the chief judge for the Southeast regional, said he does not expect any team to be able to answer the question about data recovery.

"Data recovery is a black hole of a problem — no team is going to solve it," he said.

He also said he believes U.S. teams do not win the finals because of the lack of motivation to study programming.

Van Brackle said in America, the amount of concentration put on football is equivalent to the amount that the Russians and Chinese put on programming.

According to van Brackle, U.S. college students just don't have the same level of motivation to put so much effort into programming that other countries do, and this is why Americans don't win at finals.

For example, UCF practices once a week for 40 weeks a year, when other countries' teams practice multiple times a week, year round.

The UCF team has been preparing for the ICPC for 10 weeks, said Daniel Wasserman, a freshman who is competing for the first time.

Although he has a basic idea of what the questions will involve, he cannot be sure, because they are different every year. Geometry was one subject he predicted would be a part of some questions.

Wasserman said that even though there is no prize for winning except plaques, he still considers the effort worth it because of the satisfaction he gets out of competing.

The winning team from the regional goes on to compete in the world finals in Cairo.

Chris Gouge is one coach for the UCF team who said that he liked being on the team so much that he began volunteering as a coach after he graduated.

He said he is glad to help coach the team, and he helps by coming up with real-life critical thinking problems for the team to solve, which prepares the team to do the same in the competition.

Gouge said there are three other graduate students who help coach the team as well, and they all enjoy working with the students on the team.

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