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Only 4 Teams In World Beat Ucf Computer Programmers

March 8, 1991 | By Kit Lively Of The Sentinel Staff

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All those Saturdays lost to grueling practice sessions paid off Thursday when the [University](#) of Central Florida's computer whiz kids won fifth place in an international programming contest.

The contest in San Antonio attracted 22 [teams](#) from around the world. UCF earned an invitation by winning the Southeastern United States regional competition in October.

Stanford University won top honors Thursday, followed by Vrije Universiteit of Holland; Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in Blacksburg, Va.; and Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand.

The contest was "very nerve-wracking," said Robert Franceschini, a senior on UCF's [team](#).

Each four-member team clustered around a single [computer](#) terminal to solve as many problems as they could in five hours.

The contest consisted of eight problems. Teams could correct wrong answers but had to take penalty points.

The problems weren't [easy](#). One asked for a program that could translate English text into an imaginary language. Another wanted the computer to recognize the shape of a triangle when given a set of geometric coordinates.

The top two teams each solved seven problems, but Stanford had fewer penalty points.

Virginia [Tech](#) solved six and UCF and Victoria each solved five. UCF placed behind Victoria because it had more penalty points, said Mark Schnitzius, a post-graduate student on UCF's team.

In addition to Franceschini and Schnitzius, UCF's team included sophomore Peter Popovich and junior Chris Gouge. Bill Horan was the alternate.

This was UCF's third year to participate in the [international](#) competition. Teams placed second behind Stanford in 1987 and fourth in 1986.

By placing fifth this year, UCF beat competitors from Harvard, Brown and Columbia [universities](#) and the universities of Pennsylvania, Virginia and Texas.

This year's UCF team won a \$2,000 scholarship.

