

Aiming for total recall at Memory Championship

Amelia Teng

A group of 52 people spent hours yesterday in a room competing to prove one thing – that they have the best memory.

They fought through 10 categories, from memorising the sequence of a deck of 52 playing cards, to remembering long lists of random words and dates, and as many faces and names as possible.

Yesterday's contest drew people from 10 countries to take part in memory sport, where participants are tested on how much information they can remember within a time limit.

The Singapore Open Memory Championship is believed to be the first of its kind here. It was organised by the Singapore Polytechnic (SP) Graduates' Guild and

Memory Ark, which runs workshops in memory techniques.

The event was recognised by the World Memory Sports Council, founded by mind-mapping guru Tony Buzan and chess grandmaster Raymond Keene.

Participants came from Singapore as well as countries such as Japan, China and South Korea. The youngest was an eight-year-old girl and the oldest a 40-year-old woman, both from Indonesia.

German lawyer Simon Reinhard, 36, who flew here for the event, clinched the top prize of \$1,500 yesterday. Yesterday, he memorised 356 playing cards in 10 minutes, 14 cards short of his personal best – also a world record he set last year in Italy.

"It looks like we're studying for exams, but it's actually very fun. What's going on in our heads is a



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Mr Gerald Lim (left) and Mr Wellon Chou co-founded Memory Ark, an organiser of the memory contest.

lot of imagination and creative work," he said.

Another contestant, Secondary 2 student Li Zeyu, 15, said his science and geography scores improved from Bs to As this year, after he started learning memory

techniques from July last year.

Memory Ark co-founders Wellon Chou, 25, and Gerald Lim, 19, said the event aimed to raise awareness of memory skills as a mental sport. Both are third-year students in SP pursuing engineering with business.

They are also in the midst of setting up the Singapore Memory Sport Council, the local chapter of the world association. The society expects to be registered by June.

Anyone can pick up memory techniques, they said. These can, for instance, involve using stories to link words or concepts.

"These skills can make studying more efficient," said Mr Chou, adding: "You still need to understand concepts, so it's not about photographic memory or rote learning."

✉ ateng@sph.com.sg