USACO NEWS -- 15 October 2010

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-- Welcome to the 2010-2011 Season ----------

The USACO coaching team is proud to announce the schedule and format for the upcoming 2010-2011 pre-college programming contest season.

[For those who hate to read newsletters: nothing has really changed. Contests are on same 'logical weekend' as last year.]

Most of the hallmarks of the USACO competition remain unchanged:

* All pre-college students throughout the world with access to the internet are eligible (except cheaters who have been banned).

* No fees are charged.

* Contest languages include C, C++, Pascal, and Java.

* Register at http://ace.delos.com/usacoregister (for both contests and training).

* Training can be found at http://train.usaco.org.

* Contests beyond the first-year level are three to five hours in length (except the qualifying round).

* Results are widely disseminated and reported on the USACO web site.

* The 'big prize' is an invitation to the USA Invitational Computing Olympiad in early June, 2011. Generally, only those in the Gold division qualify for the big prize.

* The 'biggest prize' is selection for the four-student USA international traveling team that will represent the USA in THAILAND at the International Olympiad where 80 other countries will also compete July 22-29, 2011. Other travel opportunities might also be available. NOTE: IOI CONFLICTS WITH IMO THIS

YEAR -- folks can attend one or the other, but not both. This might impact some participants' strategy for the year.

* And, finally, cheaters are banned for life.

We will continue to run three three standard divisions.

* GOLD DIVISION: The elite level with the most difficult challenges. The lowest-level competitors in this division should be able to create a dynamic programming algorithm from scratch.

* SILVER: Just below the Gold division, Silver competitors should know a number of standard computer algorithms (e.g., the flood-fill algorithm).

* BRONZE: Students who can write programs that work, including ad hoc programs that don't require fancy optimized algorithms.

Both Gold and Silver levels are "invitation-only". Invitations are earned by:

* Doing well on the October qualification exam

* Doing well at the Bronze or Silver Level on subsequent contests

* Special cases as determined by the coaches

* Achieving the Gold/Silver level in previous contests

Invitations are lost by reading problems but not solving them. You can *always* read the problems after the contest.

-- Qualification Contest ----------

THE QUALIFICATION CONTEST IS OPTIONAL -- everyone's qualifications from previous participation are still valid.

Our first contest will be a set of TWO-HOUR USACO Qualification and Practice Contests. Those who wish to move up from their current silver or bronze competition level definitely might wish to take this exam. Anyone who wishes to expand their horizons (with no penalties) or just have fun is welcome to participate. Scores will be reported only to the contestant; no overall rankings will be revealed.

You can take any or all of the three contests as you wish. Any time you get 80%, you can move up (if you're not already higher).

To qualify for the Silver level, take the Silver contest. To qualify for the Gold level, take the Bronze contest. The Bronze competition, of course, is 'just for fun' since no qualification is required for the Bronze division.

The Qualification contest's scores will be used only for qualifying -- they will not be used for determination of national champions, invitations to travel camps, etc.

The contest is of slightly unusual format since it must cover multiple levels of competitors. Each of three contests has but two or three tasks to be completed in two hours. Score 80% on Silver or Gold competitions and you move into that division (if you're not already rated higher).

Best of all: You can see your score as you go along in the qualification round!

The tasks and scoring are anticipated to facilitate placement of competitors at the proper level. By no means will all competitors solve all problems.

It is also possible (after subsequent contests) to be invited to move up or down a division if it is clear that the contestant is misassigned.

Below is this year's schedule for this year's contests.

Contest lengths are not shown because we choose the length based on the problems the contest contains, though generally they will be three hours in length. Except for the US Open, contests run from Friday through Monday, USA Mountain Time:

-- Unified Contest Schedule ----------

* 17 Oct, 2010 -- MIT ACM preliminary competition IV
  http://z-trening.com/competitions.php
* 22-25 Oct, 2010 -- USACO Qualification Contest ** OPTIONAL **
* 23 Oct, 2010 -- COCI -- *** conflict with qual contest ***; sorry
* 5- 8 Nov, 2010 -- USACO November Contest
* 13 Nov, 2010 -- COCI
* 3- 6 Dec, 2010 -- USACO December Contest
* 11 Dec, 2010 -- COCI

* 7-10 Jan, 2011 -- USACO January Contest
* 4- 7 Feb, 2011 -- USACO February Contest
* 11-14 Mar, 2011 -- USACO March Contest
* 28Apr-2May, 2011 -- USACO US Open
* Early Jun, 2011 -- USA Invitational Computing Olympiad (~8 days, by invitation), Clemson, SC
* 22-29 Jul, 2011 -- IOI -- Pattaya, Thailand (by invitation) --> conflicts with IMO!

Any additional contests will be announced a few weeks in advance of the competition (just like last year's holiday contest).

We look forward to an exciting year of competition. Please join us!

I'll send details of each regular contest a few days before it starts.

RK

PS: reply with 'unsubscribe' in the body of a note if you wish to be removed from this low-traffic mailing list.


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