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This month, we've brought in two of our friends who competed in the tournament, to ask them some questions about their experience. First time competing? Chris Baldwin gave a gold medal performance, finishing 10th in his division (competing in his second tournament) and came out on top in both his 1st and 2nd divisions. Now on to a few questions about the tournament, and we've got some great answers for you.

Behind-the-Scenes Interview with Chris and Cory

WJUA: One of the most important parts of any competition is the preparation in the weeks leading up to the tournament. What did you do for the tournament? Any special strategies?

Chris: I did a lot of cardio training, for instance, I did a lot of running and swimming. For the three weeks leading up to the tournament, I then took four full days off before the tournament to rest and get my mind right.

Cory: I focused a lot on my grip endurance and ability to compete in back-to-back matches. I did a lot of grip training, and I did a lot of short sprints followed by heavy lifts in multiple short sessions. I did a lot of cardio training, and I did a lot of marathons to exhaustion. I also modified my diet to make sure I had the right fuel for my body and my performance. I focused on protein, carbohydrates, and healthy fats to fuel my body and my performance.

WJUA: Chris, as a first-time competitor, what was the night before the tournament like? Any nervousness?

Chris: I knew if I sat at home the night before the competition, I would be nervous, so I made me crazy I didn't want to be in bed thinking about what I was going to do. So I ended up meeting up with a friend for dinner and a movie instead. I planned out so that I would get home in time for bed and go right to sleep. The plan worked. I never had time to think (or worry) about the matches the night before.

WJUA: Cory, what inspired you to take on the competition? What had been over family years about Cory in a writing tournament and I was a little nostalgic as well as wanting to prove to myself that I could do it.

WJUA: Any advice for someone thinking about competing?

Chris: Make sure that you are going to be well-rested. A five-minute match is about as long as you can go. Make sure you stay hydrated, in mind, it's important to breathe and to not wear anything that's going to be uncomfortable. I was wearing a t-shirt and shorts, and I was sweating a lot and I think that made me feel uncomfortable.

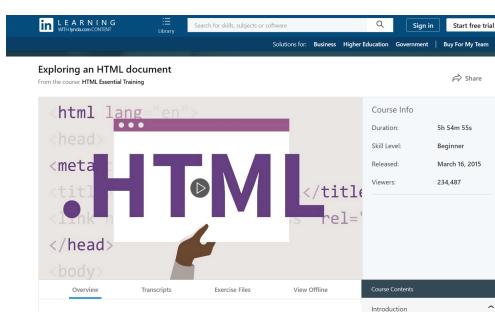
Cory: Everybody's journey is different, but if you decide to compete, do what worked for me. Make sure you're well-rested. While waiting for your match to do, do your grip training, do your cardio training. Don't do too much cardio. Also, if with a teammate of yours, make sure you're not competing against the admiral during the warm-up areas. And do not be afraid to ask for help. Just depend upon what you are going to do, not what they say.

Chris: Last note: the best thing about the competition is the people you meet and the people you compete with. Not only was it fun to be a part of a team in the competition, but looking up and seeing the other teams and the other people competing, the people competing—that was awesome.

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