

# **An Unexpected Victory**

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December 7th 2018. It's Tech's first hackathon. You're an hour late, scrambled a team in the last minute, and have no idea what's going on. Will you win against a field of 100 coders? Nope.

At least, that's what I thought. I'd gambled my night away to a hackathon that I knew I wouldn't win. What's worse? These three hours of coding would only end in a night of misery, in addition to the usual heap of homework. And in all honesty, I would have walked out the door, not knowing what could have laid in store. But I couldn't. There was my team, Yu Xuan Lin (Class of '21) & Anny Zhou (Class of '21). They had no reason to come: they had homework to complete, plays to manage, and ends to meet. But against all odds, I saw them waiting for me in the two chairs I'd expected to be empty. I had a team I couldn't let down, and a chance to win, so I took the gamble.

My team had arrived just before me and were just as confused. We were tasked with solving a public health crisis. A huge database of 311 service requests (ie, trash, rodent problems, drug overdoses, etc.) lay in front of us, from which we had to identify an issue, and make software to alleviate said issue. We then had to pitch our software to the judges. The most appealing solution would win.

My team and I were in a frenzy. I hadn't coded in HTML or CSS for a while, and neither of my teammates could code, so we began brainstorming ideas. We had been discussing the drug epidemic in Ms. McDonnell's health class, which led us to wonder how a person would react to seeing an overdosed person on the street. Many would panic; others would have forgotten the procedure for CPR, and still others would remain dumbfounded. We had a problem. All that remained was a plausible solution, a functioning application, and a presentation. We were stressed, to say the least.

And then it came. The pizza. All 3 slices of it. I jumped back to my chair, reenergized and began coding. The situation of a drug overdose required a specific design principle: Minimalism. And I knew exactly how to implement that in the context of a drug overdose app, from my experience in working with the CSS Materialize library. I focused on the code, while Yu & Anny focused on the presentation.

And then it came: the presentations. We were first, but we knew we had to go big or go home after three arduous hours, so we put our all into it. Yu provided the opener, Anny operated the slides, and I transitioned into explaining the app. Ten presentations later, we were practically biting our nails. I was prepared to leave in spectacular failure, having buttoned up my jacket to the brim.

And then it came. We'd won. Words cannot describe the feeling, but as I ran to the store that night, the halal guys asked me "Son, something exciting you?". "I won, habibi. I won."



Photo by *Michael Potash*