

Victory on the first try

Forward planning paid off for the winner of The Straits Times National Youth Media Competition. SHERYL QUEK reports

Despite tech trip-ups and looming deadlines, the team from Singapore American School (SAS) kept their cool and triumphed – on their first try, no less – in The Straits Times National Youth Media Competition.

At the prize-giving ceremony last week at OCBC Centre, the team, comprising Taylor Julia Haas, Christina Yoh, Park Jihoo, Daniel Bieker, Varun Singh Bindra – all 17 – and Lindsey Mei Cosgrove, 16, walked away with \$3,000, six Canon Pixma printers and a three-week internship with The Straits Times.

Hwa Chong Institution won the silver award and \$2,000, while 2012's champion, School of the Arts (Sota), received the bronze and \$1,000.

The win was especially sweet as the challenge was raised further with a revamped format in the event, formerly The Straits Times National Schools Newspaper Competition.

The 10 finalists had to produce a news video, write and design the front page of The Straits Times and post online breaking news updates, compared with a print-only challenge previously.

Ms Serene Goh, editor of the broadsheet's publications IN and Little Red Dot, said the SAS team's take on news was "unique".

"I think they had a different approach in the way they cast the news and they were unafraid to experiment with the way they played the stories," she said.

Taylor told IN: "We didn't see much of what the other teams did during the competition so it was hard to judge where we stood. After seeing everyone's work, I thought we would be in the top four but I did not expect to win."

The 24-hour final last November was a rush for teams who had to interview Acting Minister for Culture, Community and Youth, Mr Lawrence Wong, in a mock press conference first thing in the morning. Shortly after, participants were whisked off to interview Mr Lemuel Lee, from the OCBC Pro Cycling Team, for their video assignment.

Completing the tasks called for shrewd strategy. SAS' approach? Planning ahead. "Before we came (for the competition), we knew who would be doing the design, who would be doing the writing and who would be doing the video," said Taylor.



The winning team from Singapore American School (from left): Varun Singh Bindra, Park Jihoo, Taylor Julia Haas, Daniel Bieker. Not in the picture are Christina Yoh and Lindsey Mei Cosgrove.

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The first runner-up team from Hwa Chong Institution (clockwise from top): Ian Wong Kai Jing, Danyon Low Ming Loon, Brandon Hoong Yi Da, Gaw Ban Siang, Joel Lim Zheng Sen and Denis Lan Chung Lim (centre).



Second runner-up team from School of the Arts (Sota) (from left): Monisha Iswaran, Rachel Chew Min Qi, Ysanne Yeo, Rachel Amanda Yin, Clarisse Bu Rui-En, Liu Nuo Lin (on the ground).

Hwa Chong Institution's Ian Wong, 17, felt his team exceeded their own expectations in the competition, saying they "expected to be among the top three teams".

"We're ecstatic about coming in second, but we're not surprised," said the first-year junior college student.

Last year's media challenge was presented for the first time by OCBC Bank. Offering her congratulations to the winning team, Ms Koh Ching Ching, head of group corporate communications of the financial institution, said she was impressed with the quality of the work produced by the participants.

"Having developed a close relationship with our media friends, we know first-hand how challenging it is to put together a compelling media story. For the students to do all this and produce quality work within 24 hours is not an easy feat," she said.

Canon Singapore was the media contest's official imaging and technology partner, sponsoring equipment and prizes for the competition, while Adobe put up a three-month subscription to its online suite of software, Adobe Creative Cloud. Samsung also offered winners two Samsung Galaxy 8.0 tablets.

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