

ADVANCE DIARY INFORMATION for journalists and broadcasters

32 Countries are competing in the 22nd World Memory Championships

Three days Saturday November 30, to Monday December 2nd 2013

Croydon Conference Centre, Surrey Street Croydon CR0 1RG

Opening Ceremony and Presentation of Flags hosted by the Mayor of Croydon

in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Katherine Street, Croydon

Friday 29th November 4pm. Film crews and photographers welcome

Interviews with all competitors available

All media enquiries: Chris Day 07802
211587 secretary@worldmemorychampionships.com

www.worldmemorychampionships.com

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A record 32 countries and 130 Mental Athletes will be converging on Croydon for the 22nd World Memory Championships. Unlike the many sports that involve running, throwing, jumping, all the competitors need to succeed in a memory competition are their brains.

However, it is not about what they know or how much general knowledge they can recall, but their ability to be presented with fresh information, memorise it over a set period of time, and then recall it accurately against the clock, that the competition has based on since it was founded by Tony Buzan and Raymond Keene OBE, the Chess Grandmaster, in 1991.

Over three intense days and over ten separate memory disciplines, competitors will demonstrate their ability to memorise numbers, words dates, names and faces, playing cards and abstract images - in impressive quantities .

For example, memorising the exact order of 25 to 30 shuffled packs of playing cards in just one hour or 4000 binary digits - just a long list of zeros and ones? Could you do that? The surprising answer is, yes you probably could - providing you knew some simple techniques and practiced for long enough. We all have a far better memory than we might believe - all we lack are some simple techniques to unlock its power. This is something you can try at home!

The fact is that none of these World Ranked competitors were born with a particularly good memory. Reassuringly they also lose their car keys and come back from the shop without the one item they went for, or in the case of three times World Memory Champion Ben Pridmore from Derbyshire, his 'lucky' hat. He is now on his fourth. However, by practicing the memory techniques necessary to succeed in competition, it is like taking your brain to the gym. In the same way that muscles get stronger the more you use them, the more you challenge you brain to memorise, the better it gets and the more capable you become at exams, study or in any profession. A diet of daytime TV just doesn't hack it. With memory it is a case of use it or lose it.

So what drives competitors to pay to travel from the furthest points of the globe to compete, even when there is no prize money? Why would they put themselves through such an exhausting and intensive three days of memorisation and recall? Because the sport is practiced in exactly the same way around the world, and is always independently arbitred, it has been possible to have a World Ranking table where competitors can compare their performance with the best in the world over the past two decades. The competitor who obtains the best cumulative score over the ten disciplines of the competition can justifiably be crowned as the World Memory Champion.

The Ten Memory Disciplines

Discipline Duration Current Record holder

Name and Faces	15 minute	Simon Reinhard	181	German	2013
Binary Numbers	30 mins	Ben Pridmore	4140	WMC	2007
One hour Number	60min	Wang Feng	2660	WMC	2011
Abstract Images	15 mins	Johannes Mallow	385	German	2011
Speed Number	5min	Wang Feng	500	WMC	2011
Dates	5 mins	Johannes Mallow	132	Swedish	2011
One hour Cards	60min	Ben Pridmore	1456 (28 decks)	WMC	2010
Random Words	15min	Simon Reinhard	300	German	2010
Spoken Number	1 sec	Johannes Mallow	364	Sweden	2013
Speed Cards	One pack	Simon Reinhard	21.19sec	German	2011

All records and statistics can be found on www.world-memory-statistics.com

Countries taking part in 2013

Algeria, Australia, Canada, China, Denmark, England, Ethiopia, Finland, Germany, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Mongolia, Netherlands, Norway, Pakistan, Philippines, Poland, Slovakia, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, Ukraine, USA, Uzbekistan, Vietnam, Wales

The current World Rankings for the top 20 competitors are:

Rank	Competitor	Ranking Score	Championship
1	Johannes Mallow WMChampion	10000	Swedish Open 2013
2	Simon Reinhard GMM IGM	8445	Swedish Open 2013
3	Wang Feng WMChampion	8324	WMC 2011
4	Jonas von Essen GMM IGM	7997	Swedish Open 2013
5	Ben Pridmore WMChampion	7151	WMC 2010
6	Boris Nikolai Konrad GMM IGM	7075	German 2013
7	Christian SCHAFFER IGM	7041	German Open 2011
8	Ola Kåre Risa GMM	6953	Friendly (Cambridge) 2013
9	Gunther Karsten Dr. WMChampion	6685	German 2007
10	Clemens Mayer WMChampion	6547	WMC 2006
11	Liu Su GMM IGM	6502	WMC 2011
12	Astrid Plessl GMM IGM	6424	WMC 2004
13	Cornelia BEDDIES GMM	6134	German 2007
14	Andi Bell WMChampion	5945	WMC 2002
15	Joachim Thaler GMM	5844	WMC 2006
16	Dominic O'Brien WMChampion	5645	WMC 2002
17	Su Ruiqiao GMM	5549	WMC 2009

18	Zheng Caiqian GMM	5511	WMC 2010
19	Jan Formann GMM	5338	WMC 2003
20	Li Wei GMM	5329	WMC 2010

Memory? Well, it's that thing we all used to have before we had smart phones and iPads to do all our remembering for us. It just the same as the way that Sat Nav devices have robbed us of the skill of using maps. So are our brains now redundant? Is it too late to upgrade our neck top computers?

Memory has been in the news more often this year than ever before as the medical profession wake up to the fact that, by encouraging people to stimulate their brains with mental challenges and engaging in mind sports, it is possible to delay the onset of dementia and other age related problems. In fact taking your brain to the gym, not just your body, could have even better results to our longevity! Practicing memory techniques is the mental equivalent of a work out.

Grey Power Rules the Grey Matter

It has always been taken for granted that memory is something we automatically lose with age, or at least, this is the excuse we give ourselves from the age of thirty onwards ! But, earlier this year in a very brave experiment, one man decided to very publicly put this to the test - and to risk his standing and reputation if it goes wrong.

Back in the last century, in 1991 Dominic O'Brien, at a spritely 34, was the very first World Memory Champion, an incredible feat that he repeated a further seven time to become the only person ever to be the eight times World Memory Champion.

Now with memory competitions held in 32 countries around the world, he chose to retire from being a competitor to become the Head of Ethics for the Mind Sport of Memory. He had not entered a competition for nine years but last year at 55 he entered the warm up competition to the World Championships to see if he still had what it takes. The result? Personal bests in almost all disciplines and an overall Silver Medal. Not bad for an oldie - and hope for us all.

Dominic is on a mission. He believes that we all have far better memories than we think that we have, not matter what age we are. All we lack are the simple techniques that the memory competitors use, and a bit of practice.

Having taught school children around the country how to be better at exams by using these techniques, he now wants to inspire the older generation, that he is now reluctantly a part of, that far from losing their marbles, they still have the ability to have an amazing memory if only they gave it a chance.

"With every physical or mental skill, if we don't use it, we lose it" says Dominic

In the World Memory Championships none of the competitors taking part were born with particularly good memories. For all of them, this is a skill they have developed by learning the techniques and doing lots of practice - just like any other sport.

In this way, they can remember long - very, very long - lists of things: numbers - 4140 binary digits in 30 minutes; dates - 132 historical dates in 5 minutes; playing cards -1456 playing cards in one hour - that is 28 packs, individually shuffled and memorised, perfectly, in just 60 minutes - imagine!

Rhyme and Reason

Actually, the 'proper' word for people like Dominic is 'mnemonist', derived from mnemonic, meaning a technique or device - often a rhyme - that helps you to remember something. The phrase '*Richard of York gave battle in vain*', the first letters of which indicate the colours of the rainbow in order - red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, violet - is one example. '*Read out your green book in verse*' is another.

'Names and Faces' will be one of 10 events (hence the decathlon analogy) in this year's World Memory Championship. It is an open format, in that anyone from any country can compete, and there are medals and certificates for the winners in all of the ten disciplines.

These ten disciplines are designed to measure pure skill in the areas where memory is important, rather than an individual's knowledge on a particular subject. They are not culturally or language specific, thus ensuring a level playing field for international competition. As well as names and faces and playing cards, memory subjects include spoken numbers, dates, abstract images and random words.

Photo Finish

Quite how these competitors achieve such extraordinary feats of recall is open to debate. Many neurologists doubt that anybody possesses a genuine, 100% photographic - or 'eidetic' - memory. (This has, though, been claimed for a number of people, including Kim Peek, the 'model' for Dustin Hoffman's card-counting autistic savant in the Oscar-winning film *Rain Man*.)

Experts such as Tony Buzan, and indeed the competitors themselves, including Dominic, attribute it to sheer determination and hundreds of hours of practice. What is certain is that whoever wins this year's World Memory Championship would be a pretty tough opponent in a game of pairs ... ***27 packs anybody?***

Two Decades

The Mind Sport of Memory was founded twenty one years ago in the UK by brain expert and the inventor of Mind Mapping, Tony Buzan along with Chess Grandmaster Raymond Keene OBE. They were frustrated that the best selling books of World Record celebrated the achievements of people who could eat the most Smarties in three minutes using chop sticks, or wear the most number of socks on one foot, but totally ignored the achievements of mental athletes. As a result, they staged the first World Memory Championships in 1991.

Since then some 28 countries have taken up the sport and compete over ten disciplines for a place on the World Rankings, and the title of World Memory Champion.

Tony Buzan - 'Guru of the Grey Matter'

Tony Buzan is the President of the World Memory Sports Council, the governing body of the sport. He's also a top international businessman, the author of almost 100 books on the brain, the inventor of Mind Maps®, and the man who has done more than anybody to put these so-called 'mind sports' on the ... well, on the map.

Says Tony, described in The New Yorker as 'The biggest name in Memory':

"The great thing about memory sports is that everyone can compete in them. The Championships are based on fundamental cognitive skills that are essential for everybody's survival.

"All of us, no matter how appalling we might think our memories are, can - with the correct formulae and a little bit of practice - train our brains and memories to function ever more efficiently and effectively. The contestants at the UK Memory Championship are people just like you and me who've trained their own brains at a level reflecting their true potential."

For all general enquiries, speak to Chris Day, General Secretary of the WMSC on

020 8688 2598 or mobile 07802 211587 email secretary@worldmemorychampionships.com

Dominic O'Brien can be reached on 01747 812403 or email MemoryDom@aol.com or mobile 07979 992487.

The Chief Arbiter of the sport is Phil Chambers, WMSC Chief Arbiter on email phil@learning-tech.co.uk or call 07000 853276