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Engineering Physics Student a Top-20 Cube Wrangler



Student a top-20 cube wrangler

Senior took on 300 of world's best at Rubik's championship

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UA student Brent Morgan finished 20th at last weekend's World Rubik's Cube Championship in Budapest, Hungary.

"It was the most intense tournament in Rubik's cube history," said Morgan, a senior majoring in engineering physics and math.

This year was Morgan's third participating in the tournament. The physics department helped sponsor his trip.

A Rubik's cube is a mechanical cube-shaped puzzle with six sections subdivided into nine colorful squares. The puzzle is solved when the square's faces are all the same color on each side.

One of 300 competitors, Morgan placed 20th in the semifinal round with a time of 14.18 seconds.

"Everyone was faster than ever before," he said.

Morgan is also president of the UA Rubik's Cube Organization, a campus club. Morgan is the only one among the club's 15 members competing at the global level.

Morgan first started playing with the cube in high school, and it took him three to four days to solve it the first time. Now he finishes one nearly every day, time permitting.

"It's fun solving them," he said.

The champion of the tournament, 16-year-old Yu Nakajima of Japan, won 5,000 euro after solving the cube with a time of 11.5 seconds, according to the World Cube Association.

"There is a physical limit," Morgan said, adding that sometimes the physical effort of solving the puzzle can be tougher than the mental challenge.

Hungarian architect and inventor Erno Rubik invented the cube in 1974, but it didn't become popular in the U.S. until a "Rubik's craze" emerged in the 1980s, according to the Rubik's cube official Web site.

Mr. Rubik was at the competition to hand out the prizes.

"He's a shy kind of guy," Morgan said.