

# USENIX notes

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## USA WINS WORLD HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAMMING CHAMPIONSHIPS—SNAPS EXTENDED CHINA WINNING STREAK

*Rob Kolstad, USACO Head Coach*

This year's four-member USACO elite high school programming team, sponsored by USENIX, nabbed the top team spot at the world programming championships (the International Olympiad on Informatics). For the first time, the United States has earned the undisputed world championship. The results were announced August 20, 2010, at the University of Waterloo in Waterloo, Ontario, Canada.

The USA programmers earned 3 of the top 13 spots among the 300 competitors from 83 countries vying for medals. USA Gold Medal winners included:

**#4 Wenyu Cao**, who will be a senior at Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts, in the fall

**#5 Michael Cohen**, from Montgomery Blair, a magnet high school in Silver Spring, Maryland (now attending MIT)

**#13 Neal Wu**, from Baton Rouge Magnet High School in Baton Rouge, Louisiana (now attending Harvard)

**Brian Hamrick**, from Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology in Alexandria, Virginia, earned a silver medal for 44th place; he has also matriculated at MIT.

China, Japan, and Russia tied for second place, with two gold and two silver medals. Bulgaria and the Czech Republic tied for fifth. Germany was seventh.

Head coach Dr. Rob Kolstad praised the team: "Our team trained for hundreds of hours over the past couple of years; some members competed in three dozen contests last year. They've done a terrific job transferring that training into competitive success." All four team members had international competitive experience at previous IOI competitions or the Central European Olympiad on Informatics (USA is the "western branch" of central Europe). They were selected from 15 USA candidates at this year's USA Invitational

Computing Olympiad (and selection camp), held at Clemson University in South Carolina.

USACO Educational Director Dr. Brian Dean noted, “This victory demonstrates that USA pre-college students can excel and win in tough international competitions where the Chinese have dominated for almost a decade.”

USACO’s mission to promote pre-college computing and recognize outstanding competitors is supported by: USENIX, the Advanced Computing Systems Association; Booz Allen

Hamilton, the Strategy and Technology Consulting Firm; IBM, International Business Machines; and ITA Software, Innovative Travel Technology. USACO pursues this mission by providing training resources to over 200,000 registrants from over 80 countries, participating in six contests per year, with three divisions in each, that typically garner a total of 1,000 competitors at three different levels, as well as an annual training camp.

IOI 2010 sported new sorts of innovative tasks that rewarded exceptional

levels of problem-solving creativity—just the thing USA students excel at. One problem required the identification of the written language used by various Web pages. Another required students to identify, not the shortest path through a corn maze, but the longest possible path, a unique twist on a standard problem.

USENIX’s long-term support is much appreciated by the competitors and coaches.



**ROB AND BRIAN FLANKING THE TEAM: (FROM LEFT) DR. ROB KOLSTAD, USACO HEAD COACH; MEDAL WINNERS MICHAEL COHEN, WENYU CAO, BRIAN HAMRICK, AND NEAL WU; DR. BRIAN DEAN, USACO EDUCATIONAL DIRECTOR**