

Rowechen Zhong

12th Grade

Hobbies:

Violin, Tetris, Swimming, Running

Clubs:

Science Club, Symphony Orchestra, Swim Club

Contest / Competition Experience or Honors:

USAMO HM 2021 / Blue MOP 2021 / APMO 2022 Silver (2nd in US) / USACO Platinum / US Physics Camp 2022

Autobiography

In 6th grade, I found out Mathcounts existed, and promptly got my elementary school ego shoved down my throat. I didn't like that, so I prepared pretty hard, making Nationals in 7th and placing 28th in 8th. During that time, I fell in love with math.

When I found the $F=ma$ contest in 9th grade, I took two weeks out of my AIME grind to speedrun all the past $F=ma$ sets. I had the mathematical syntax; I just needed to learn physics vocabulary. I paired my mathematical machinery with newfound physics intuition and qualified for the USAPhO. Then, I googled HRK, studied more, and got a bronze medal. At the same time, I found out about the USACO. I just needed to learn the Java syntax; the mathematical content was already there. I tried the bronze contest and swept it, then tried the silver contest and swept that.

In 10th grade, I spent virtually all of my time on computational mathematics; I qualified for USAPhO again, but it was canceled. In 11th grade, I switched to studying olympiad-level mathematics and diversified my studies. On my birthday, I made three wishes: USAMO, USAPhO Gold, and USACO Platinum.

Deciding HRK was boring, I picked up Ricardo and Wang's Competitive Physics textbooks. These were math-heavy and quite challenging, which was perfect; I soaked up the books. I took CF competitions and mocked past USACOs. I enrolled in Evan Chen's OTIS program and blasted through around four dozen units. 1 $F=ma$, 2 AMCs, and 3 USACOs passed without event. On the AIME, my newfound theory let me qualify for the USAMO by a thread. My life was a whirlwind of competition and study - but it had stopped being work, it was play, and it would never be work again.

My memories of that time - it's dusk, snowing outside, there's lofi music playing on my google mini, Latexed equations dance across my monitor, and Competitive Physics sits open atop pages of multicolored hand-drawn diagrams. I'm not there. I'm far away in a theoretical universe, marveling at how electromagnetic fields morph under relativity.

On the USAMO, I found out my competitive programming experience had made me a combo main, and I clutched a MOP ticket. I made the USAPhO Top 50 list. 2021's Gold Open was essentially a math test. So I swept it, taking home Platinum.

In my senior year, I returned to my middle school IMO dreams, spending hundreds of hours exploring the wonders of olympiad mathematics.

In order of importance, competitions taught me how to learn, the meaning of work, and how to leverage interdisciplinary knowledge.

On April 29th, I abruptly and unexpectedly found out I qualified for US Physics Team. So I guess I will return for one last olympiad.