2020 winners of the SA Computer Applications Olympiad

The Institute of Information Technology Professionals South Africa (IITPSA) has announced the winners of the Computer Applications Olympiad.

Gold medal and IITPSA trophy winner – Justine Barwise, Grade 12, Hoërskool Waterkloof (Gauteng).

The annual Applications Olympiad is a challenge for learners who take CAT or the ICDL or are otherwise computer literate. The participants have to solve a number of problems using a common office package and the data provided. Contestants may use the application of their choice, such as the Word Processor, Spreadsheet, Database and Presentation Tool. The event is one of three Computer Olympiad challenges held each year to identify, encourage and reward computer aptitude, encourage computer studies, and create an awareness of career opportunities in ICT. The SA Computer Programming Olympiad is one of the oldest and largest competitions of its kind in the world and has been held since 1984.

Computer Olympiad manager Michael Cameron said 6461 learners from 163 schools took part in the first round of the event, three weeks before lockdown was instituted. While the event is usually held at schools and the finals at a central location, the lockdown prompted organisers to stage the Olympiad's second, third and final rounds remotely this year. The finals were invigilated by ten teachers at five provincial venues.

Noting that the Olympiad contributes to futureproofing South Africa by building the data skills of today's teens to help South Africa develop beyond the pandemic, Cameron said: "Reaching the finals is a significant achievement. Today, entrepreneurs are looking for young programmers. They see the benefit of having tech-savvy teens in business, and it is best to start young."

The winners of the 11th Applications Olympiad, announced this week, are:

Gold medal and IITPSA trophy winner – Justine Barwise, Grade 12, Hoërskool Waterkloof (Gauteng) who wins R10,000 for herself and R4,000 for her school.

Silver – Latasha Claire Friend, Grade 12, Penryn College (Mpumalanga).
Silver – Ruan Schoeman, Grade 8, Homeschool Midrand (Gauteng).

Bronze – Anais Herman, Grade 11, Hoër Meisieskool Bloemhof (Western Cape)
Bronze – Jaedon Naidu, Grade 11, Eden College (KwaZulu-Natal)
Bronze – Faran Steenkamp, Grade 12, Thomas More College (KwaZulu-Natal)

Participation and provincial award winners:

- Maryam Badsha, Grade 12, Rustenburg Girls' High (Western Cape) – placed 2nd in Western Cape (tie)
- Kate Blake, Grade 12, Bergvliet High School (Western Cape) – placed 2nd in Western Cape (tie)
- Urooj Mollah, Grade 12, Collegiate Girls' High (Eastern Cape) – placed 1st in Eastern Cape
- Alok More, Grade 11, Glenwood High (KwaZulu Natal) – placed 2nd in KwaZulu-Natal
- Eric Peach, Grade 12, Hoërskool Randburg (Gauteng) – placed 2nd in Gauteng

R47,000 in cash prizes was awarded to the six medal winners and their schools, and all finalists receive free IITPSA student membership.

Moira de Roche, Non-Executive Director of the IITPSA and Chair of the Computer Olympiad Board, said during a virtual awards announcement: "We congratulate all the winners, who participated under unusual circumstances this year. I was delighted that so many of the finalists – more than half of them, and the winner, are young women.

"The IITPSA encourages talented young people like yourselves to keep up to date with the ever changing world of IT, and we encourage you to take part in at least one IITPSA event in the year ahead – it could help you shape your career and clarify subject choices. It will also help you develop a network of people, which will help you in your future career."

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