



Sunday 12th October 2003

Riding in Top Gear But with the Brakes On!

There was something about the third day of Shaastra 2003 even as it charged ahead – a certain restraint, a certain reluctance to add any momentum. Major events took place. But somehow, the day on the whole was a little less memorable than the second. One let down was in the quality of the lectures as well as in the lecturer-audience rapport.

The talk by Dr. Raymond Stata, though reasonably well attended, was on a topic far from the one advertised. The content of the talk by Dr. Vijay Chandru was as confusing as the topic, namely *Second Coming of Computational Positivism*. This proved to be a reiteration (as the speaker himself acknowledged) of the fact that lectures immediately after lunch are always boring and poorly attended! A lot of students were caught catching a quick nap in the air conditioned halls of the auditorium during these lectures.

The crowd pullers on day three were undoubtedly Unconventional Flying Machines and the Shaastra Main Quiz, not to mention The Incredible Machine. While Unconventional Flying Machines started off as a pretty low profile event with participants absolutely clueless about how to use their extreme freedom with materials – ranging from Diwali *patakas* to aluminum foils. The event hogged most of the attention when the testing began at the KV Grounds and the rockets started gunning for everyone and everything from the Dean Students to a Fountain Pepsi outlet!

The Shaastra Main Quiz was generally accepted as more than difficult. Some of the steps and hops involved in the connection questions were extremely intricate. However, it is clear that these questions, particularly the visuals were very well researched. Many questions were dedicated to the coordinator who could not stay on for Shaastra. The finals also had a surprise appearance by

another ESB sinner who was called in to be a guest quizmaster. Q provided the much needed entertainment for the less heavy duty quizzers in the audience. A lot of non-IITian participants seemed rather irritated by the overuse of IIT lingo by the coordinators.

The Incredible Machine continued where it left off the previous day. The coordinators gave away reference books as prizes, after first querying the winners on their branch of study! One Electrical engineer with an interest in Biotechnology, however, was denied a branch slide as no BT textbooks were available! One of the coordinators, an unlikely showman in appearance, was on fire with the mike and indulged the audience in cheering, booing, and guessing the ages of participants!

A number of other events dotted the day's schedule apart from these larger spots. The Supply Chain Management Game was conducted by outside professionals but somehow failed to draw too much of a crowd. ENGenious was well

appreciated but seemed a little too elaborate in that even the most minute details of the design were expected to be shown. All problems were drawn from real life. Metakicks, to quote one of its coordinators, was 'surprisingly well attended', and to paraphrase many of the participants, surprisingly easy. Project X returned to an old favourite material – drinking straws – to devise a rain water harvesting system. Informals' Oscilloscope Games were also rather well attended. And finally, Bullseye had a good chance to showcase its incremental progress towards reality. Though the coordinators' efforts have been rather heartily commended, last year's winners claim to have already found loopholes which they perhaps on moral grounds have not yet exploited.

Dream Catcher in the OAT was the much required jolt that the third day needed. While not much can be said about the movie itself, it is certain that any guests looking to sign the Shaastra guestbook the wild and natural way will seriously reconsider!

Detailed Coverage of These Events

Is Outside the Scope of This Newsletter!

Team Newsletter shall continue to devotedly follow Shaastra as it happens. However, we shall have no opportunity to bring you anything after this issue. We leave you with a preview of what to expect. And with hope.

The Spirit of Engineering team, although much less visible than it was last year, has been steadily working to build what could create a world record for the world's largest arcade game. This afternoon, Team Newsletter urges you to witness the demonstration of Snake or Nibbles at the SAC.

Apart from the final sessions of events which have already begun, today will also see the ICE Quiz, Aeromodeling, Java Jeopardy, Hardware Design Contest and Blueprint.

To continue the story where we had left dangling in our Zeroth Issue, the Video Conference coordinators, in spite of the most relentless wrestling with the best of contacts, had to finally give up on flying Dr. Kevin Warwick in, as his wife's passport had run out of pages to stamp another visa on!

Low Rent Bulletin Board (Unlit) aka Lectures and Demonstrations for the Day!

Hafeez Contractor on *Building Castles in Thin Air* - the thought process in a designer's mind.

Objects in the Rearview Mirror

Are Closer Than They Appear

by

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Booze, aka Vignesh Nandakumar, was deeply involved with the first two Cores that coordinated Shaastra 2000 and Shaastra 2001. Currently, after two more years of devotion to Electrical Engineering, he hopes to work on integrating next generation hard disk drives.

Part Three – Turbo Boost and the Crystal Ball

*“Men may come and men may go, but I go on forever” –
The Brook, Alfred Lord Tennyson, also **Shaastra**.
“The woods (of IIT) are dark, lovely and deep, but we
have promises to keep” – Shaastra Team motto*

Two years and three Shaastras later, it just feels better. 2002 was probably the Golden Year of Shaastra so far. Two Shaastras in a year is no mean feat, but each giving a turbo boost to Shaastra is what one would call **awesome**. And kudos to those Shaastra teams for that. While the first two Cores put together a skeleton, it was the subsequent Cores that actually fleshed it up, that made innovation a necessity in Shaastra, that introduced more events of high relevance to Shaastra and that came up with the Greatest Thing in the World! The momentum of 2000 and 2001 started Shaastra; the turbo boost of 2002 can be seen as what will define Shaastra's trajectory into the future. Shaastra 2003 has sure kept that up and at the same time, has been made more socially relevant. It goes to the credit of the Shaastra 2003 team to have conducted events to solve problems of social relevance, putting Shaastra in a league of its own.

When the curtains come down on Shaastra 2003 tonight, when the participants return, when the Core sits down at GC and sighs at the Shaastra 2003 banner, when the Hospi team returns the last mattress and when the billboards get painted over, that's when the size of it all hits you. That's when your thoughts wander to what the next Shaastra will be like. And if you can, keep this

newsletter with you till then and pen me your thoughts.

Over the last two days, this column talked about how it all started and the growth pangs of the second year. Much as I wanted to talk about the Golden Year of Shaastra so far, I found myself at a loss of words. As an alumnus with a view from a distance, one can only imagine the feeling of being there. And speculate as to where Shaastra could go from here. It took me two full days to find a crystal ball to see the future and I let my thoughts soar- here's what I saw:

By Shaastra 2005: Shaastra has students coming from South Asia and South East Asia, making it the first South Asian technology event for students; Industrial and science exhibition showcases emerging science and technology in India; Shaastra is a culmination of a year-long tech competitions at IIT-Madras. Shaastra web-cast live!

By Shaastra 2008: International conference organized along with Shaastra; Shaastra becomes biggest event of its kind in the south Asian-south-east Asian region; Blueprint @ Shaastra has produced at least 5 patents. Year-long tech competitions made open to other colleges too. Astronauts video-conference from Space!

By Shaastra 2010: Shaastra becomes biggest sci-tech forum in India for students, academicians, researchers and industry (*and participation levels in Shaastra increases to proportions that need crowd management studies*).

