

Ex-intelligence officer wins USA Memory Championship

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A former US Navy intelligence officer who served in Afghanistan won the USA Memory Championship here Saturday for the second year in a row, besting his three fellow finalists in memorizing two decks of cards.

"I am beyond happy because I had to prove that (last year's victory) was not chance, so now I am totally at peace. I love to compete against myself and getting better and better," said Ronnie White, of Fort Worth, Texas.

Fifty mental athletes competed all day in the 13th annual championship in lower Manhattan that included events such as memorizing the names of 99 people and their pictures, a 50-line poem in free verse and over 100 single numbers in the right order.

In the category of speed numbers, computer science student Nelson Dellis, 26, won and topped White's previous record by remembering in five minutes 178 different numbers in their right order.

White, who is able to memorize a deck of cards in 1.5 minutes, will go on to represent the United States at the World [Memory](#) Championships in Guangzhou, China in November.

Mostly won by Britons, last year's world championship was clinched by Briton Ben Pridmore, who memorized a randomly shuffled deck of 52 cards in 24 seconds.

Despite their astounding feats, most competitors profess nothing unusual about their prodigious memories, claiming that all it takes is regular mental exercise.

"I do practice every day, in the morning, at night. I do at least one hour a day," said Ram Kolli, a 29-year-old risk management consultant from California who took third place behind White.

A memory technique widely used is pairing an image to each item that is memorized.

"Whatever you want to memorize you must turn into a picture. I have a person for every playing card in the deck," said White.

And they say having a good memory really makes a change in your daily life.

"I meet somebody today and six months later you remember their name, and if you are in business it helps your business," White said.

"It helped me also in the military," added the 36-year Navy veteran.

"There is a lot of stuff to memorize, and as an intelligence officer... I could memorize a lot of information without taking any notes."

Months before each championship, the contenders go into intensive training that often includes changing their eating and living habits.

"I stopped drinking alcohol three month ago, eat blueberries everyday and (take) omega-3 antioxydants," said Dellis, who enjoys mountain climbing in his spare time.

USA Memory Championship chairman and founder Tony Dottino says anybody can have a good memory.

"Memory is something we use everyday, at any moment of our lives, and we never learn how to use it."

But, sometimes, Dottino added, it's good to forget.

"There are things in our lives we don't want to remember, so our brains are able to suppress certain memories, so they don't depress us."

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