



# The first seven years

The first seven years are crucial both in the course of human life, and - as it has proved - in the background of the International Olympiads in Informatics, says Assoc. Prof. Asen Rahnev, Dean of the Faculty of Mathematics and Informatics at Plovdiv University „Paisii Hilendarski“. He is also Deputy-Chair of the Host Organizing Committee of the XXI IOI. The first gold medal winner in international competitions is a Plovdivian - Emanuil Todorov, an alumnus of the „Chernorizets Hrabar“ Secondary School, the English Language School and the Mathematical School (in his one-year Vocational Training Module).

He was a top scorer and received the special prize. Then he graduated from the MIT, having become the first Bulgarian enrolled at this elite university. After that he did a PhD and settled to work and live in the USA. At the second International Olympiad in Informatics, the gold medal tradition was continued by Stoyan Halkaliev and on and on it went, until Ivaylo Riskov - the golden boy of 2003 come into play. Prior to the international competitions, however, the Plovdiv school had some very strong years. We would always win the nation-wide contests. For many years in a row, the national team was led by

Plovdivians. It was Ognyan Gavrailov and me who worked with the kids. We were teachers at the Mathematical School in Plovdiv at that time... But let us go back still earlier - somewhere around 1981-82, when all this system was run by the then Assoc. Prof. Pavel Azalov. Later on, the professor led the Bulgarian national team at the Olympiad for university students and we ranked fourth in the world in the same year when Bulgaria finished fourth in the World Cup Football: which is why our achievement did not provoke as much media attention as it deserved.

Continued on p. 6

A special illustrated postcard dedicated to the XXI International Olympiad in Informatics - Plovdiv, 8 - 15 August, has been in circulation in Bulgaria since 27 Jul 09. The philately edition was validated during a ceremony at the Bulgarian Postal Museum by the Organizing Committee of the contest and by the Minister of Education, Youth and Science Yordanka Fandakova.



Very few people seem to know that the new Minister of Regional Development and Public Works has also been an informatics champion. In the now distant year of 1982, Rosen Plevneliev was a winner in the Bulgarian national competition which was the forerunner of the International Olympiad in Informatics



## The Olympiad determined my life

**Ivaylo RISKOV,**  
gold medal winner at the  
Olympiad in 2003

After the Olympiad in 2003, I was enrolled as a student at Sofia University, and a year later I continued my studies at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Boston (MIT), the USA. I graduated

last year with a Master's degree in Computer Science and since then I have been working (to put it formally, I have been pursuing my career in the field of my specialisation) with a financial company in New York, where I am responsible for the company's software infrastructure and financial models.

I suspended my involvement in competitive informatics a year ago, just before my graduation. During the first year after I left for the USA, in 2005, I took part in the International Olympiad for university students as part of the MIT team. Although it can be said that the Olympiad for university students is anal-

ogous to the Olympiad for school students, the two competitions are rather different in terms of rationale, organization, and dynamism. The biggest difference, however, is that the contest for university students is a competition of teams, of universities, and not of individuals (unofficially, the Olympiad for school students is a contest of nations). During the following years, I was also one of the team coaches (it is common practice for coaches in Olympiads for university students to be students who are also former contestants). In no attempt to give myself credits, I am happy that the team managed to make it to the fourth and second places, respectively - unlike the not so brilliant performance of the team in the year when I was a contestant.

In addition to competitions for university students, for a certain period of time during 2004 I was still involved in Olympiads for school students in Bulgaria by proposing problems and providing training to part of the national team for the Balkan Olympiad in Informatics during that same year, which was also held in Plovdiv. I most honestly regret I will not be able to attend this year's Olympiad in my home town - Plovdiv and I wish success to all contestants!