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Development through competitions during his vocational high school period

After working for a year to pay his tuition fees, Tai Chiang Ching went to I-Ning High School to enrol in the Division of General Business. He joined the contest team of abacus arithmetic instructed by Mr. Hong You-tian right after he entered the high school. I-Ning High School held a competition to select team members. All new students could also participate in the competition and about 200 students took part.

Mr. Hong selected 30 members, and gave them special training after school every day. After one month, he selected 15 of them to stay on in the team. After another month, he retained only 10 members. Mr. Hong said that the contestants he was looking for should be elite students who can face any challenge. Since only five members could participate in the contest, he needed to find those who were willing to study, practise hard and then pass rounds of gruelling examinations. If a contestant couldn't pass the examination rounds, he or she would be eliminated in the contest.

Mr. Hong created a tense but fair environment to train the students who practised hard in abacus arithmetic and had the intention of participating in the contest. When Tai Chiang Ching entered I-Ning High, his level of abacus arithmetic had already reach level 4 and he was considered to be top-ranked among the members. Therefore, Mr. Hong highly valued Tai, who was very interested in abacus arithmetic and was willing to practise hard. Thus, he was able to get good grades on the exams. Finally, he became one of the five “best of the elites” who was able to stay in the team to represent the school and participate in the national contest. Mr. Hong had made a great impact on Tai Chiang Ching.

Mr. Hong knew some abacus arithmetic teachers from other schools, such as Mr. Lin Mao-rong from National PeiTou High School and Mr. Hsu Biao from Sheau-Yang High School in Changhua County. Those schools often held friendly competitions, so the teachers sometimes also held such competitions outside the school on

holidays. Teachers and schools were not only able to communicate but could also exchange skills through these competitions. Tai took these opportunities to get to know more teachers and students outside the school. On one occasion, when Tai was an 11th grader, he asked Mr. Hsu if he could join the training camp held by Sheau-Yang High School during his winter vacation because I-Ning High School did not hold one. Mr. Hsu was surprised that a student outside his school would voluntarily join the training camp. He agreed to have Tai Chiang Ching join the two-week training camp and allowed him to stay with other contestants in the school dorm.

Hsu Biao thought, “If the students in our school can all study hard like Tai Chiang Ching, I would be relieved. The school’s abacus arithmetic team would also get a good place in the contest.” This story proved that Tai Chiang Ching’s decision-making, determination and perseverance to learn abacus arithmetic is evidence that nothing could stop him.

At that time, I-Ning High School’s representative team participated in all the national abacus arithmetic contests in the big cities in Taiwan, such as Taipei, Yilan, Taichung, Chiayi, Tainan, and Kaohsiung. There were four to five large-scale contests held each year, including regular and friendly contests. National abacus arithmetic contests were all team contests and were divided into groups of elementary school, junior high school, senior high school, college, and non-student youth. Usually about 100 teams participated in a contest with about 500 members taking part in total.

The contest results would be based on the total score of the three members of each team representing their respective schools. Tai Chiang Ching remembered that his team had earned fourth place in the contest, and it was difficult to reach such a high level of achievement with so many schools competing.

When Tai Chiang Ching graduated from I-Ning High School, his level of abacus arithmetic had already reached level 4. Tai had intended to stay in the school to teach abacus arithmetic,