

Physics Orientation Camp 2016

On 13 July, we awaited 20 incoming Physics freshmen at the registration room of Physics Orientation Camp 2016 (POC'16). We were the seniors, orientation group leaders (OGL) and camp facilitators. At the arrival of our first participants, we gave our warmest greetings and directed them to their respective orientation groups (OGs). There were 4 OGs with somewhat illustrious names to complement with the illustrious storyline behind the activities of the 3-days-2-nights camp. Yellow in OG colour was *Tinore Maritimus*. Red was *Octum Arbitus*. *Mactor Cxor*— green— and *Abyssi Umbrians*— blue.

There was barely any need for ice-breaker games. With 5 freshmen and 3 seniors in each OG, we were soon familiar with one another's names. What followed next was perhaps unique to Physics orientation camps. The conversations within our OGs eventually converged to matters concerning Physics. Ranging from “why choose Physics?” to technicalities in the academic field, the freshmen were verbally engaged until everyone had arrived for the camp briefing to commence.

To simulate the likes of mission-oriented games, with a compelling story to unravel, one of the camp facilitators, Lloyd, entered the character of a Chief Commander and issued orders to the freshmen behind a Commander's desk. In the same room, a series of videos were played to the camp participants after they successfully completed each mission. Through Lloyd's narration and the video playbacks, the freshmen were fed with the development of the plot, ridden of twists and surprises.



Lloyd role-playing as Chief Commander. He turned out to be a villain at the end.

Day 1

The camp activities for the first day were situated in Science faculty. We had the dry games, consisting of Blind Mice, Relay, Ampere's Loop and Cheerio. In each of these games, the 4 OGs were made to compete with one another. Blind Mice required a member to be blindfolded. The "blind" member then relied only on his team mates' verbal guidance to locate a bin and drop a ping pong ball into it.



From top left: The orientation groups are Octum Arbitus (Red), Abyssi Umbrians (blue), Tinore Maritimus (yellow) and Mactor Cxor (Green).

Relay was a race across 4 stations. At each station, the player must complete an objective before he could move on to the next. The first station was a challenge to toss chopsticks, with palm facing up, only to grab them with palm facing down. The player must start with 1 chopstick, followed by 2, so on and so forth, until he succeeded with 5. At any point the player dropped a chopstick, he must restart the challenge. The rest of the stations were not any easier; the last being the toughest where each OG attempted to build the tallest structure of paper bags using only their mouths. In Ampere's Loop, the aim of the game was to balance a balloon with a paper plate in one hand and manoeuvre the balloon into a pail at the end of a path. Along the path, members of other OGs would fan their paper plates to make the player lose control of his balloon. Among the dry games, Cheerio might be the most physically demanding, requiring players to hang on a pull up bar while answering questions. Some of these questions were even academic-related!



Dry games: Relay.



Dry games: Cheerio!

The next activity was a wet game, titled Drop The Cap. The scoring system was complex and the game had plenty of strategies to work on. For that reason, it was the most exciting and enjoyable. The game started with 2 OGs battling against each other. Players wore a newspaper vest over their shoulders. They would then throw water bomb bags at the opposing team members until their newspaper vests were torn from their necks, thereby eliminating them. Apart from the general rule, there were other ways to gain advantage over another team. For example, a team member could acquire a powerful water gun by hanging a weight over his vest for 5 seconds. If his vest could not support the weight and was torn, he would not acquire the water gun and be eliminated instead. Drop The Cap was about strategizing and taking risks, alluding to the grading system of NUS.



Wet game: Drop The Cap.

The last activity of the day was Escape The Room. This was the most intellectually challenging game. With so many puzzles, it took the fastest team an hour, nineteen minutes to get the final clue leading to victory. Some of these puzzles required freshmen to arrange mirrors and beam splitters on a customized tray so that a projected laser beam would be shone and directed onto the letters giving the clue. A freshmen remarked that only in POC'16 did he ever encounter such “high-level” and “logically satisfying” games.

Day 2

The activities for day 2 were held in Palawan Beach of Sentosa. The games were Ultimate Frisbee, Capture The Flag and Fill-The-Bottle. By now, the freshmen had opened themselves up to one another under the catalyst of these team-oriented games. No one was reserved in their involvement of the camp activities. Including the seniors, we had grew much closer to one another and the camp was progressing excellently. We proceeded for dinner after the games at Sentosa and headed back to campus for the last activity: Scouting at Knight. Again, it was full of complex scoring systems and abundant strategies to exploit. For this category, my OG emerged as winners through shrewd and prudent planning.

At night, each OG gathered for “HTHT” (heart to heart talk) over supper. We shared some of our personal life stories and had a good laugh out of silly games.



Top row and bottom left: Sentosa games. Bottom right: Strategizing for Scouting at Knight.



Prof. Sow's lab demonstration.

Day 3

We began the day with captivating lab demonstrations by our own Faculty staff and Head of Physics Department, Professor Sow. With Prof. Sow's unparalleled flair of Science communication, the freshmen were enthralled and reminded of their love for Physics. Following that, the freshmen sat through a few talks, one of which was presented by Special Programme in Science (SPS) on the curriculum and opportunities that the academic programme has to offer. Afterwards, we left campus for the Amped

Trampoline Park where we ached our bodies in our fervent jumping. It was about late afternoon when we returned to campus. As the camp approached its end, we announced the scores of each OG and awarded them with prizes. We came to the end of POC'16, satisfied and enriched. Getting to know the freshmen was a rewarding experience for the seniors. The freshmen were also grateful for the advice we offered on academic matters or on life as a Science student in NUS. The positive response of our camp participants assured us that POC'16 was worthy of all our efforts and NUS Physics Society hopes to continue this outstanding tradition of Physics orientation camps.



Amped Trampoline Park.

Some comments from our camp participants:

"Thanks seniors! Really appreciated all the effort you guys put in for the camp." – Nicholas Ng, incoming freshman

"Thanks to the OGLs and the rest of the seniors for organizing the camp so well... your advice and expertise is very much appreciated! Looking forward to seeing you guys in school soon!" – Ravin Raj, incoming freshman

"POC was a great 3 days of senior-freshmen interaction. We had a lot of fun and got to know each other through the camp activities. As an OGL, I feel very excited for the incoming freshmen as they embark on their undergraduate study in Physics. I hope that through the camp, they would have had a glimpse on what it is like to be part of a family of Physics-minded people." – Lai Mingrui, OGL