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Autobiography:

When I was 8, I saw a program that learned to play Pong using reinforcement learning. I found this unbelievably cool and I wanted to learn how it worked and build my own, so I bought this massive tome called Python Machine Learning and started reading. Trouble is, reading only helps if you can comprehend, which I could not because I barely knew how to code. I went back to watching YouTube videos and playing video games like the other 8-year-olds.

A few years passed, and I got interested in math competitions. My 5th grade math teachers were very supportive and they encouraged everyone to do MOEMS. At that time I still thought that cookie clicker >> math, but I got sick of being beaten by my friends and so I decided that I would train and get better. I developed a fondness for the iconoclastic nature of competition math problems. Knowledge of calculus wasn't going to help you; creativity was far more important. I worked through some of the Art of Problem Solving books and, in a shocking turn of events, got better at problem solving.

Around the same time, I picked up game development with GameMaker. I followed tutorials and got better at coding, eventually becoming good enough to make my own games and participate in game jams, where you build a fully functioning game in about 48 hours (like a hackathon). Game development was my golden ticket because it set me up for competitive programming, which set me up for AI.

Competitive programming was, and still is, very fun. It combines math and coding, two of my favorite things, into something even better. Codeforces's Elo system and nearly unlimited problems encouraged me to grind, and starting from 8th grade I practiced a ton. I was bored in my classes and we weren't allowed on our computers, so I printed out articles about various data structures and algorithms and read them during class instead. I also took Codeforces contests during high school and memorized problem statements so that I could mindsolve them during class. I would

wake up at 4 a.m. to solve Codeforces problems until I had to go to school, not because I relished getting out of bed that early, but because solving those problems was fun, I wanted to get better, and this way I could make time in my day to do it. I didn't have time after school because of skating, so I did it in the morning.

An intermission from my competitive programming journey to talk about MathPath! MathPath 2023 was the best summer of my life. I still talk to a ton of MathPathogens, sing Taylor the Latte Boy and Polaroid Love and Cupid, and draw glensheep. I also learned a bunch of cool math at the program about platonic solids and game theory and graph theory and rizz theory.

After getting back from MathPath, I was super motivated to study for AMC. Despite tons of preparation, I missed AIME by a few points. I tried again next year and qualified, but my AMC score was way too low for JMO. Meanwhile, I had been pursuing competitive programming the entire time. I decided to focus on that, and that decision ended up taking me from gold to camp in a single season.

I got into AI olympiad around January 2026 (yes, I know Round 1 was also in January 2026; I was quite unprepared) and studied using the past problems. I also read some of d2l per a recommendation from Dennis Yang. I was really happy to discover that I'd made Round 2, although I regretfully didn't have much time to study for it because the USACO US Open took place a week before. The Round 2 problems seemed to be impossible for everyone except Feodor and I left tons of them blank. The only question I fullsolved was the shape classification problem, where in lieu of a CNN I coded a solution that used corner detection plus BFS. USAAIO more like USACO, am I right?

USAAIO camp was incredibly fun and I learned about so much there, from Hoeffding's inequality to VAEs to AI safety. There was also tons of sidequesting, e.g., learning about the calculus of variations with Aaditya. To everyone at USAAIO camp, I love you guys!

It's an honor to be on Team USA and I can't wait for IAIO!

AI resource recommendations: The Welch Labs Illustrated Guide to AI, all of his and 3b1b's videos, d2l, and ARENA.

Book recommendations: Crying in H Mart, Project Hail Mary, The Fault in Our Stars, All the Light We Cannot See, A Gentleman in Moscow, and A Thousand Ships.