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News / GTA

Rubik's cube is no puzzle for 'speedcubers'

Rubik's cube still going strong 35 years after its invention, with competitions that bring world records to mere seconds.

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Antoine Cantin demonstrates his techniques before the Toronto Open Speedcubing Competition.

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By: [Oliver Sachgau](#) Staff Reporter, Published on Wed Dec 02 2015

Before 1986, the ten-second barrier for the 100 metre dash was seen as unbreakable. The human body, people reasoned, was physically incapable of going any faster.

Then Jim Hines ran it in 9.95 seconds.

Still, there are some world records which can only be broken so often. Eventually, the limits of the human body mean it can only go so far, so high, so fast.

For Toronto's speedcubing community, that's especially relevant. At their Toronto Open, competitors raced to be the ones to get that last record, which would put them in the history books for all time. Their tool: a Rubik's cube.

Speedcubing means solving the infamous 3D puzzle as fast as possible. There are dozens of individual events: solving the standard 3x3x3 cube with both hands; doing it with one hand; solving a special 4x4x4 version.

Almost exactly a week before last Saturday's Toronto Open, 14-year-old Lucas Etter had annihilated the previous 3x3x3 two-handed record at a competition in Maryland, solving the cube in 4.9 seconds. Though no one at the Toronto event beat that record, the top competitors rarely took more than 7 seconds.



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STEVE RUSSELL / TORONTO STAR [Order this photo](#)

Ten-year-old Ifat Ammatul's fastest solve of a 3x3x3 cube is 59 seconds.

Antoine Cantin was among those going for a new record at the Toronto Open. He currently holds the world record for fastest average time (over five tries) solving a 3x3x3 cube one-handed, at 10.87 seconds. He also held the record for fastest single one-handed solve at 8.75 seconds, until a solver from China beat him by half a second in May 2015. To hit those speeds, Cantin said, he practises every free moment he has.

"If I have free time, I'm going to practice," he said, adding that the past year has been tough on his free time, as he's finishing high school and juggling a part-time job.

"Before that, it was literally every second."



STEVE RUSSELL

At 55, Peter Douthright was one of the older competitors at the Toronto Open Speedcubing Competition.

When speedcubing first began as a sort of sport, the records fell slowly. But records are now rarely held for more than a few months.

Partly responsible is the hardware. Few of the cubers at the Toronto Open were using the original Rubik's cube, launched internationally in 1980, opting instead for other brands, especially from the Chinese brand Yuxin. These are more flexible, custom-shaved and even come with cube lube to keep them spinning as fast as possible.

Dave Campbell, director of canadianCUBING and organizer of the Toronto event, said the Rubik's brand is still respected among competitors for inventing the puzzle, but no one who wants to break a record uses one.

"Every time I watch the video I would cringe, because... there's a big pause that was one second long... it could have been so much better," he said.



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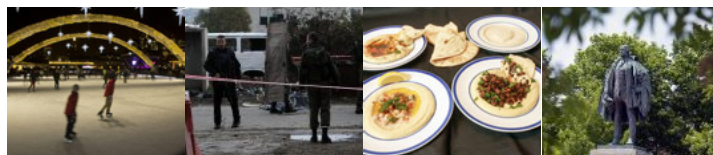
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Ryan Minjun Cho wears ear muffers to drown out the sound as he studies his cube.

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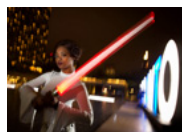
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