

# Playing for real in a simulation

To come out on top again in the stock-market trading simulation competition was truly exhilarating, says **ALEX GOH**

**M**ORE than 500 students pitted their financial and trading skills against each other for the Traders Trophy, held at Singapore Exchange last month.

This trading simulation contest is part of a multinational event that takes place around the globe, from South Africa, Hong Kong and Dubai to Europe. University students compete to become the best student trader from their respective country.

Connected in a network of 30 laptops in a virtual dealing room, the students trade with each other and with fictitious market players.

I first participated in this competition last year out of a desire for a taste of a career in trading. As I did not have any prior knowledge, the learning curve was rather steep.

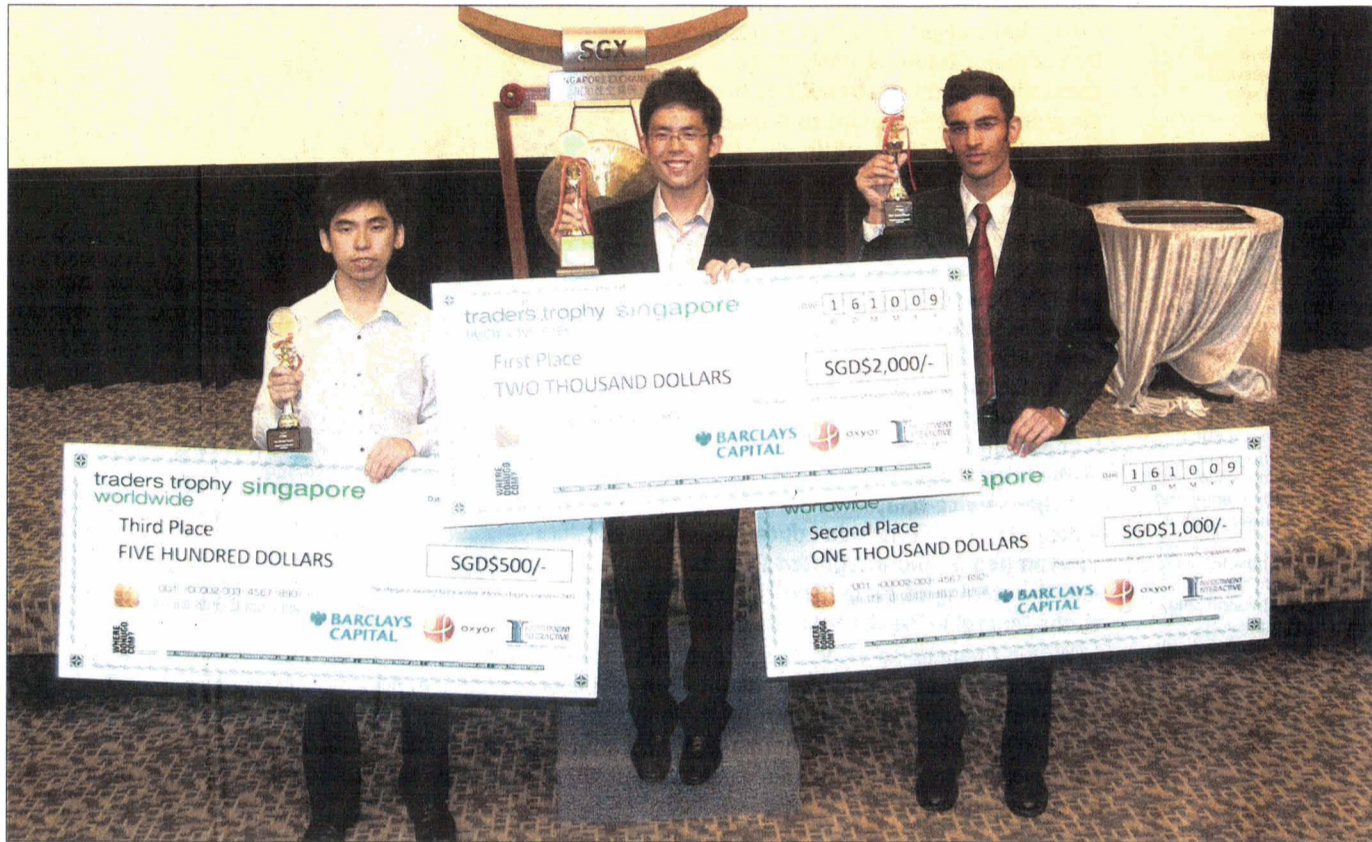
I was initially confused about the bid and offer concept, among other things, but after going through many readings and learning from several consultants who explained the mechanisms of trading to me, the overall picture became much clearer.

The competition was comprehensive – not only were we judged on our profitability (such as making money through trading), we were also assessed on our ability to manage risks (such as keeping to the limits).

I realised that the ability to multitask well and to stay calm and focused even after realising that you have made a bad call was paramount in staying ahead in the competition.

This year's event, sponsored by Barclays Capital, was much more intense than the last edition. Participants were very knowledgeable and highly skilled, as many knew what to expect and what was required in the competition, having had prior experience from the previous year's competition.

I knew that the margin for error was small and I was thankful that I did not make any big mistakes that would have derailed my chances. To finally come out on top was truly exhilarating, and even more so as I managed to win it for the second consecutive year, and landing a coveted spot in the Barclays Capital in-



**Staying on top:** The trading competition is an excellent platform for students to gain exposure to the realities of the trading environment and is especially beneficial to those who are contemplating a career in trading, says Mr Goh (centre), the second-time winner of the Traders Trophy competition

**'Singapore students proved themselves to be highly adaptable to stock market conditions and we had entrants from all disciplines, from history majors to econometrics Masters. But in our simulation, profit is not the only winning criterion, just as in the industry. All contestants need to display a rounded skill set, including risk management and good communications skills, exactly the qualities that financial companies look for in a trader of the future.'**

– Pieter Ris, director of Oxyor

ternship programme.

The experience gave me the chance to further discover my strengths in trading. Throughout the course of the competition, I had to constantly remind myself not to fall into the trap of restricting myself to a certain strategy, particularly because I knew what strategies worked from last year's competi-

tion. I learned to be flexible and adaptable and to compete with an open mind.

That mindset enabled me to come up with and employ a different approach from last year's competition, as well as with the recent 2009 preliminaries.

This trading competition organised by Oxyor – a network of organi-

sations offering work performance enhancement services for companies – is an excellent platform for students to gain exposure to the realities of the trading environment and is especially beneficial to those who are contemplating a career in trading.

The competition was made more complete with the traders from

Flow Traders and Barclays Capital coming down to interact with the participants, giving us first-hand insights into the trading industry.

Moreover, the finalists were given the privilege to visit the Barclays offices, which was a real eye-opener as many of us have never been on a trading floor before.

The competition has given me

many memorable experiences and is one that all students who have a keen interest in trading would relish at participating.

*The writer is a fourth-year finance undergraduate studying business management at the Singapore Management University's Lee Kong Chian School of Business*