

Full Name: Samuel Zhou

Grade: Senior

Hobbies: Reading classic novels, playing excessive amounts of Minecraft, trying (and failing) at bluffing hands in poker, watching anime, listening to random music (Weeknd, Post Malone, K-Pop), and watching mystery documentaries

Clubs: Science Bowl, Academic Challenge, Physics Club, Math Club, Leadership II

Experience: USAPhO Camp (2022), USAPhO HM (2021), USAPhO Qualifier (2021), AIME qualifier (2020-22), USAJMO Qualifier (2021), USAMO Bronze Medalist (2022), Honorable Mention (2023), Science Bowl Nationals 2nd place (2022), 9th place (2023)

Bio:

Now, where did my physics journey start?

Ever since elementary school, I have loved science, and I saw a flier for Science Bowl tryouts one day in 6th grade.

Very soon afterwards, I signed up and prepared for the day of the tryouts by spewing random questions at my parents.

Excitement was rushing through me as I buzzed on the questions, and I was absolutely ecstatic when I discovered I had made the team!

Reaching out to me, one of the coaches asked what subject I was interested in the most, and I decided to focus on physics.

Going to middle school, I still carried that same love for Science Bowl with me.

On the day of the 7th grade Science Bowl team tryouts, however, I didn't do that well and missed the team.

Not one to give up after a small setback, I decided to grind textbooks in order to bounce back and do better for 8th grade.

Nothing felt better than the day I participated in the final buzzer round of tryouts and qualified for the team that year.

Although I didn't make the A team, I still miraculously got to Science Bowl nationals with the B team, which only solidified my passion for physics!

Going to Science Bowl Nationals sparked many other STEM competition interests of mine, most notably with the AMC series and with the $F=ma$.

In late 8th and early 9th grade, I took $F=ma$ courses, and the excellent guidance I received helped me qualify for the USAPhO that year in 2020!

Very sadly, however, the USAPhO was canceled that year, but I resolved myself to dive deeper into the fascinating world of physics beyond mechanics and improve.

Every problem I struggled on and every concept I learned only helped to fuel my motivation, as each increase in my understanding felt deeply satisfying.

Yielding better competition results would require me to pick out some high quality books, so I chose to study HRK, Mechanics by Morin, and E&M by Purcell.

Of course, my most important guides in the journey through physics and towards qualifying for the Camp have been my mentors. Shoutout to Kevin Zhou and Dr. Tang.

Under them, I've been motivated to work hard to pursue this goal, and I couldn't have made it this far without them.

Ultimately, the day of the USAPhO came, and I felt that I was as well prepared as I possibly could be.

Pressure was high and there were many moments where I felt like I would crack, but I did my best to stay focused and keep making progress.

Nearly four years of effort paid off in the end.

Each day that passes reminds me of how soon camp will be, and I couldn't be more excited to have this amazing opportunity to learn physics with peers that love physics as much as I do!

Very soon, I hope to improve my lab skills at camp.

Every new tool I learn there will only make me more passionate about physics, and hopefully I'll carry this love for physics with me wherever I go!

Readers, if you're still here, look at the first letter of each sentence.