

Walking down the aisles of Heathrow Airport to the immigration counter, it hadn't quite hit me that I was in England. At the counter, the gentleman checking my passport decided that he was up for some banter and he asked what the purpose for my visit was. Still feeling lethargic, I mustered a, "I'm here for the Oxford Intellectual Property Law Moot Competition."

"So, do you agree with the American or the European approach to IP Laws?"

"Oh, I think I'm all for the British approach."

The hearty laughter reminded me that I was finally in England. Nawaz and I were on our way to Oxford to represent the National University of Singapore (NUS) for the 5th Oxford International Intellectual Property Law Moot Competition to be held in Worcester College, Oxford, over the weekend of 23rd to 25th March.

This year, the number of teams participating in the competition grew and international representation increased greatly with teams from America, Canada, France, Hong Kong, Sri Lanka, Australia, Singapore, Ireland and England participating. Last year, the team from NUS emerged champions and I suppose we had some lofty expectations to live up to. Arriving at Worcester College, we could not have expected a worse start to things. The bundle of authorities that we had meticulously prepared did not survive the flight and were in a state of shambles. There was no time to be spent fretting and we promptly headed out to the city centre to get new folders to repair the damage.

By the evening, things were almost sorted out and we attended our first briefing for the competition. It was comforting to see some familiar faces. Last year's representatives, Sugene Ang and Felicia Tan were there to provide us with moral support (and slot in a holiday amidst their hectic schedules). Assoc. Prof. Eleanor Wong, our coach, was also there and her instructions to us were that we should report punctually to the competition venue the next day, and that we should not be up till too late. We were up till 3 am working on our arguments.

The next morning, the NUS team was pitched against Brunel University and the University of Westminster in the preliminary rounds. We won both these rounds and it was satisfying to hear that the judges were impressed with our performance. The months of hard work were coming to fruition. It was, however, still too early to rest on our laurels.

We were through to the quarter-finals, held in the late afternoon, and the random draw matched us as appellants against Queensland University of Technology (QUT). The quarter-final between NUS and QUT was very exciting. I think we put in our best performance yet. However, the decision went to QUT by a razor-thin majority of just one point.

While it was disappointing at first, we snapped out of it during the bar quiz that evening. There was fun and laughter all round. We did quite well in the quiz and were placed third. We could have done better if I were better versed in pop music trivia! It also dawned upon us that we had every reason to be proud of ourselves as being there and competing in the moot was in itself an achievement.

QUT went on to win the competition, beating Hong Kong University in the semi-finals and George Mason University in the finals. At the prize-giving ceremony, there was good news to come for NUS. Our team won the prize for Best Written Submissions and I received a special merit prize for my performance in the competition. Prize winners got the opportunity to sit at the high table for dinner and I was very fortunate to be seated next to Lord Justice Mummery. We had spent the last few months reading many cases which His Lordship presided over and it was a surreal experience talking to him. It was also a humbling experience as he shared many anecdotes from his time as a junior barrister. Mummery LJ also knew quite a bit about Singapore and I could never have imagined that I would be spending an evening talking to an English Judge about Singapore!

The sense of community among the organizers of the competition and the mooters made for a wonderful experience. The Oxford IP moot competition is certainly the highlight of my time as an undergraduate and it will be something I will always remember fondly.

On behalf of Nawaz and myself, I would like to thank the following people who helped us with our preparation for the competition: Assoc. Prof. Eleanor Wong for her brutal but always constructive comments; Asst. Prof. Burton Ong for indulging us in our countless questions on the finer points of IP law; Mr Tan Tee Jim SC (M/s Lee & Lee), Mr Alban Kang and his colleagues (M/s Alban Tay, Mahtani, & de Silva), Mr M Ravindran (M/s Ravindran Associates), Mr Lau Kok Keng and his iTec team (M/s Rajah & Tann), and Mr Tony Yeo and his colleagues (Drew & Napier LLC) for their invaluable input on the practitioner's view on the legal issues and the practice sessions amidst their busy schedules; and last but by no means least the IP Academy for providing us with all the necessary support and making it all possible.



From left: Mohd Nawaz, Ramesh Kumar S/O Ramasamy and Prof. David Vaver