



27 young technicians participate in the 48th National Skills Competition

Life in Japan is supported behind the scenes by its technicians. The National Skills Competition is held every year with the objective of passing on their skills to the next generation and letting people know about how important manufacturing is. At the competition, technicians aged 23 or under match their skills against each other in roughly 40 event categories, including Electric Welding, where metals are joined together, and the new technological field of Mechatronics, which is a fusion of mechanical, electronic and information engineering. At the 48th National Skills Competition in October 2010, 27 MHI technicians participated in five categories.

Takahiro Konno has participated two years in a row. "I was discouraged several times, and even missed work because I didn't want to practice anymore," he said, looking back over the past two years. "But I have never wanted to stop going to the competition." Days spent deep in thought and worry lead to an epiphany. "It's important to get a prize at the competition, but I realized there was also something even more important," he said, reflecting on how the experience left him with an overflowing sense of appreciation for his instructors and all the people who had supported him.

MHI's only female participant was Hitomi Tashiro. She spoke of her determination to "push her own boundaries" and of how she strove during practice to strengthen not only technical aspects, but also the physical and mental. "I went to a gym to work on my body, and for my mind I did my own study from books, learning things like breathing methods and positive thinking." She believes the competition is about "facing yourself" and really feels it is an experience that makes you grow as a person.

Ryuji Kubo and Naoto Emi participated in the Mechatronics



Commemorative photograph with all participants.



(Top) The support of his instructors and many people was the driving force for Konno.

(Bottom) The pair of Kubo and Emi. They went into the competition synchronized down to their breathing.

category, where participation is performed in pairs. "We created an atmosphere in which we could both say anything to each other, and really built up our cohesiveness." As indicated by their comment, the two placed their priority on themselves as a combination. The valuable experience of working together as one has given them the ability to cope with any kind of tough situation the future may bring their way.

The National Skills Competition was not just about the technicians and their instructors. Many technicians spoke of how they were only able to give it their best because of the support and cooperation they had from the people around them. "The expectations of the people around me was a good kind of pressure, and made practicing worthwhile," remarked Hiroshi Yamaguchi. "I think the issue will be how best to use my competition experience in the workplace. I want to work hard to make it a step in making me a bigger presence on the front line," he said with enthusiasm. Finally, he had some advice for future participants: "Do what you do well, and enjoy the competition with no regrets."

All of the technicians poured all their passion and effort into repeated practice for the competition, with nine walking away with prizes. Having grown as technicians, as members of society, and as people, they are now honing their skills by taking the experience gained through competition and putting it to use at the workplace, supporting MHI manufacturing into the future.

(Right) A smile beams from the face of Tashiro after winning a bronze medal. She will treasure this experience for life. (Bottom) Yamaguchi comments how "the influence from watching the skills of the other participants is a bounty in itself."

