Geeks battle in reality TV game show

Infocomm reality game show iWhiz promises tension, frayed nerves and even budding romance as its IT-savvy contestants vie to become Singapore's No. 1 geek.

By LIM YEE HUNG

S tars are set to fly in Singapore's first infocomm reality game show.

In the geeks-meet-Survivor-meet-Apprentice show, viewers will get to watch a contestant gripe to the camera about a team-mate playing computer games instead of working on a project. Another may rudely dismiss the ideas of a rival team as "rubbish".

Hosted by TV artists Julian Hsu and Tracy Tan, the weekly 10-episode series features 12 contestants, from 14 to 21 years old, who are split into three teams.

They have to overcome a different infocomm challenge in each episode, such as finding the identity of a hacker in a simulated "scene of crime".

The team with the worst result after each challenge will have to vote one of its members off.

Giving score to the teams will be three judges from the public and private sectors. They are joined by guest judges in each episode to provide subject expertise for each challenge.

The chief judge is Mr Lee Kwok Cheong, chairman of the Infocomm Development Authority. He is accompanied by Mr Andrew Sansom, vice-president of the Singapore Computer Society, and Mr Colin Png, director of business and marketing of Microsoft Singapore.

However, do not expect any controversial criticism like a Simon Cowell from them.

Mr Lee quipped to reporters during the launch last week that they are "very nice" to the contestants, while Mr Png said that they will play tutor more than tormentor.

In the last episode, the three finalists will face off to be crowned Singapore's first iWhiz.

The top prize is a geek's dream: a one-week all-expenses-paid trip to Microsoft's Redmond headquarters to meet key executives and researchers.

The reality game show, a project by the Infocomm Development Authority (IDA), aims to boost Singapore's talent pool for the industry, said Mr Khoo Chong Hock Yuen, IDA's assistant chief executive.

iWhiz, he said, will "reinforce our talent attraction efforts and project infocomm as an exciting and dynamic industry".

The IDA seems to have uncovered some diamonds in the rough.

Damon Lee is one of them.

The 14-year-old, the youngest contestant in the show, specialises in hardware and takes on various leadership positions in the show.

It is no wonder that a fellow competitor told Digital Life that Damon is mature beyond his years.

Some contestants, like 17-year-old Lim Yong Bing, are already passionate about joining the infocomm industry.

The IT diploma student from Temasek Polytechnic hopes to be a games programmer in future. However, it seems his experience on iWhiz has given him another career option.

He quipped: "If I don't make it in infocomm, I will be an actor instead!"

"iWhiz" debuts on Monday at 8pm on Channel 5. Each episode lasts 30 minutes.

Stand a chance to win a set of Windows Vista Home Premium and Office 2007 per episode by answering a question about infocomm that will be flashed during the show.

Show details

TEAM QUADCORE

Tay Yong Jin, 21, National Infocomm Scholar, studying information systems management at SMU.

Derek Khor, 18, pursuing a diploma in business information technology at the Singapore Polytechnic.

Lee Shi Ying, 17, studying infocomm technology at ITE College Central, MacPherson.

Emanuel Lim, 15, studying at Assumption English School, well-versed in hardware and software.

TEAM UTECH

Lai Ying Jie, 16, studying at Hwa Chong Institution; well-versed in infocomm skills.

Fong Hui Fei, 18, studying digital entertainment at Nanyang Polytechnic, good graphic skills.

Paul Andrew Mekelson, 16, studying at Tanglin Trust School; avid gamer and hardware enthusiast.

Jasmond Lih, 16, studying IT at ITE College Central, Tampines, skilled in network structure, hardware and software.

TEAM AVATAR

Olivia Chiu, 19, pursuing a degree in information systems management at SMU; good management skills.

Koh Zhen He, 18, doing infocomm technology at ITE College Central, MacPherson; good at hardware.

Damon Lee, 14, studying at Tanglin Trust School; youngest contestant, and a hardcore gamer.

Lim Yock Bing, 17, studying IT at Temasek Polytechnic, well-versed in hardware and software.