



# Count Down: The Race for Beautiful Solutions at the International Mathematical Olympiad

*Steve Olson*

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Each summer, hundreds of seemingly average teens from around the world gather for the International Mathematical Olympiad, a chance to race the clock and one another in the quest for elegant mathematical solutions. In *Count Down*, the National Book Award finalist Steve Olson sets out to crack the secret of what makes these students such nimble problem solvers. He follows the six U.S. contestants from their free-time games of Ultimate Frisbee to the high-pressure rounds of the competition. In each he finds a potent mix of inspiration, insight, competitiveness, talent, creativity, experience, and, perhaps most important, an enduring sense of wonder. As he observes the Olympians, Olson delves into common questions about math culture and education, exploring why many American students dread geometry, why so few girls pursue competitive math, and whether each of us might have a bit of genius waiting to be nurtured.

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