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Mr. and Ms. Hawk contest crowns winning contestants

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"Come one, come all to the Talon(t) Show of the Year!" proclaimed the poster.

And they did come. By the time the event was about to commence, The Bog was packed with eager spectators ready to shout their hearts out for some of the most driven and talented students IIT has to offer. The atmosphere was tense and thick, brimming with sparks of nervousness and excitement. "It makes me feel like I drank two double ventis and I'm about to go skydiving," admitted Josh Harris, a competitor for the crown of Mr. Hawk.

There were some quick and informative introductions during which the contestants were hailed by the cheers of their friends as they leaped onto the stage, and then came the question round. Every contestant was asked a random question. Some were heavy and philosophical, like "What is the meaning of life?" directed at Bart Dworak, who answered slyly, "42." Other questions were whimsical, like "What is the perfect midnight snack?" to which Harris said dramatically, "An Oreo. With milk. 'Cause it makes me feel like an astronaut."

Next came four "Minute to Win It" games, quick and fun party games that pitted the contestants against one another. The first, "Hanky Panky," involved removing tissues

from a tissue box one-by-one. The person who emptied their box first was the winner. Gus Alvarez went up against his girlfriend, Brittany Mead, in a contest of lovebirds. As a romantic gesture, Alvarez gave Mead the chance to pull the last tissue out of his box – but there turned out to be many, many tissues remaining.

The second game was "Paper Dragon" and had Harris, Liz Pierce and Amy Zasadzinski battle. The players had a roll of streamer material in each hand and had to wave them around until both rolls were entirely unraveled. In an intense match, Harris placed first with Pierce at a very close second.

The third game, called "This Blows," involved each player using the air they blew into a balloon to knock a row of cups off a table. Melanie Standish faced her soccer coach, Lauren Capuano, and emerged victorious. The final game, "Movin' On Up," pitted Dworak, Billy Bafia and Irshad Hussain against each other in a test of dexterity. Each player alternated hands taking cups from the top to the bottom of a stack until the red cup at the bottom was finally on top, and Dworak claimed a landslide victory.

The final round was the talent portion, where each contestant had the chance not just to shine, but to glow. Up first was Bafia, who admitted that his talents lay primarily in the water but nevertheless made the audience rollick with uncomfortable laughter at some well-timed raunchy jokes. Hussain caught

us off guard by singing and dancing to slow-paced Bollywood music that suddenly turned up-tempo, with a switch to vibrant dance moves. Dworak pulled DJ Ade Maron out of her desk as a partner in an eclectic mix of dance styles with a humorous twist. Standish showed off her tap-dancing skills in a spirited whirl of a dance. Pierce demonstrated her passion with some clever puns of her own creation and was quick to point out the abundance of talon-ted people on stage. Zasadzinski performed a heart-pumping stomping routine involving both hands and feet. Harris pulled on a black hoodie that obscured part of his face to obtain the proper aesthetic and rapped an inspirational poem about Mr. Hawk and the college experience. Capuano claimed she did not have a talent, then proceeded to surprise everyone with a dance style that stood out from the crowd. Alvarez and Mead closed the talent round with their best rendition of "A Whole New World" from Disney's *Aladdin*.

Then, finally, came the moment of truth: the voting round, when the winners would be chosen by the crowd. The original text voting setup was overwhelmed by the sheer number of votes, so a less technological method was employed: that of shouting. There were concerns over choosing the most popular competitors this way, but in the end the ecstatic cheering for each and every contestant raised the spirits – and the emotional stakes – of the competition.

There was a clear winner for each category: Irshad Hussain for Mr. Hawk and Lauren Capuano for Ms. Hawk. Both were crowned regally and rewarded with a sash and Chicago Bulls tickets. Every contestant was given a t-shirt for their talent and dedication.

"I feel honored to be crowned the IIT Ms. Hawk 2014, and I'd like to thank Polina Batchkarova for helping me coordinate my dance," said Capuano on winning the silver Ms. Hawk tiara.

"It makes me feel like I am the happiest person on Earth. Thank you, IIT, for hosting such an event. I am so humbled and welcomed by friends here," said Hussain, tears brimming in his eyes with a large golden crown perched askew on his head. He could not have been more moved by his victory.

Thus the night ended on a high note, thanks to the efforts of all involved: MCs Akinade Aderele, Andrea Beca, and Michael Wu, DJ Ade, photographers Kyle Gray and Andrea Beca, and most of all, the talented contestants and enthusiastic spectators.

"I really enjoyed the talent portion of the competition... The location was suitable and the prizes were great. Overall, great job!" praised audience member Bryanna Mcneal.

For one night at least, the student community united in a celebration of school spirit and IIT's many diverse talents.

