Ismail Akram

MAT1475H

Prof. K. Poirer

18 May 2014

My mathematical journey: Challenger!

My earliest mathematical memory consisted of me playing with a number line to grasp the concept of addition and subtraction in Junior Infants (Kindergarten). As far as my relationship with maths —inside the classroom— maths was my go to subject when it came to my studies, homework, tests or general reading; I always placed major priority upon maths than other subjects.

As far as outside is concerned, I remember participating in a science project in fourth year regarding the science of ‘muscle confusion’. That project heavily relied on statistics.

My relationship with maths changed numerous times over the years. Each time I stepped into new territory, I feared grasping new foreign ideas. I always questioned myself, ‘what if I don’t get it? Maths is static; either I understand it or I don’t’. I remember being extremely frightened of the introduction of letters into maths in secondary school, and I took a sneak peek at sample higher level final papers that were 5 years ahead of my time. Looking at the ‘funny S shape (integrations sign) and the symbol for infinity left me astonished. Needless to say, I was intimidated.

Mathematics made a huge impression on my psyche. When I first witnessed the idea of proving theorems through logical deduction —in my 3rd year— it greatly influenced my way of thinking. Every time I saw such a proof, I was ecstatic. I finally felt like I achieved that higher understanding of maths at the time. Now I felt like a challenger; to conclude I shall tell a brief story of one of my greatest personal achievements during my second year. Without this accomplishment, I wouldn’t be here today.

My greatest challenge started in my second year. During my Junior Certificate maths course my requirements consisted of going through 2 main textbooks, one for Ordinary Level and the other for Higher Level. I was assigned to the A2 class (with A1 being the highest level); naturally I desired to participate in the A1 class. My current teacher at the time was teaching at a drastically slow pace for my liking, and yet my peers still couldn’t catch up! I made a drastic decision alongside a friend of mine, who felt the same way. We both ignored our teacher, and proceeded to race through the text book; otherwise we would never finish, and would be left behind in the Ordinary Level (we only had a year left until the Junior Certificate exams). After constant 100s in every test our teacher threw at us, our principal called us outside the classroom. He had recognised our hard work and offered us seats to the A1 math class. I felt guilty taking the opportunity because I knew I would be replacing a deceased friend of mine, Mark from the A1 class, who passed away from a tumour. If I were to take this opportunity, I couldn’t let it go to waste. This decision greatly influenced my mental perseverance. Not too long afterwards I also escalated into the English and Irish Higher Level classes. I was practically a part of the A1 Higher Level class now.

Packing my maths notes into my bag was my final memory in Ireland before I moved here. I registered late and was denied the option for Pre Cal. When I found out City Tech had an Honours program for Calculus, I persisted constantly for a month to have them let me in.

Now that I’m here, I plan on transferring to NYU-Polytechnic by 2015 to eventually become a Software Engineer. I know that I’ll have to shift gears and crank it up even more, and I’m more than determined to achieve my goals for the future.