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How SANS and the UK Cyber Team Helped Sourish Sharma Reconnect with His Cyber Passion and Rediscover Community

A first-hand look at how SANS Institute and the UK Cyber Team initiative supports technical growth, builds belonging, and reopens doors for aspiring cybersecurity professionals

Developed in partnership with SANS Institute and the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT), the UK Cyber Team initiative was a three-round national competition designed to identify and cultivate the UK's next generation of cybersecurity leaders. Starting with an online qualifying round, then an advanced capture the flag (CTF) event, and culminating in a live final round in Birmingham, 30 top cybersecurity practitioners were selected to represent the UK and compete in international CTFs.

This case study highlights Sourish Sharma's journey, from returning to CTFs after a long break to rediscovering the thrill of technical challenge and the power of community.

Rediscovering Skills and a Sense of Belonging

Sourish first heard about the competition through the Cyber Discovery Discord server. Though he hadn't participated in a CTF in several years, the opportunity sparked something. "I thought it'd be nice to do one," he said, and quickly signed up.

Round 1 was more than just a challenge, it was a community experience. "Round 1 was awesome!" Sourish recalled. "People were active on the Discord server, which made it feel more involved. I felt like I belonged–it gave me motivation to participate."

Even though his start was slow, persistence paid off. "I didn't think I had any shot at getting into the final round," he said. "But I kept at it for ten hours and performed way better than I thought I could've!"

Round 2 brought a different kind of thrill. "It was more focussed and technical, so it was really fun treating it as a speed-running challenge," Sourish said. "The rush you get when solving a puzzle is unbeatable, so to be able to get loads of rushes in a single afternoon was epic!"

The Live Final in Birmingham marked a major milestone: Sourish's first-ever in-person CTF. The experience exceeded his expectations in every way.

From the competition environment to the logistics and community, Sourish was energized by it all. "The atmosphere and accommodations were mind blowing," he said. "The energy was crazy, and the food was stellar!"

But the biggest impact came from something less tangible: connection. "I really felt like a part of the cyber community, which I'd been missing so much for the past couple of years and didn't realise until the finals," he said.

While he suggested small improvements to the Friday night activities, he praised the overall event experience, especially the technical setup. "The lighting and sound effects in the big room were great," he noted.

Favorite Moments

The Live Final, the first UK Team training round, and the people. "It's hard finding people who are into cyber," Sourish said, "but this competition brought 200 of them together and I loved it."

Career Impact

After several years away from CTFs, the competition gave Sourish the push he didn't know he needed. It reignited his interest in technical challenges and reminded him how much he enjoyed working in cybersecurity. The experience helped rebuild his confidence and gave him momentum to keep growing in the field. "The finals set a super high bar for what 2025 has to offer me," he said.

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Why Sponsor?

Sourish's story is a powerful reminder of what the UK Cyber Team program delivers:

▶ **Skill Reinforcement:** The competition brought him back into cybersecurity after a long break and helped him thrive.

▶ **Community Reconnection:** Sourish rediscovered a sense of belonging and camaraderie with like-minded peers.

▶ **Momentum and Motivation:** The program inspired him to reengage with his career path and embrace new challenges.

▶ **Sponsor Alignment:** Supporting this program means backing authentic, high-impact learning moments and future talent.

Discover What's Next for the UK Cyber Team

Stay up to date with the latest milestones, training highlights, and competition updates from the UK Cyber Team.

Visit **ukcyberteam.sans.org** to follow their journey as they develop into the UK's next generation of elite cyber talent.

Sourish Sharma