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How SANS and the UK Cyber Team Competition Helped Emily Bridge Transform Her Cyber Skills, Confidence, and Career Path

A first-hand look at how SANS Institute and the UK Cyber Team Competition initiative unlocks talent, develops skills, and builds future cybersecurity leaders.

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 Brimingham, 30 top cybersecurity practitioners were then selected to represent the UK and compete in international CTFs.

This case study highlights Emily Bridge's experience, from the first qualifying round to the Live Final, and how the program helped her build confidence, sharpen her skills, and build a future in cybersecurity.

Emily Bridge

Learning at Every Stage

In Round 1, a timed, online qualifier focused on foundational cybersecurity knowledge, Emily was able to see where she stood and where she needed to improve. "I looked back at the challenge categories where I struggled and made sure to revisit them in preparation for the next rounds," she said. These challenges pushed her to get serious about building her technical baseline knowledge.

Round 2 consisted of a more advanced team competition unconstrained by a timeclock. Emily described it as a turning point. "With no live leaderboard, there was less pressure, and I feel that I performed better." She learned to communicate under pressure, think critically, and adapt quickly, all of which were skills that carried into later rounds.

Competing in the Live Final

The Live Final in Birmingham brought together over 200 participants for a full day of hands-on challenges. The environment was intense but motivating. "I had an amazing time meeting cyber enthusiasts from all over the UK. Everyone was each other's cheerleader," she said. Emily stood out not just for her technical ability but also for her teamwork and resilience, qualities that helped her win a spot in the UK Cyber Team Competition.

"Definitely the scavenger hunt on induction night! It got us communicating and allowed us to understand the team dynamics and how we work best."

Career Impact

"We got to connect with the sponsors and learn about their opportunities. I also appreciated that SANS held one on one recruitment sessions to discuss career options and provide career advice."

Why Sponsor?

Emily's experience shows why the UK Cyber Team programme matters:

▶ **Skill Development:** Participants grow through hands-on challenges, feedback, and real-world scenarios.

▶ **Real-World Impact:** From 210th to finalist, Emily's journey shows the competition's power to develop talent.

▶ **Career Pathways:** Direct access to training, mentorship, and recruitment opportunities.

▶ **Brand Visibility:** Sponsors engage directly with top emerging talent and are seen as champions of the cybersecurity future.

"If this competition ran again, I would 100% apply."

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.

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