

UP Front

FACE TIME

BENEDIKT TASCHEN



A BOOK YOU CAN BENCH-PRESS

It's one of the biggest gambles in publishing history. On Apr. 15, German entrepreneur **Benedikt Taschen** released *GOAT: A Tribute to Muhammad Ali*, a limited-edition photo book about the boxing legend—with a \$3,000 price tag. (The title stands for "Greatest of All Time.") At 75 pounds, it's so heavy that picking it up gave Taschen a hernia that required surgery in mid-March. "We're including a note inside that says always have two people lift it," he says.



Taschen, 43, prides himself on shaking up the stuffy world of coffee-table books. *Sumo*, his four-year-old photo book by the late Helmut Newton, weighed 66 lb.

GOAT took four years and \$12 million to produce. Taschen, who used to get up in the middle of the night to watch Ali fights, figures he needs to sell two-thirds of the 10,000 copies to turn a profit. That's a feat some compare with going 12 rounds with Ali in his prime.

—Christopher Palmeri

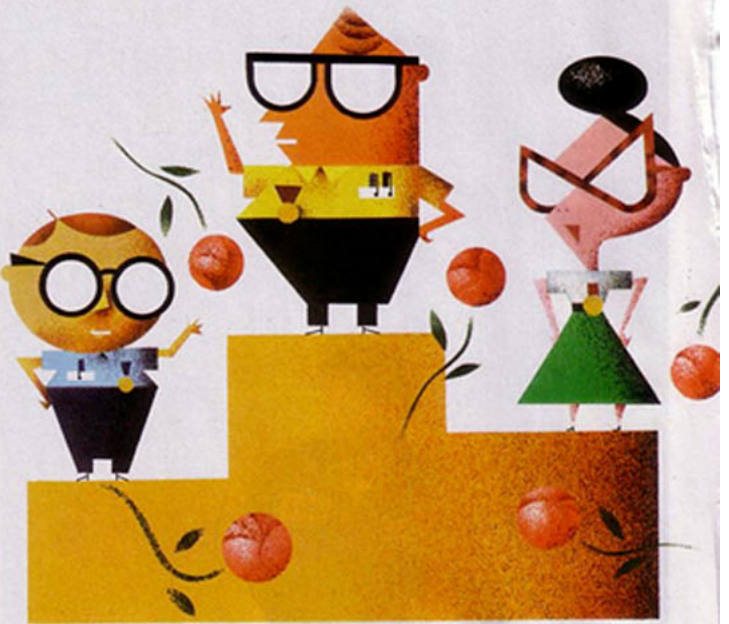
WIRED LIFE

AND THE CHAMPION CODERS ARE...

IN SOFTWARE, no country is hotter than India. But at the Apr. 16 **TopCoder Collegiate Challenge**, software's world championship in Boston, the programming powerhouse was all but invisible. A 22-year-old Pole, Tomasz Czajka, won the \$25,000 prize for the second year in a row, edging out rivals from the U.S., Canada, and Australia.

Indians barely ranked as also-rans: 58 Indian students were among 705 competitors in the early rounds, but none made it into the 24-person programming final.

The country consistently trails. Officials at TopCoder, the Glastonbury (Conn.) company that runs the contests, have ranked competition results of 36,000



programmers over three years. **University of Warsaw** ranks highest, with its students in the 97th percentile. **Massachusetts Institute of Technology** students finish, on average, in the 86th. **Indian Institute of Technology** is far behind, in the 56th percentile. TopCoder officials say the contests reflect pure math skills. But G. Sivakumar, head of computer science at IIT Bombay, says students

need training for the contests because they're races against the clock. He says the Chinese already provide courses, and that India will likely follow.

Companies such as **Yahoo!** and **Intel** sponsor the contest and use it as a recruiting tool. While India is sure to keep landing its share of software jobs, look for recruiters to keep banging on doors in places such as Boston and Warsaw, too. —Stephen Baker

CHURCH & STATE

THEY'D RATHER PAY THAN PRAY

THERE ARE FEW more popular ways to catch a tax-time break than taking a deduction for charitable giving. Almost 40 million people did so in 2001, according to the latest data from the **Internal Revenue Service**.

But as a more liberal tax policy has increased giving, religious attendance has fallen. In a **National Bureau of Economic Research** paper, economist Jonathan Gruber of **Massachusetts Institute of Technology** finds



that Americans view donations as a substitute—if you can't pray, pay.

Gruber analyzed government surveys on donations and religious attitudes over 30 years. The data show that for every 1% rise in giving spurred by tax subsidies, attendance at services drops 1.1%, implying a "strong substitutability."

Religious leaders say the biggest donors are regular attendees, but Gruber says tax changes most affect those who aren't regulars. Does having people in the pews outweigh the benefits of more cold, hard cash? On that point, Gruber remains agnostic. —Brian Hindo

THE STAT

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The percentage decline in the United Auto Workers' membership rolls in 2003. At 624,585, the union's membership level is the lowest since 1942 and down from a peak of 1.53 million members in 1969.

Data: Labor Dept.

(CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT) ILLUSTRATION BY TERRY ALLEN; H. ABERNATHY/ROBERTSTOCK.COM; SIAN KENNEDY