Acing Tech Interviews: From Startups to Big Tech

Jason Bell & Christopher Mollard

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Agenda

- Introductions
- Preparing for Behavioral & Competency Questions
- Preparing for Technical Exercises
- Congrats on Your Offer - Now What?
- Book & Podcast Recommendations
- Q&A

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Jason Bell

- 16+ years of experience across technology and and consulting
- Tech commercial leadership roles at Amazon and three startups (one of which was acquired by Google)
- Qualified Amazon Hiring Bar Raiser, with a hiring veto, for 4+ years; led 500+ Amazon interviews
- Tech Careers Advisor for top UK & European Universities
- Current: Director of Know Your Pace, Personal & Professional Development

Christopher Mollard

- 12+ years of experience in UX as in house, consultant and contractor
- Lead UX and Scrum Master on numerous public sector projects
- Successfully delivered technology transformation on a small and large scale, working in and with development teams in Agile
- Early adopter and Thought Leader of UX in Agile
- Current: Director at J4G Design: UX, web and graphic design agency

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Preparing for Behavioural & Competency

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Behavioural & Competency

- Utilize STAR Framework
  - **S**ituation: provide necessary background
  - **T**ask: clarify your responsibility
  - **A**ction: succinctly describe what you did
  - **R**esult: explain the outcomes with a focus on impact you drove

- Common mistakes to <u>avoid</u>
  - Lengthy background
  - Forgetting **T**ask (your responsibility) and jumping to **A**ction after **S**ituation
  - Results which could have been achieved by a team without you

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Behavioural and Competency Example

- People often say the simplest solution is the best. Tell me about a particular complex problem you solved with a simple solution.
    - This is testing how you innovate
    - **S**: When building a product that the client were still in the process of branding, we were continually asked to make content and brand updates
    - **T**: I was working on the front end, primarily with the content and styling
    - **A**: I implemented centralised components for wording and elements
    - **R**: This saved our delivery team hours a week, the equivalent to a day every fortnight which freed us up for more valuable and new work

Behavioural and Competency Example

- <u>When have you taken on something significant outside your area of responsibility? Why was it important? What was the outcome?</u>
    - This is testing your ownership
    - **S**: Working on a Scrum Agile delivery team, we would have daily stand ups to update the team on what we were working on
    - **T**: I had to discuss what I did yesterday; was doing on that day and whether there are any blockers. Another member of the team was blocked and couldn't continue with a front end component
    - **A**: Having heard this, I spoke up and said that I could take on the component that was blocking him
    - **R**: I resolved the issue quickly and my peer was able to pick up another piece of work. The team completed the Sprint on time and showed valuable progression for the client.

Preparing for Technical Exercises

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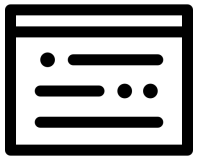
Three Main Types of Technical Exercises



Coding:

- **Specific language proficiency:** Write code in a specific language like Python, Java, or C++ to solve a problem
- **Data structures and algorithms:** Implement a specific data structure like a binary search tree
- **Object-oriented programming:** Design classes and interfaces for a given scenario

Problem-solving:

- **Algorithmic puzzles:** Solve logical puzzles with code
- **Technical brainstorming:** Discuss potential approaches to a real engineering problem
- **Debugging:** Analyze and fix errors in existing code, demonstrating understanding of common pitfalls
- **Code review:** Review someone else's code and provide constructive feedback

Systems Design:

- **Scalable:** How to handle millions of users and requests
- **Real-time:** How to process data and respond in real-time, with low latency
- **Fault-tolerant:** How to tolerate failures and remain operational
- **Security-focused:** How to secure against common attacks

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Hiring in Tech - Latest News

- The balance of power has shifted back to tech employers
- While a minority of experiences, watch out for software engineering interview processes that feel like a multiple-day work assignment
- For challenging technical interviews, prepare with:
  - HackerRank
  - LeetCode

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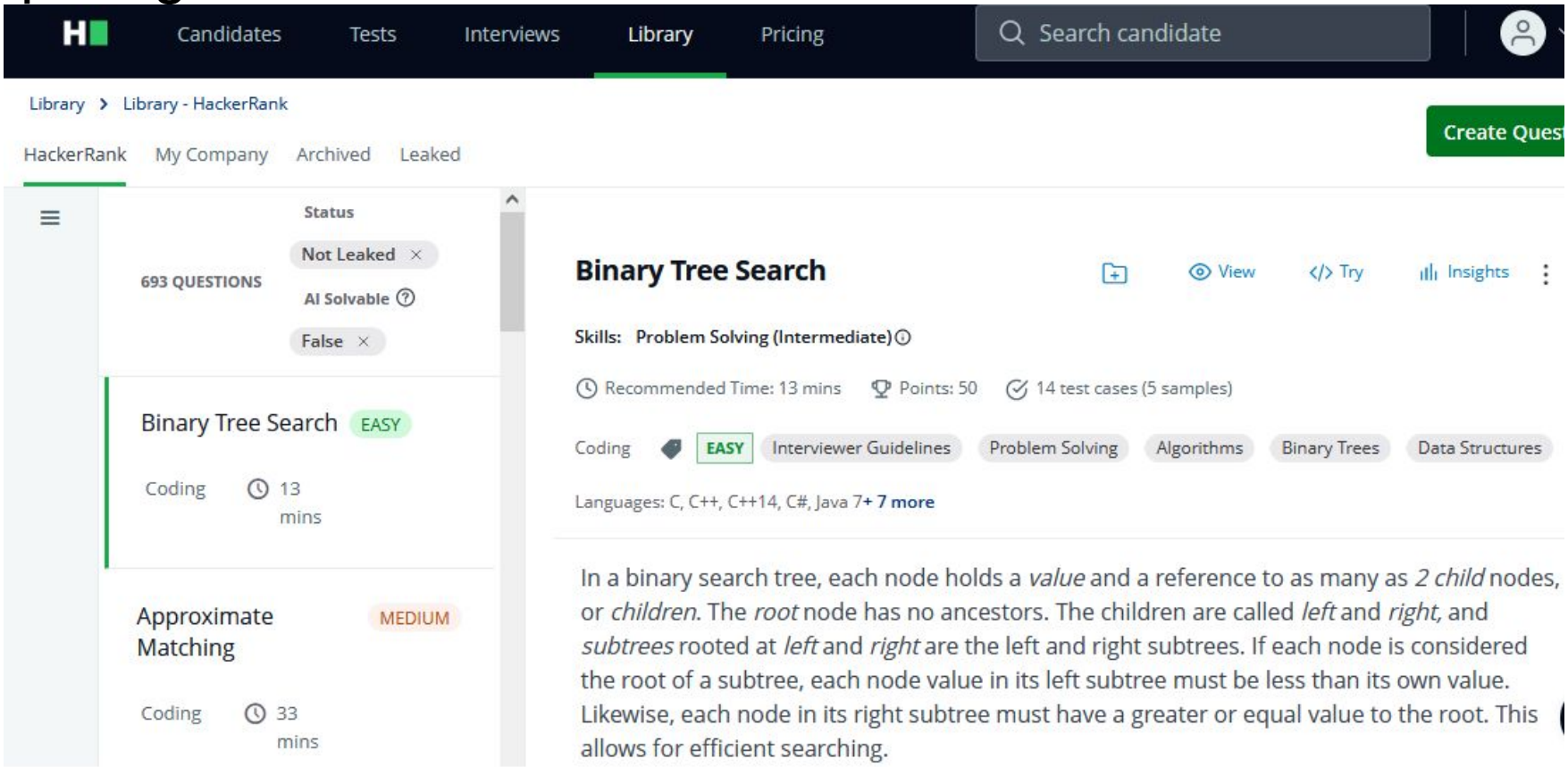
Preparing with HackerRank



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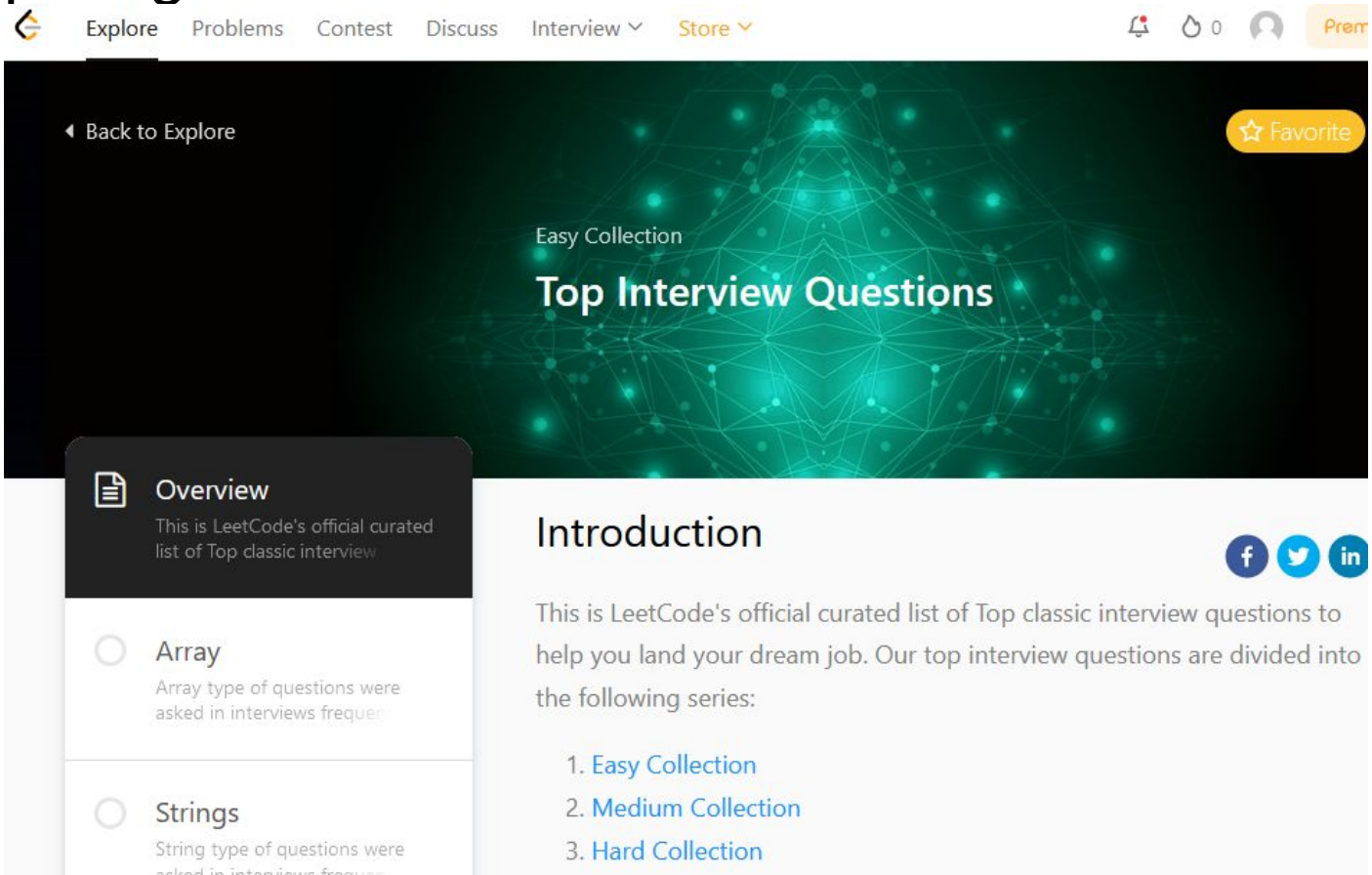
Preparing with LeetCode



Congrats on Your Offer - Now What?

- **Package Negotiation:**
  a. Base salary
  b. Bonuses
  c. Shares vs Options: key to understand the vesting schedule and potential value
  d. Pension
  e. Other Financial Benefits like health insurance, number of holiday days

- **Non-Financial Elements:**
  a. Career Development & Training
  b. Work-Life Balance

- **Final Offer Tips:**
  a. **Multiple Offer Leverage**: Aim to have interview processes with multiple employers end around same time
  b. **Watch Out:** Be Careful to strike the right balance - while engineers are in high demand, if you are too demanding you may regret it (e.g. offer rescinded, ruined dynamic with future manager)

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Book & Podcast Recommendations

Books

- **The Lean Startup** (Eric Ries)
- **Sprint**: How to Solve Big Problems and Test New Ideas in Just Five Days (Jake Knapp)
- **The Inmates Are Running The Asylum**: Why High Tech Products Drive Us Crazy and How to Restore the Sanity (Alan Cooper)
- **Don’t Make Me Think**: A Common Sense Approach to Web Usability (Steve King)
- **Hooked**: How to Build Habit-Forming Products (Nir Eyal)
- **How Google Works** (Eric Schmidt)

Podcasts

- **Catalyst Podcast Launch** (NTT Data)
- **Design Better**: Intersection of Technology & Design (Eli Woolery and Aarron Walter)
- **Web History** (Jay Hoffman & Jeremy Keith)
- **The Stack Overflow Podcast** (Eira May)
- **Hard Fork** (New York Times)
- **20VC** (The Twenty Minute VC)

Q&A

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