

*These notes are unedited, from Menick's "Coachean Life" blog.*

## Bump debriefing, part one: Judge maintenance

The first goal of any debate tournament is to get it over with. I don't say this facetiously. Top priority is making the rounds happen with efficiency and dispatch. This means a combination of cooperative judges, experienced tabroom, and runners who literally run, with a ballot table that successfully connects those three disparate groups. If you're in two buildings, as Bump was, that means doing it twice, simultaneously. And O'C is wrong. We don't traditionally dispense with a final round; we had one last year, for instance. But, for a variety of reasons, we need to start that round before 9:00, as is clearly explained in the invitation. In other words, although my goal is getting the tournament over with, this is not at the expense of having rounds. But as I say, any tournament has this goal, however many rounds they run over however many days: you've got to get the rounds started, and finished. Everything else takes a back seat to that imperative.

That first cog in the machine, getting judges to cooperate, can be tough, depending on the competitive stakes. A lot of coaches like to prep their teams before a round, advising on what the opponent may or may not be running, analyzing the judge paradigms, maybe generally Knute Rockne gippering them. Whatever. Personally, aside from the most overarching of strategic advice, I'm not one for this stuff as I think it smacks of cramming for the exam the night before, and I wonder how useful it really is. Anyhow, there traditionally isn't a lot of that at Bump, or at least not so much as you'd notice. Rounds aren't often being held up while some coach goes over the opponent's flow card by card. Which is good, since there isn't too much the tournament can do about that, because when it happens, the offenders tend to disappear while they confer, and you can't hustle warm bodies you can't find (and they usually hold up two rounds, the one the coach is judging and the one the kid is debating). On the other end of the process, there's the oral critiques, where sometimes the judges go on longer than the debate. These are usually first-year-out judges (or the spiritual equivalent) who think that the

debaters want to squeeze out every ounce of their rarefied mental juice, whereas in my opinion these judges would be better off expending this same energy back home trying to get a date. The point is, the debaters want to know why they won or lost, and that's about it; your reasons, if you gave them the loss, won't be convincing them to change their stripes any time soon, nor will they be meaningfully dazzled by your intense and sparkling oral critique. Trust me on this. Given, for example, that most debaters ask you your paradigm and then ignore it completely when the round starts, stripe changing is just not in their bag of tricks, and don't expect otherwise. What a tournament director can do about this is, at least, get the ballots into a runner's hand before the endless/pointless blather commences. The worst case scenario from a run-on-time perspective is when a judge takes forever to reach a decision, regardless of how much you poke and prod; that one judge can cost the tournament serious time, and there's nothing you can do about it. So judge cooperation, one way or the other, is the one area the tournament director is at the mercy of an outside force, i.e., the judges themselves.

Still, you can ameliorate the situation to some extent. Most of all, have a judge lounge that judges want to lounge in. Comfy chairs are nice, although they may or may not be accessible, but good grub, coffee, snacks, water, etc., are entirely at your command as tournament director and will keep your judges where they need to be when you want them. It centralizes them when schematics are released, and when a judge you have scheduled doesn't show up, you know where you'll find another one. Bietz suggested that hospitality, which he claimed was lacking at the Pups, is a real selling point for a tournament, and he may be right about this. I certainly can tell you where the good judges' lounges are that I know of, and I'm always happy to go back to a place where I was treated well, and less happy to go to a place where I was not treated well. As Tolstoy said, all debate rounds are the same, but each judges' lounge is different in its own way. As tournament director I can't control the debates, but I can control the environment of those debates. Or more to the point, the Sailor families can control that. I enlist some generous parents to help out, and they inevitably pull through with the fly-  
ingest of colors. They're the ones stocking and manning the judges' lounge, not

me. I'm concentrating on priority one, getting the rounds going. If you don't have parents to do this job for you, don't bother running a tournament, because you can't do it yourself. You need a dedicated hospitality staff; parents who have pride in their kids and their team, are the perfect people for it.

## Bump debriefing, part two: Judge acquisition

The other thing about judges, aside from having them do their job, is having them in the first place. Early on in my debate career, I noticed that the Newark tournament always ended with a final round judged entirely by Newark alumni, which they seemed to reckon by the dozens. The alums came—and gave—back, and Newark seemed to have the monopoly on it. Everyone else had a couple of alums, of course, but nothing like this. I was impressed.

I tend to think that I have a good relationship with the Sailors, and I was very appreciative this year of the number who came back to work the tournament for me. Absent Kate, who turns up to stay in the family will, we went back as far as Noah and Wedro (and might even have had Jared if he knew the difference between November and December), up to pretty much the whole shooting match of '07 grads. There are no more reliable judges than the ones who were your own debaters. They come because they got something out of debate themselves, and understand that your tournament is an important part of it. I'm far from a tradition hound like O'C, but there is no question that a tournament simply continuing at a school year in and year out is a tradition in and of itself, and all the aspects of being a part of that tournament, from starting out as a runner to ultimately running the tables, is a high point of the academic experience. It's fun. You know what it meant for you, and you know what it will mean for others, and you want it to continue even after you're gone, so you come back and give it a little nudge to keep it moving. I'm not much of a fan of former high school debaters who still want to be high school debaters when they're in college, reliving the experience through actual high school debaters rather than living the college experience that is more appropriate to them, but I am a firm believer in giving back reasonably to the ac-

tivity that was your most important for four years. When I see the Sailors, Ret'd, doing this, it does my heart proud. Add to this that these judges, this tribe of Sailors, Ret'd, is as predictable a judge pool as you're going to find, because they were all raised on orthodoxy. Every single one of them will expect you to argue the resolution and achieve your value through your criterion, and every game you play that doesn't do that will work against you. You can read the new guidelines for LD from the NFL, or you can get a can opener and pull apart the brains of the Sailors, Ret'd, and see exactly the same thing. Of course, there's variations, and a card-carrier like Wedro thinks differently from a philosopher like Kate, but they're watching the same round and, ultimately, judging it the same way, with the same expectations of the debaters. No one should be shocked that both semis rounds, entirely adjudicated by Sailors, Ret'd, were 5-0s. And the thing is, if for some reason this style of judging doesn't appeal to you, nevertheless, the paradigm is clear as a bell. You know going in what they want. If you don't give it to them, there should be no surprise that they don't pick you up. (And I'll have more to say on this at a later date, because some interesting ideas on digressive debate were discussed at the alumni dinner.)

So I have the good fortune of a great group of alums to come back and help me out. I have also, at times, drawn on the debate community at large to hire extra judges. This year, with only a couple of exceptions, I didn't need to bring in extras, but usually I do put out a call and hope for a good draw, and usually it happens. And herein is an important point. A tournament is as good as its judges. That is, I could draw the best debaters in the universe, but at the point where I don't have judges who are up to a certain standard, the debaters and their coaches won't be happy, and the tournament will lose esteem. I am perfectly fine with local tournaments with lots of inexperienced (albeit trained) judges, but at some point, especially if you have expectations of gaining or maintaining TOC bids, you do want to guarantee a base level of judging that meets the standard you are setting. A tournament director must reach out to get the best judges possible, if TOC bids are that standard. It is one thing to lose a round because your judge's paradigm and your debating were not a match (but that's your problem,

bub, and not your judge's), and another thing altogether to lose a round, even maybe a bid round, because the skill set of the adjudicators simply weren't up to the task of figuring out a normal debate round.

There are a variety of reasons why I no longer offer policy at Bump, and one of them is this very aspect of acquiring good judges. Having no real link to the policy world, I could never reasonably draw in the extra judges necessary to make a tournament work reliably year after year. And by the way, the word extra is important. A good tournament needs more than enough judges, not just enough judges. I'll talk about that more when we get to the tabroom discussion. But my point is, I could barely make policy happen, much less make it happen well, at least as far as judges were concerned. What I did was dump the burden on the attending teams, with heavy judging obligations, but I always went into the policy events with fear and trembling. One year we had exactly one judge for the final round: it was that bad.

So the moral of the story is, one of the chief jobs of a tournament director before a tournament starts is the acquisition of good judges (keeping, of course, within budget). If you're lucky, you can start with your own alums. Absent that, keep up your community connections. Make your tournament one that judges will want to come to (think hospitality, as mentioned yesterday). Make the whole thing fun, rather than some solemn, mind-numbing, grueling marathon.

If all else fails, give out a Jon Cruz award.

## Bump debriefing, part three: Tab

The second theme of the well-tempered tournament is the tab room.

Needless to say, I am found mostly in tab rooms nowadays when there's a tournament to be had. This does not come from fear of debate, but simply from evolution. The longer you're around, the more likely you'll end up working behind the

scenes, if you are so inclined. When I first started helping out in tab, it was at MHLs, and they were still being done on index cards; *real* old-timers like to regale comparative newbies like me with tales of doing invitationals on index cards, taking up entire gymnasium floors with the pairings and, no doubt, barely making the things happen even remotely accurately. When I started, the tabbing software was Mac-based, and touchy. People would literally massage their machines while the bits and bytes of the pairings were assembled and printed, because the slightest sand in the programming oyster inevitably led to [I can't imagine where this metaphor is supposed to be heading, but the point I'm trying to make is that all hell would break loose more often than not, so if you have some way of cleverly saying that, have at it]. The software was much more stable after it was ported over to the PC platform, but even today it's still occasionally touchy, as I have often remarked. But the problem is, it doesn't *look* touchy. It looks as easy as pie. Enter the data, press some buttons, print up the schematics, hand out the trophies.

If only.

It has been said, accurately, that around here we have something like a floating tab room, with the same people alternating through it week after week, and this is true. There is nothing you can throw at most of these people that they haven't seen before (especially now that we've gone through the 96 Tears episode a few weeks back). When a problem comes up, someone knows how to solve it. When I first started going to tournaments, there was inevitably at every tournament a point where everything went into suspended animation, where the computer ate the data or something, and everyone just sat around waiting for someone to fix it. Often that meant reentering skadoodles of data while the parents sent out for another round of debate ziti. Those moments nowadays are rare. Even when one of us magically erases the first five rounds, there's a backup handy on a flashdrive, and even a second computer. We're always ahead of the game. You can trust us on this stuff.

So the first thing you need to do is have an experienced tab room. And you have to understand that you, as the tournament director, will have little or nothing to do with the tabbing of your tournament, except during the break rounds. If you're like me, at a tournament you are exhausted before it starts, and you spend two

days running around trying to be everywhere, putting out little fires. You have not only no time for tab, but no ability at it, even if normally you can do it in your sleep. Your brain is on hold, while the tab staff does the thinking for you. This is as it should be. I'll do it at your tournament, you do it at mine. Works like a charm.

In my case, of course, there were two tab rooms. JV and la Coin at the high school running PF and VLD, and Mr. Bacon down at the grammar school running NLD. Two different businesses, actually, with different sets of issues. But here's the bottom line. These are three people I would trust with my tournament. These are three people I *did* trust with my tournament. There are a few other people I know I could confidently ask as well, but that number is small. Sabrina and Kaz have been in there for me in the past, and I'm sure will be in there again at some point in the future, and Rose JT used to be the cornerstone of the operation (because we needed someone to complain that the high school library was too cold), and I'd put O'C in there in a minute if I didn't want to torture him by having him judge declamation rounds in the middle school (never telling him that we don't have dec, and there is no middle school). But in the event at hand, as I say, it was Joe and Lynne and Michael. I never worried for a second about what they were about. If you're a tournament director, you really do have to be everywhere at once, but one place you shouldn't have to be is tab (except, as alluded to above, during breaks). But to be honest, it's not because these folks can run the software that I have confidence in them. It's because they can run *tournaments* that I have confidence in them. A tab staff isn't about pressing the buttons. It's about making the tournament happen the best way possible.

I'll explain how tomorrow.

## Bump debriefing, part four: Managing the pool

So a tab room staff needs to know how to run the software. If you're planning a tournament with a tab staff that is inexperienced, you should publish this in your

invitation. In big letters. That way, when everything gets screwed up, no one will be surprised.

But a tab staff's job is not managing the computers, any more than a musician's job is playing scales. One has to be able to do it, but the music comes from something else.

In the varsity event, we have over 50 judges for the weekend, and what I do is ask the participants to rank them in advance either A, B or C. Then I guarantee that every round will have the right judge for that round. If it's a clutch, bubble round, it's an A. If it's a panel, it's a mix, and every panel is mixed equally. Curiously enough, when the rankings came in for Bump, there were maybe two that I would have disagreed with. JV commented likewise. In other words, if we had been ranking in a vacuum, it would have come out about the same. It is important that your tab people know the players. While I can walk into any policy tab room and run it so it sings, what I can't do is know the right judges because I don't know a single person in the pool. You can say, well, if someone else does the rankings, all you have to do is push the buttons, but even then, that's not enough. But let's backtrack a second.

To at least a minor degree, the idea of ranking judges is not without controversy. I have made my opinions well-known about things like mutual judge preference (negative), and the need to use lay judges (positive), but some problems remain with the latter. I demand that a school bring trained judges, but at least one school brought a couple of parents who didn't know the first thing about a debate round. (Of course, culprit schools like this are well known by tournament directors, as they're usually repeat offenders, so it's not as if anyone is getting away with anything, and the reputations of these schools is abysmal, and most of us don't want anything to do with them. This plays out mostly in the long run. You graduated from one of these schools? Don't think I'll ever hire you to judge for me. Meanwhile, don't think that your school will ever get any special consideration from me for anything. You want a break of some sort? Play the game. Bring

bad judges that bring down the level of the pool? You're simply not upholding your part of the bargain.) The thing is, though, once they're there, there isn't much you can do about bad judges except dump them into down-three rounds. Anyhow, the point is that I believe that knowledge of the pool, and manipulation of the pool, is desirable. I firmly believe that a good LDer should be able to pick up just about any ballot, adapting to the judge, provided there's an idea about what the judge is looking for, but I also believe that in a crucial round, an experienced adjudicator is preferable to a raw recruit. Lots of people come to a tournament like Bump to get a TOC bid. I run the tournament knowing this is the case. I run 6 prelim rounds only because it's a TOC rule. I have drunk that Kool-Aid. Therefore, I need to carry through on it. At any point where the competition matters, you will have the best adjudication possible.

A good tab staff evaluates every pairing before running off the schematics. The round is organized by brackets, and we can make sure that wherever it matters, there's an A judge. In order of priority, this is the down ones and the down twos, the undefeateds, and everybody else. The down ones, because you're guaranteed to break if you've only lost one, and the down twos, because you're guaranteed not to break if you're down three; as a rule, there's almost always enough As to go around for both the down ones and the down twos. As for the undefeateds, if you have a few more As, you'll apply them here, because often these folks are in the running for speaker awards, although since you're dropping the hi-low points, one ballot won't matter. The program, by the way, often puts a 4-0 and 0-4 round with the same judge, mostly because you can't really damage either of them, and there's a presumption that these won't be your top As. And everybody else is everybody else, and you get what you get (usually balanced so that people the tournament is paying to judge don't sit in the lounge all weekend, followed by people who haven't judged yet, followed by people you want to torture).

It's harder for the tab staff in the break rounds, where a balanced panel is important. As advertised, we made sure that the strength and weakness was equally distributed. But the Bump staff took it the extra mile. Knowing pretty much all

the judges, JV and La Coin were making sure that, to the extent possible, the panel was uniform. That is, you know that some judges are traditionalist, and some are digressive. Mixing them on a panel means that the debaters, if they're truly adjusting to paradigms, would have to adjust to diametric opposites simultaneously. Not good. The computer does automatic pairings, and we start with that, but then you adjust. That is, you don't say, oh, these guys need a conservative panel or a digressive panel: that's cheating. What you say is, okay, the computer has put in a conservative first judge, so if we have to manipulate for balance of rankings, let's keep the panel conservative. Or vice versa. If you're a good debater, you adjust to your judge, but adaptation has to make sense. From the tab point of view, you create panels that make sense, with balanced talent, that any debater would say, that's a good panel, regardless of whether that panel is of that debater's particular stylistic persuasion. In other words, a round shouldn't be a crashout, especially a break round. Good tabbing insures that it isn't. At most tournaments, including Bump, the only time the Tournament Director gets involved in tabbing is taking a look at the break round panels. Since the TD is the one ultimately held accountable, tab feels that the TD should approve what happens. Certainly O'C went over all my panels for Big Jake, as I went over all the panels at Bump. That way, if people like or dislike how the panels were handled, the Tournament Director can take the responsibility. This is as it should be.

Down at the grammar school, the issues Mr. Bacon faced were quite different. Needless to say, there's no ranking of judges, given that most of them are upperclassmen, but there is a knowledge that a couple of people in the field are woefully unprepared, again usually parents dragged in by their teams who seem to feel that these important personages are best kept in ignorance of the proceedings, as if they're some necessary evil rather than their selfless benefactors. These teams don't seem to realize that an untrained parent judge not only serves no one well in the pool, but also personally feels lost and confused, which is hardly how you should treat the people who've enabled your participation in the event. Anyhow, these folks have to be attended to; often, they need their hands held and their heads patted until you finally find a round they can't screw up too badly.

Add to this that your entire field is novices who, to put it bluntly, haven't got a clue. They've never been to an invitational before. They don't completely understand rounds and flights and elims. Maybe they've debated once or twice before, at most. This is all new to them. And in their midst, is the Dreaded Ben.

The Dreaded Ben became a legend before the tournament was over. Most of the following is true, with only minor improvements of a narrative nature. The Dreaded Ben went into flight A of round one and debated the wrong person. Dreaded Ben then proceeded to go into some other flight B of round one and debated some other wrong person. Fortunately, since his opponents and judges were almost as clueless, they complied. By the time the Dreaded Ben got to round two, he was debating affirmative now for the third time in a row (one round ahead of the rest of the field) and, I gather, debating yet again the wrong opponent. While it will come as no surprise that, before the weekend was over, the Dreaded Ben was carried off in irons by his own coach for reasons having nothing to do with his naïve enthusiasm about debating everyone in sight as quickly as possible, provided he could go off, this is the sort of thing that Bacon had to face, and solve, for the entire weekend. Novices tend to get sick, in a fairly Kirkegaardian fashion, and disappear completely. The judge pool consists of as many first-time judges as there are first-time debaters, and their youthful exuberance needs to be either dimmed or stoked. Judges are interrogated over their 22s and 23s, or their strings of 30s. Juniors seem to want to insure their pool of Facebook friends remains intact, and go all Point Fairy as a means of doing this. Or they simply can't grasp that novices are judged on a novice curve, and not compared to the round you saw last week at Big Bronx against people who already had six TOC bids this year even though they were attending their first tournament. There are lessons to be learned all over the place. And Bacon is the one giving those lessons. And keeping things running smoothly over in Siberia where the entire school, absent the spaces devoted to the tournament, is given over on Saturday to a special event involving over 300 people participating in a lunch and basketball game. I went down there at one point and could barely make it down the hallway, it was so crowded with non-Bumpians.

So here's my advice. If you're running a tournament, bring in Bacon or Vaughan or Coyne, or better yet, bring in all of them. They will make your tournament solid. There's just one thing. You can't have them on Bump weekend. Their mine, I tell you, MINE!!!

You can have the Dreaded Ben.

## Bump debriefing, part five: The ballot table

I've been to very few tournaments that were neatly contained. Aside from local events like MHLs, where we might acquire a small building for a hundred teams or so (I'm thinking mostly of the Newark venues), usually we're in a very large building, or in some cases, a number of very large buildings. People are on different floors, in different wings, in totally different locations. Somewhere there's a tab room, and somehow the ballots from all those different people in different locations have to get to that tab room. This can be quite a poser.

Different tournaments address the issue different ways, depending on the scope of the distance. At Yale, for instance, we've resorted to cell phone call-in results on the Friday night, which is a pretty good idea when people are split up seven ways to Capistrano. In most places, though, it's one building, but a very complicated building. There seems to be a rule in the construction of high schools that demands that the room numbering system be done only in primes, imaginaries, or hack-proof file encryption. You'll walk down the hallway and it's 101, 102, D-42, 2888, C3PO, A-V Room, Boys, More Boys, Nurse's Office, 103, 301, 031, Nurse's Other Office, 013, Even More Boys, Keep Out This Means You, and 104. In that order. You know you're in trouble when the person asking you for a map is the assistant principal. As mentioned earlier, it's a fair assumption that many of your judges have some reason to start their rounds late, and some other reason to end their rounds late. And meanwhile, the tab room is playing endless games of You Don't Know Jack and just praying for ballots. There are times, of course,

when there really is not much to do, but when it's time to do something, and there's nothing there to do, then the clock is ticking away and nobody—NO-BODY—is happy.

[This is the point where, if you're working in tab with him, O'C wanders off. He is, simply put, one of the greatest wanderer-offs of all time. Or maybe that's one of the greatest wander-offers. Whichever. If you're working with him, make sure he has his cell phone with him if you see him grabbing his pith helmet for another excursion into the bush. Otherwise, you're on your own.]

The ballot table is a combination concierge desk and command center, and it is often the most poorly planned of the basic elements of a tournament, because I think that some TDs underestimate its importance, or just run out of steam when it comes to thinking about it. It's sort of the default thing people come to last when they're organizing their events, and it's given a priority way lower than it deserves. On the one hand, it is the interface between all the attendees of the tournament and the staff of the tournament. It is the official site to which all have access, of which all will ask questions, where all will come when all else fails. On the other hand, it is the radius of the wheel of ballots, whence runners extend with their orders ("Get the ballots out of Becker's hand if you have to slash his throat with a Torture Me Elmo doll to do it!") and return with their hot little ballots. I think of the runners as a part of the ballot table, although this does not mean they should all sit around the ballot table so that none of the attendees of the tournament can get near it (a regular problem). I organize the Bump table with people whose job is ballot checking and distribution, with a Runner Wrangler whose job it is to keep the runners running (think Master Sergeant), and the runners (the Myrmidons). [I'll wait a minute while you search for Myrmidon in Google. FYI, the Runner Wrangler is their Achilles.] This whole combined unit's job is to get the ballots to the judges when the schematics are released (which includes, and this comes as a surprise to many people, getting schematics into the judges' lounge), check that all the rounds have started (each runner is given a list of rooms to verify), and collecting the ballots when the rounds are ending by

posting runners outside each door or in each strategic area (every judge who saunters back with a ballot rather than having a runner run back with that ballot is a delay in the tournament).

There is a series of rules that I think all ballot tables need to enforce, and some suggestions that should help, and some general thoughts worth considering.

### **1. Runners are not paid to think. Runners run. End of story.**

Problems arise when runners are lazy, too good for the lowly position, try to fix things themselves, or don't know what to do. Lazy and lowly need to be noted by the TD; these are the students who will be sidelined from any important work at your future tournaments, and if they're bad enough, sidelined right this minute. I have sent people home for being too much of an obstacle. Your uncommitted runners are, mostly, your uncommitted debaters. You won't miss them when they're gone, and they'll be gone soon, one way or the other. On the other hand, I've seen my senior captains running through the hallways with ballots in their hands. That's why they get to be captains. Then there's the ones who try to solve problems. A debater or a judge is missing, so the runners think they'll find another debater or judge. This is the sort of thing that has tab storming out with their Torture Me Elmo dolls. If there's a problem, runners have to know to bring it back to the table. (And, of course, the table has to know to bring it to tab.) The runners do what the table tells them to do, which is run. Anything comes up, have the table solve it. And not knowing what to do is a problem easily solved by having experience at the table. I try to put in new people every year, but I also carry over experienced people every year. This time out, with the incorporation of my varsity into judging, I was starting from scratch to a great extent, but there were reliable wranglers/assistants in both buildings, so problems were minimal.

### **2. The further your ballot table is from tab, the greater the number of problems.**

All problems need to be solved by tab. This is the basic rule. It's not necessarily true, but it's mostly true. The further away from tab the table is, the more likely

tab will not be involved in solving problems, and worse, will not even know problems are happening. Bietz wondered why top judge material was manning the tables at Yale rather than judging, but from my perspective, I was thrilled to have experienced tournament people right outside my door. Multiple ballot tables, walkie-talkies, every clever solution to the problem of the complex physical plant is potentially a problem of its own. Keep it simple. One ballot table, as close to tab as possible. Your runners will make sure the ballots get to tab, so don't worry about making you poor miserable judges have to walk once in a while. Although to tell you the truth, given the likelihood of doughnut surplus at any tournament, the walk will do them good.

### **3. The ballot table must be totally professional.**

The following are banned: card games, any other games, any distraction from helping out your guests at the tournament, if you're bored, suck it up. As I said, the paradigm is the concierge table. And the people at the tournament are your guests. Think of it any other way at your own risk. I also ban outside food from the table. That is, we're serving perfectly good food to our guests; if this were your house, would you serve one thing to your guests and something else to yourselves? Rude. Anyhow, they have to be friendly, accessible and knowledgeable. Your best people get to be at the ballot table, as they are your best reflection of your team.

### **4. Major domo is a unique job, and an absolute requirement.**

The major domo is the connection between the table and the tab staff. The major domo is the third check of every ballot before it gets to tab (the runner is the first, the table is the second). The major domo gets to see how the machinery works so that next year, the major domo will be in a position of major responsibility, with an understanding of where all the bodies are buried. Major domos check all the ballots after each round for errors in tabulation. Major domos keep all the packets up-to-date, after the check. Major domos get to eat the tab food (I do believe that the tab staff needs to be fed well; since they're undercover, I don't feel I'm breaking my no-outside-food rule to keep them happy). The major domo is *always* on hand to do whatever tab deems necessary for the entire weekend. The

major domo always comes out of it smelling like a rose. Gabe, for instance, has major domo'd at Lex, and now he wins Bump. End of story.

### **5. The Tournament Director means it.**

I do not make threats lightly, and I do carry through on them. I am short-fused at Bump, but this year I only blew up once that I remember. But I saw things. First, I saw a bunch of runners who were running their little patooties off. These are my stars. These are the people who will get good jobs in the future, preference at tournaments if there's a limit, whatever I can do for them. Second, I saw a couple of people who were obstacles to the tournament. They will never get good jobs in the future, nor preferences of any sort. They weren't there when I needed them. I will remember this forever. That's the way my mind works. If you run a tournament and people do a good job, reward them. If they do a poor job, tell them. It's their team, their school. (This is especially true for me, as an outsider, so to speak.) At the end of the day, it's the school that gets that good or bad rep, not the Tournament Director, since TDs come and go. I can think of one school I don't like to go to because the kids just goof off year after year, and the judges and the tournament suffer for it. A little pride in the operation is what's called for, but I can't make you proud of your school in a vacuum. You're either proud of what we're doing here, for whatever reasons, or you're not. If you're not, go away.

Next up, the final, absolutely essential cog in the tournament wheel.

## **Bump debriefing, part six: What Would Menick Not Do**

This is the final debriefing on Bump, which I hope will be of interest/use to others hosting tournaments.

While I concentrate during the event on what I consider the chief job of a tournament director—keeping the tournament running—there are other aspects of a tournament that also need to be run. I don't believe that I could handle those in addition to managing the running of the rounds, so I ask for parent volunteers to

handle these for me. These parent volunteers are every bit as important as the tab room in making a tournament work, except that their contributions are a little more indirect. That is, a tournament can run without housing and good meals nicely served and comfortable judges' lounges, but it can't be run well. To say these things are non-essential, therefore, would be true. But to attempt a tournament without them would be absurd. And considering the amount of work involved in them, for a tournament director to attempt them personally would be impossible and/or insane. In other words, if it weren't for hardworking, committed parents, there wouldn't be any Bump. There wouldn't be many high school tournaments at all, probably. The world of forensics would be a bleak, uninviting place.

I seek volunteers to head up each of those areas: housing, meals and judges' lounges. Each is a job in and of itself. Each is a lot of hard work, over long hours. Let's look at them.

Housing is, apparently, something of a uniquely northeastern custom, but it's a good one. It allows us to go to tournaments all the time. If we had to pay for hotel rooms weekend after weekend, well, we wouldn't. The money simply isn't there for it. I guess we'd redesign our universe to more one-day events, with the predictable decline in the quality of our debaters. (Yeah, the northeast sucks, except they seem to be everywhere in the country doing pretty well, so I wonder which northeast the legends of impoverished LD are about, anyhow.) But housing is a bear. If you have a big enough team, you could conceivably offer slots solely from your own parents, and that would be it, but few schools have that big a team. Hen Hud certainly doesn't. And some schools may have the numbers, but not the facilities, because they're city schools with long commutes that don't translate into a five-minute ride home, or they're lower income schools where situations may not be amenable to a boatload of extra people spending the night. At Hen Hud, we now will guarantee only 150 housing slots. The housing parent has to come up with these by, essentially, pounding on doors. Telephone calls, emails, begging, more begging. Connecting with team families, former team families, team former

families, friends, friends of friends, people walking into WalMart looking especially prosperous. Whoever. Then, once you get 150 slots covered, you've got to handle the roiling sea of registrants to be housed. Why do we start imposing fines? Not only because of my extra work, but the houser's extra work. Names are attached to housing, then the name changes, so a new name has to be attached. There's drops and adds. Changes every time you turn around. Next year, the fines will be higher, and the housing limit absolute. Add someone after the limit is reached? That's your problem. You can't get blood from a stone, or housing from a tapped out houser, but you can get rooms at a motel. It was Benjamin Franklin who first pointed this out, I think. In any case, there's the housing list sent when registration closes. There's the housing list when people actually turn up (or don't). Then there's the matching of names to slots and getting all the information to the right people in the hubbub of people showing up at 10:00 to pick up their charges for the night. I'm usually in tab pumping out the morning's pairings while this is going on, but I've been in the housing area, and it's like bedlam, only crazier.

Thank you, Ms. Raptoulis, for handling this for the team in 2007. (That's Peanuts's mom, if you're wondering.)

Meals are, at least, predictable. You get what we had last year, unless I tell you that there's going to be an appreciable difference in numbers (which I couldn't really tell, this year, as we were offering fairly different events). You've got to deal with three suppliers: 6-foot heroes on Friday, dessert cakes on Friday, pizzas on Saturday. Food has to be ordered, paid for, delivered, set up and served. Parents are enlisted as volunteers to help the volunteer in charge, and kids are pulled in for the heavy lifting. A good food parent keeps an eye on the concessions table (thank God) and keeps that supplied if your concessionaire isn't around at the moment. And a good food parent coordinates with the judge lounge parent to keep that site stocked. A good food parent is a godsend. You know this if you've ever tried to feed three hundred or so people a couple of meals served around their rounds and flights and coming in from two buildings.

Thank you, Ms. Theodore, for handling this for the team in 2007.

Judges' lounges are stocked from contributions from team parents, which must be sought and processed in advance of the tournament, and then supplemented as necessary. Food must be laid out pleasantly in two venues (although next year it will be only one, as there are few adults in the grammar school) and kept neat and stocked for an entire weekend. There must be enough coffee for everyone including Erin, who drinks 6 gallons herself before the first Saturday round is even posted. As I've said earlier in this series of debriefings, if you have a place where judges enjoy hanging out, where they're treated well, they'll come back, and when you're hiring, the word will get around. Plus there's simply the question of hospitality. One ought to be nice to one's guests, and treat them well.

Thank you, Ms. Gofman, for handling this for the team in 2007.

When I say these folks handled things, I mean they *handled* them. With little or no help from me. I'm from the delegation school of management: Here's the job, you do it, if it goes well you get the credit, if it goes poorly I get the blame, what do you need from me to make it happen, see you when it's over. As I say, it would be impossible for me, or anyone, to run a tournament any other way.

So there you are. I've written up this series to give you an idea of what goes on at a tournament, maybe just because you might be interested, or, heaven forbid, you're thinking of running one yourself some day. Every year I try to improve things from the previous year. I've been doing it for over a decade and there's still areas for improvement. There will be areas for improvement until I stop doing it, and then there will be areas of improvement for some other ~~poor schmuck~~ tournament director to take on.