

Introduction to Public Forum

PF vs. LD

Amongst my team at Hen Hud (affectionately referred to as the Sailors), one starts as a novice in LD. At present I believe that this is the best way to learn the basics of debate like case writing, presentation, argument structure, etc. Plus, there's a lot of opportunities to debate (and succeed) as an LD novice, so if a student is looking to gain experience, it will happen. After LD boot camp, Sailors can, if they so desire, begin doing PF. So, the starting point for Sailors in PF is a year's experience in LD, with all that entails.

The first two things that occur to me about PF are preliminary to any actual discussion of the activity. They are results of that boot camp year in LD. I think they may be the biggest spiritual differences between disciplines a student must accept at the onset of the activity.

First of all, the nature of PF research is entirely different from LD research. Obviously research = research at some level, but the nature of LD is, ideally, that we are attempting to achieve some lofty goal like justice or morality in our actions. Often the resolutions are removed from real life contexts (think kill one to save five), or are only tangentially related to real life. If we discuss nukes we do not discuss the politics of nuclear weapons but the morality of nuclear weapons. Compare: The policy debater handling nukes will certainly research some moral aspects of the issue but will research facts and figures and political stances in incredible depth, while the LDer will certainly research some facts and figures but will concentrate on the morality aspect in the greatest depth. Realistically, PF follows the Policy research approach. It's about the facts and the figures. Not exclusively, but nonetheless primarily, and exhaustively (or as exhaustively as can be done in a month or so, versus the full year of topic maturation on the Policy side). This is a change of mindset that newbie PFers coming from LD might not be prepared for. But it's an important one to understand and embrace. Good PFers never talk out their butts, or to be more precise, good PFers, when talking out their butts, bring facts out of their butts as well. An LDer walking into a round with a well-stuffed folder of evidence looks like a goober. A PFER walking into a round *without* a well-stuffed folder of evidence looks like a goober. Therein lies one key difference between the activities.

The second big difference is, of course, the partnership aspect. Policy has always had partners, and policy coaches have various approaches to the unions and breakups of their pairs over their debating careers. Some people are not that well suited for team debate, at least not initially. Some Policicians become LDers because they can't do the two-person thing. The bottom line is, having to debate as a team brings in a totally new dimension to the activity. If you have a big team, you can match-dot-com them and find the right pairings, perhaps. With a small team, it's more of a default pairing. It's still pairings, though. Learning to work as a team requires a specific set of skills different from working alone. Tennis doubles is still tennis, but it's played differently. There's a lot of opportunity for people to bump into each other, or for neither of them to be where they should have been. Meshing with a partner is a good skill all its own. I would like to be able to promise everyone on my team that, for the rest of their lives, they will only work with

people with whom they are compatible, but it just isn't true. As often as not, they'll be forced to work with yabbos of the most yabbonian persuasion, and they won't be able to blame failure entirely on their partners. Teams work because the members of the team capitalize on their assets and minimize their deficits. Sometimes teams will be more exigency than meeting of the minds, but that should not limit results.

As I say, these are new problems, or new approaches, for the LD novice graduating up into PF. For that matter, they're still issues that must be addressed even if the Pfffter has never done LD, but at least in that case one is not going counter to previous experience.

Facts first! The importance of evidence

Here's a rule of thumb I propose for Pfffters: Never open your mouth unless there's a piece of evidence in it. If nothing else separates PF from LD, then let it be this (although, of course, there are plenty of other separation points as well, but this one is key). This is not to say that PF need be nothing more than dueling facts, of course; my point is that simply saying something without evidentiary support is a sure way to lose a round. In LD, solid analytics derived from evidence or even concepts can take the day, especially in areas where one is discussing something ephemeral like justice or societal obligation. Interpretation of those issues, in LD, can be as important as application of those issues to specific circumstances. But, as a general rule, it's the other way around in PF, where application and circumstances usually come first. Analysis is important, obviously, but if you're arguing, for instance, that we should have nationalized health care, what will win the day is healthier people. Healthier people will result from better health care, national or non-national. And this structure applies most of the time.

The speeches in PF are like an inverted unmultiplied factorial or something, going from 4 to 3 to 2 to 1 minute (and, I guess, to 0 minutes when it's all over). None of these is particularly long, but at least in the first speech you get a chance to present a reasonable, and in LD terms, normal-length constructive. After that, things get progressively tighter. Clarity and word economy are obviously of great importance. But so is argument structure. If you're going to refute what the opponent has said, this is where you can't open your mouth without a piece of evidence in it. But that evidence must be in the classic Toulmin argument structure of claim/evidence/warrant. Here's a loosey goosey example: "[claim] If we enact a national health care plan, it will result in people dropping like flies. [evidence] According to the the Onion, 87% of all people who have been in a similar plan in Kush Behar have instantly contacted the yaws and collapsed in a heap. [warrant] Since our plan is no different than theirs, we can expect the same result." Even the NFL documentation discusses what they call the "Art of Argumentation" in this fashion.

This sort of presentation is simple enough in a written out case, but it must also come out in rebuttals. In a way, the evidence part of the equation is the easiest to come up with, assuming you've done your research. That is, a fact is a fact is a fact. Claims can be scurrilous, and warrants can be elusive, but as Mr. Gradgrind in Dickens' *Hard Times* would happily point out, facts are facts and there you are. The problem is, it is tempting to leave out facts in refutations, especially if one's background is LD where the warrant and claim (and impact) are often sufficient to win a point. (Alternately, it might also be tempting to go so facty on us that one

leaves out the literal arguing—the claim and warrant—beyond a mere dusting. That’s no good either.) That’s why I say that, for the former LDer especially, not opening your mouth unless there’s evidence in it is important. The temptation is to argue other ways, but I don’t think that that will work very often. Smart arguing on warrants is intriguing in some contexts, but in the PF round, at the end the judge is looking for (in my example) the most health, and the most health is probably going to result from demonstration of facts applied logically rather than demonstration of logic applied without factual basis.

Research

This probably isn’t a problem for you, but it is a problem for a small team without much of a history of group research. To wit, what the hell *is* group research, anyhow?

First of all, there’s the question of what, exactly, comprises the group. It can be merely the two members of the sole team doing PF during a certain period (we’ve had that a few times amongst the Sailors), or it could be a couple of teams, plus maybe a lost soul or two simply interested in either the subject or PF per se. Whatever the size of the group, there are some rules that seem obvious.

All research is owned by the team. In other words, if you find anything at all, it is to be shared by everyone.

All people involved in debating a topic are involved in researching it. While it may be convenient to have a lot of other people go scouring the vaulted halls of data while you lounge about on your divan eating Turkish delight and watching “Saved by the Bell” reruns, following which you simply skim the best of what others have done to write cases, this is not allowed, for a reason other than the apparent unfairness of work assignment. The thing is, knowledge is the number one key to success in debating, or at least one of the number one keys to success. The acquisition of knowledge does not come from looking over the shoulders of those who have themselves acquired knowledge, but in the actual act of acquiring it. Let’s say that you’re specifically looking up international health plans. Every plan you look at, good, bad or indifferent, tells you something about health plans in general. If a lot of them are the same, that tells you something. If they’re all different, that tells you something. If all the doctors in one country are women, that tells you something. Different rates of infant mortality tell you something. In your research, discovering any of these bits of data might lead you somewhere you weren’t expecting. Depth of knowledge comes from going down different pathways. Superficial knowledge comes from dabbling. The debater with depth of knowledge will inevitably win out in the long run over the debater with superficial knowledge. Trust me on this. (My brief against some critiques in LD is, of course, that they are an attempt to circumvent the acquisition and display of knowledge on a topic rather than an honest attempt to challenge the grounds of a resolution, which if done correctly require just as much research.)

Research must be organized in advance. If it’s just the two team members, each gets a starting assignment. If it’s a handful of people, more assignments. The researchers should work as a team, specifically digging stuff up. There will be overlap, but there’s nothing wrong with that. In

the end, there will be a bounty of material that is mostly different, that can then be shared, in keeping with the rule above that all research belongs to the team (except for the lazy yabbo on the divan with the Turkish delight).

Research, after it is acquired, must be made physically available to everyone. I have no specific recommendation here, although I have seen various schemes and database apps on occasion from Policicians who do this for a living. At the moment, the Sailors simply put it into a folder (and subfolders) online where everyone can access all the good stuff. With a small number, that works well enough. And, of course, given that resolutions tend to repeat, if not literally then at least spiritually, it's good to be able to go back and look at the old stuff. Coming up with a workable solution to data organization is not easy. Go with what works for you.

Think about your research. All of the above speaks merely to research in the raw. Obviously there is good research (useful, meaningful data) and bad research (useless, meaningless data). One needs to distinguish between the two, but that shouldn't be too hard if you've done enough work in the acquiring in the first place. If all your data say that there's a one in ten chance of hell freezing over except for one chart that proves that hell is already frozen, the odds are that your vast data weighing in on the warmth of hell indicates that hell as a skater's paradise may not be something you want to buy into. "Facts" that are out of line with all your other facts, or your intuition, are either paradigm shifters or bogus, and as a general rule, the latter is more likely than the former.

There's more to research than facts. How you read the data is yet another issue. This is why the acquiring is so important. In the process of acquisition you will usually discover facts not merely as data in a vacuum but evidence in support of a position. Professor So-and-so points out that all the doctors in Amazon City are women, and links this to a low infant mortality rate and better education for immigrants, or whatever, based on their being women, and you have acquired not only facts but opinions to draw on, to inform your own opinions in putting together your case positions. Of course, there is a lot of raw data out there (I post plenty of charts in the Coachean Feed, qv), but most data has a point of view surrounding it, or a source lending it substance and veracity and trust (or lack thereof). Mastering these aspects of research, i.e., weighing its value, is as important as the mechanics of the thing, but can't be done until the mechanics of the thing are inherent in your approach to doing the research. It's learning scales versus playing concerts: you can't make art until you first master technique.

Finally, there is the question of research in a library versus research online. This is a tough one. If you have access to the resources of a major university library, grab the group and go there. But absent that, nowadays the resources of your average local library (not to mention school library) may be of the slim pickings variety. Get everybody together and go on line, as a group, if that is the case. **But do work together, if at all possible, regardless of where you're working.** This will keep everybody organized and working toward their specific assignments, while keeping you flexible for changing assignments. This is not to say that everyone won't do independent research as well (making the fruits of this labor available to the team), but group research will ultimately bear different fruit, and therefore should not be ignored.

Case writing

Curiously enough, my old rule number one for PF was: Don't do LD in a PF round. How wrong I was.

This is not to suggest that people actually *do* LD in their PF rounds. There are no values, there are no criteria, speed is problematic at best, and judges are inevitably new to the activity so you can't count on any paradigmatic understanding of what you're doing. But the underlying concept of value and criterion can easily be adapted to case structure in PF, and doing so will make your cases all that much clearer. We'll get to that eventually. Before that, the mechanics of writing.

The first step in writing a case is divvying up the work. There are two people on a PF team, so we need a fifty-fifty approach. But I'm not necessarily sure if something as simple as, you write the con, I'll write the pro, is a good approach. I'm going to assume that as a general rule your team will have somebody who always does the first speech and someone who always does the second speech. The first speech on either side is a constructive. Simple enough. Your best constructor will go first, your attack dog will go second. There are probably plenty of variations on this theme, but that makes sense as a starting point.

So here's a problem. Both members of the team write a speech, but only one actually delivers it. Unless the person who is writing but not delivering is a professional speechwriter, it is highly unlikely that that person will be capable of molding his or her phraseology to match the other speaker. As a rule, we all write like ourselves. People who read my writing inevitably tell me they can hear my voice in their head when they read it. I write like me, so when I read something I've written aloud, I do it pretty well because I know what it's supposed to mean. This is true of most people, consciously or otherwise. Language has a unique personality aspect for each user, regardless of whether it is written or spoken—my rhythms, my word usages, my syntax. Because of this I'm wary of splitting the writing chores in a simple 50/50. I would suggest the following.

The case-writing process begins when the initial research is completed. The idea that informs an LD case, that there is a central thesis, that you are running X, where X can be relayed in one simple sentence, holds for PF. If you can't boil it down to one simple declarative sentence—running that Obama's health care plan will bankrupt the country, let's say, or that not enacting Obama's health plan will result in the collapse of the present health care system, whatever—then you're not there yet. So, the first step between the two partners is a meeting of the minds. Agree, after studying the topic area, what the plan of attack will be. If you don't agree, you're going to be in trouble, so make sure you both like it. And then I suggest that the first speaker put together a good solid draft of the case (either side). Write it all out, start to finish. Make it good. Then send it to your partner for a critique. Partner will find things that aren't clear, that go on too long, that need different evidence, etc., and edit it accordingly. Then back to the speaker/writer, who incorporates the editing. Repeat until everyone is satisfied. Then do the other side.

This may make it seem as if the second speaker is getting something of a free ride. Not exactly. Can you say blocks? Rebuttals? While the first speaker is putting together the constructive, the second speaker puts together predictable arguments against the other team. We don't want

anyone to feel left out here. The case-writing partner will edit these blocks as this person edited the case-writing partner's.

Of course, there is the question of, what if the better writer is the second speaker? Aren't we missing out on that person's very useful skill?

Well, yes and no. You just have to work things out. What I'm suggesting here is a starting point for a team, given that the team will have many many months, nay years, to work it out. When all is said and done, one person will be delivering the speech that is written. Every word tripped over, ever phrase misstated, works against the team. But different people are different people. In the best of all possible worlds, a team will over time find the best system that capitalizes on both their best skills.

But no matter who does what, the basics apply of using an LD framework while not using an LD framework, that I mentioned at the start. We'll get to that next.

Framework

Debate is debate. I think we can easily make the mistake that different kinds of debate are more different than they actually are. Their forms and structures may be slightly different, and their content may be radically different, but their underlying essence is identical. In a debate, we are trying to convince someone of something. In academic debate, we have rules to guide how we do that convincing. But in the end, it's all about the convincing.

None of what I'm going to say here is going to come as any sort of surprise to coaches, who know this and certainly teach it, or good, experienced PFers, who are already doing it. But the point of this essay is to take a complete, starters' position, so bear with me. It may not be new, but it's not useless. And it may help get stuff across to newbies, especially those I'm used to, the previously-trained-in-LD PF newbie.

Let's start here. If you want to argue something, you've got to follow a fairly basic structure. You have to have the point you're trying to make—that is, your side of the argument—clearly defined. You've got to have reasons in support of your side of the argument, and you've got to demonstrate how those reasons do, indeed, support your side. This structure applies to any argument, either within or outside debate.

You can throw all kinds of names and details and definitions of the above, but the structure remains the same. For LDers, we look at it very specifically. First, to clearly define our side of an argument, we go to the underlying value of our side. LD was originally conceived as values debate, differing from the existing two-person policy debate in that while policy obviously was concerned with instituting or challenging specific actions (policies) usually on a practical level (this *will* work, this *won't* work), LD was going to go into the philosophical considerations of actions. Should we do something because it's the right thing to do, in other words, as compared to its practicality. The right thing to do is often wildly impractical, the wrong thing to do is often immediately practical, but that doesn't warrant the latter or bar the former (although one could

make such arguments). Closing one's eyes at the formation of LD and imagining the difference between it and policy could not have been difficult. Frankly, it still doesn't seem difficult, even though there is much more overlap than anybody probably ever expected. They are clearly different animals.

The genius of LD was, in its formative years, the institution of a literal value into the framework of argumentation. If you look at the literature, maintaining a value and criterion were not initially structural necessities; my understanding is that a few clever coaches brought the concept to life at their institute. A couple of years or so ago, NFL actually upgraded its LD rules and incorporated the literal value into the rules, along with the criterion for measuring if that value had been successfully incorporated (i.e., the weighing mechanism). When I first started judging, there were plenty of teams that did, by design, not include literal values in their cases or arguments, and often they got away with this (although personally I found it hard to track what they were trying to do). Teams doing that today would, if one were to follow the rules (which I highly recommend) lose out of the gate.

PF has not come up with its literal analog to V/C yet, if it ever will. In many ways, it is harder to close your eyes now, so soon after the formation of PF, and imagine the differences separating it from policy or LD than it was to separate LD from policy. The thing is, there are plenty of differences, but they don't have that much to do with content per se. PF topics tend to be mostly of a policy nature, and there is no specific V/C structural aspect, so those are differences, of course, but the real difference is in the ever-changing topic, which allows just so much depth before the next topic comes along, and the relatively short speaking times, which limit the amount of argumentation (especially as PF debaters continue to face lay judges, which will remain the case for the foreseeable future, just as it was an aspect of LD for a very long time). You're going to have to get to the point quickly in a PF round, and you're going to have to stay on the point, and you're going to need classical oratory skills. Wackiness will not be rewarded. Misreadings of resolutions will not be rewarded. Lack of research will not be rewarded, but neither will facts without meaning. The nature of PF begins to determine itself through its actions.

Which brings us back to the basic idea of what an argument has to be. You have your side of the argument, clearly defined. You've got to have reasons to support your side. You need to show how those reasons do, indeed, support your side. And if you're talking about PF, and you apply an implicit value construct borrowed from LD to the argument, I think you'll end up with a really solid case. Yes, I'm recommending have a value. An *implicit* value.

The value in an LD case is the thing you are trying to achieve, the underlying big social aspect like justice or morality. It's the reason you go aff, or neg, to get to the value of justice or wherever. If the resolution is, say, banning nuclear weapons, your argument in LD is not that we ban nuclear weapons because they're dangerous or something like that, but because it is the moral thing to do. Put another way, the value is the underlying reason you support your side of the resolution, and your arguments point sooner or later to that underlying reason. You win or lose because you convinced on the level of the underlying reason.

That is exactly what is needed in a PF case right off the top, an underlying reason to support one side or the other. This reason, this implicit value, serves exactly the same role as the value in LD.

Let's go back to our hypothetical loosey-goosey PF resolution that we've been kicking around on health care. Let's specify that it's that the US should enact Obama's healthcare plan. Before proceeding to defend one side or the other, we would need to decide *why* we want to defend that side. This comes, of course, after having done research (you don't write a case and then find research to support it, although I've known novices who attempt just that, with predictably dim results). And once we decide what that reason is, and it needs to be big and important, *that* is what our case is about, and what our evidence will support. Instead of calling it the implicit value, let's call it **The Big Idea**.

Before showing an example, let's imagine that we don't have The Big Idea. We could run a case in favor of BHO's health plan that goes like this:

1. We stand in support of the rez.
2. If we enact this plan, the following 3 good things will result.
3. Evidence for result A, which is a good thing.
4. Evidence for result B, which is a good thing.
5. Evidence for result C, which is a good thing.
6. Because of these 3 good things, we urge a pro ballot.

Even if this case has great evidence, convincingly delivered, it lacks an underlying idea. It lacks underlying tissue. The resolution alone is not enough. Think of it as the difference between a plot and a theme. The plot of *Moby-Dick* is, well, there's this big whale. The theme of *Moby-Dick* is obsession. Either one without the other is, well, a fish story or a psychological essay. Together they are arguably the Great American Novel. (And, yeah, Melville calls whales fish, so don't get me started.)

Now let's throw in **The Big Idea**. After doing research, the team decides that The Big Idea in favor of government healthcare is better healthcare per se, that the government would do it better than independent providers, and therefore everyone would be healthier as a result. That case goes like this:

1. We stand in support of the rez because of The Big Idea slash better healthcare.
2. If we enact this plan, we will get better healthcare for these 3 reasons.
3. Evidence for result A, which is a good thing.
4. Evidence for result B, which is a good thing.
5. Evidence for result C, which is a good thing.
6. Because these three good things result in better healthcare and healthier people, we urge a pro ballot.

(By the way, I'm simplifying here, of course. Don't fault me on the technicalities.)

In other words, The Big Idea is the thing that you put at the end of the sentence where you say you support the rez *because*. The because is The Big Idea. And The Big Idea is, of course, analogous to the value in LD.

I'm hard-pressed to demonstrate a further level of connecting evidence to The Big Idea (to wit, criteria), and as a rule that may not be necessary. The existence of a criterion in LD is to translate contentions of action/fact into transcendent values. In PF the reality might be that, since all the discussion is about actions and facts, no translation is necessary. Then again, occasionally PF rezzes do include words like justice. In that case The Big Idea has to be why a given side is just, and depending on the rez, a translation factor like a criterion might also be required. Probably not, though. I think that TBI will be enough to cover the conceptualization of why one side versus the other side.

In LD, I ask my debaters what they're running on a given side. If they can't answer that question in one simple sentence, then they're not ready to debate yet. The same should be held true for PF. What are you running? If you answered for the pro in our hypothetical example, "BHO's healthcare plan is good," you wouldn't be ready to debate yet. If you answered, "BHO's healthcare plan leads to this Big Idea and therefore we should support it," you're ready to go.

The key to writing a case then, is to build it around The Big Idea. If you don't have The Big Idea, get one.

The round

The Big Idea is nothing more than the advocacy of a given position. Each side should have a clear advocacy, and the debate that ensues is the clash of the different advocacies. Simple enough, at least at the broadest view. And, given the nature of your audience, the broadest view may be the best one. It is a truism in LD that if as a judge you want to be struck by everyone in the tournament you should use the words "big picture" in your paradigm. By the same token, big pictures are probably what win most PF rounds. And big ideas lead to big pictures. Nothing complicated about it.

The first speech for either side presents that side's advocacy. I don't have much to say about coin flips and what to choose, mostly because it seems as if it's very topic-related. Needless to say, given that any aspect of a toss can go against you, it is best to be prepared for all contingencies on all sides. One especially nice thing about this is that it encourages both sides to actually have an advocacy. The weakest LD cases are the ones that simply say no to everything the aff proposes. As a general rule, this is not good enough. Both sides need offensive positions, not just defensive positions. This is not to be confused with counterplans, however, which don't make much sense to me (and, for that matter, with some of the policy folks I've talked to) because they inherently agree with the core aff position, and merely suggest another way to go about solving. Everything I concede to the other side strengthens them and weakens me. Why would I want to do that voluntarily? In LD, a counterplan almost invariably can be construed by the opposing side as support of that side's framework, meaning that counterplans in LD can only be won by strong debaters against weaker debaters. Given that there are no counterplans in PF, you may find this discussion irrelevant, but there does seem to be a tendency to write counterplans and attempt to call them something else. You might get away with this if your judge is inexperienced enough, but the reason not to run them goes beyond that they are not acceptable: they're also not a good idea.

So we've talked about what a case should include, and the first speaker now presents that case, with its Big Idea and its demonstration through evidence of how that idea will be achieved by supporting this particular side of the resolution. The four minutes available seems okay to me. Given that there is no need to explain a complex V/C framework, you've probably got the same amount of real time that you would have in an LD constructive, either in most of a 1AC or half a 1NC.

The crossfire that follows looks not much different from an LD cross-ex but I would suggest that there are a few serious differences that might be overlooked. First of all, it is very likely that a round can be won or lost in a PF crossfire. It is not really separate from the round as it is in LD. From the judge's point of view, cross-ex is all part of the deal, and there's lots of it. Every time you turn around there's more cross-examination. There is no sense that this is somehow ancillary to the proceedings. Everything that is said in crossfire can become, for the judge, a voting issue. Which means that, right off the top, there is no rest for the wicked. Crossfire counts way more than it counts in LD.

Crossfire, like cross-ex in LD, needs to be focused, for the same reasons and in most of the same ways. The sides wish to set up their own side and take down the opposing side. First of all, the questioner needs to find the opponent's flaws. Then the questioner needs to ask the leading questions that set up the questioner's position. Very standard. Simple enough.

But, as I said earlier, in PF a debater should never open his or her mouth unless there's a piece of evidence in it. We are arguing fact-based material. The judge is going to be convinced, or not, on the basis of facts. Every time you answer a question with something other than a fact, it's a lesser answer. I will admit that not every question is answerable with a fact, but that's the paradigm you should attempt. The rounds where someone is able to answer a question in a form something like, "As we pointed out with the Cheney evidence, 45% of whatever do such-and-such" is much better than any less specific response. One hit against PF is that it is dueling facts, but what is meant by that is that there is a core fact for each side that goes up against but does not overcome the other side's core fact, and they just keep hammering each other with contradictory data. I agree that that is pretty dull, and that's not what I'm talking about. What I'm saying is, support your position with evidence at all times. First of all, it makes you more authoritative. It shows that you have researched. And most importantly, it makes judges think you're as smart as a prime pumpkin. And, given the nature of the activity, it's inherently the right thing to do.

I learned quickly as a judge to flow the CX. I also learned that I needed two colors on my flow to cover things correctly. I'll be recommending this to all future PF judges, i.e., two colors. Makes sense. Keep that in mind when you're debating. In LD, I've never used multiple colors because I can flow in a very structured way. There's less structure to PF, once you throw in CX as a voting factor. Multiple colors help me track through that lack of structure. And, more to the point, I'm voting on anything, at any time. Never forget that for a minute.

The opposing side's four-minute case is no different, whether it's pro or con. The same rules apply in all ways. Which means that we're done with the easy part, and it's on to Speaker Number Two.

This is going to be really simple.

First, one side tells you why you should pro/con. After a little discussion atwixt the two sides, the other side tells you why it should do the opposite. So far, so good. We've talked about these speeches, The Big Idea, and the content of the first XF (crossfire).

The second XF is mostly like the previous one. Both sides now know the other side's Big Idea. Both sides know the other side's strategy and content. So this XF needs to tear down what has been said by the opponent and reset the stage for one's own Big Idea. Not exactly brain surgery, and more sophisticated examination processes can be developed as one gains experience. The key is, tear down opponent, build up self. It is ever thus in CX or XF or whatever you want to call it.

The breakdown of which team member goes when depends on a lot of factors, but one thing that is clear is that the second member of a team to present is going to be doing a rebuttal as compared to presenting a position. One theory is that the lovable debater goes first, to win over the judges, and the mad dog debater goes second, to attack everything that needs attacking. I subscribe to this approach at least as a starting point for organizing a team, but I wouldn't take it to the grave. I see no intrinsic reason why both team members might not want to try one position on one topic and the other position on another. Why not work on developing all the potential skill sets?

But regardless of how you pick your second speaker, one thing is clear. The second speech has to win the round. Two many rounds do not believe that this is the case, which is not a sound strategy. In a good debate, *every* speech potentially wins the round. This is clearly seen in LD, where each speech covers the entire flow (except, probably, the 2AR). But in PF, this isn't quite as clear. A lot of teams get up in their second speech and attack the other side. Period. They cover everything that was said by the opponent, they tear it to shreds, they stomp on it, they feed it to the dogs, all of which is fine and dandy, but strategically, all that does is tell me why I shouldn't vote for the opponent. It doesn't tell me why I should vote for you. Even the instructions from NFL suggest that this speech is more than just attack: "In addition, some time in either of these speeches should be allocated to rebuilding the original case."

Now, four minutes isn't a lot, granted, but it's exactly the same as LD's 1AR. I don't think offhand that you should go two and two. If you spend two and a half to three minutes attacking the opponent, then a minute or so rebuilding yourself, this should work. The structure is simple:

1. Attack opponent's Big Idea.
2. Attack opponent's main lines of argument with solid evidentiary refutation. (Demonstrate lack of warrant, lack of link, over-reliance on facts that are in fact pure bull-oney, etc., keeping in mind that to overcome their evidence you need, uh, other evidence.)
3. Demonstrate in the end why your Big Idea is so much better.

This lack of coverage of a side's own case is the biggest lapse in PF rounds. Like everything else I've been saying, it's not particularly groundbreaking; hell, it's written right into the instructions.

But people don't do it. And what this means from the judging point of view is that you have this big hole on your flow that, presumably, will be filled at some other time. That's not good enough. As I say, in a debate, every speech should act as if it's the one that has to win the round. And winning the round always means not just refuting what the other team has said but also providing support for why what you say is so much better.

To remember this—and this may be the first thread of theory to be presented in the PF world—I would suggest you tattoo the following on your partner's forehead: **“Don't just say no.”** Saying no just isn't enough. Never has been, never will be. The best defense is a good offense? Yep. If you have an extra partner that you only use on religious holidays, you can tattoo *that* on that one's head. **“The best defense is a good offense.”**

Truer words, in debate, have never been spoken.

One thing we haven't discussed yet is prep time. To be honest, two minutes of prep time isn't enough to scratch your nose, so its use must be carefully doled out. I would simply suggest that a minute go before the 3rd or 4th speeches, so that the team can compare notes on what to win with, then 30 seconds each to do the same for the two wrap-up speeches. Hear what your partner has to say before you start talking, in other words. There might be a piece of evidence you might not have thought of, or some point that would have otherwise eluded you. It is a team activity, after all. Use the team's brain, not just your own.

Anyhow, the rest of PF plays out in a most predictable way, and one need simply keep in mind that the point of each speech is to win the round. The two-minute speeches are just long enough to explain to the judge 1) why your opponent loses, and 2) why you win. Explaining either one of these without the other is not good enough. “Our opponents' Big Idea was this, and this evidence overwhelming disproved it, while our Big Idea was this, and this evidence overwhelming proved it, ergo, vote for us,” or words to that effect. What is true of crystallization in LD is true in PF. Explain to the judge why you win, and show it on the flow. We win because we made this argument for our side, which was not suitably refuted, and because we made this argument against our opponent, which was not suitably refuted. Give the judge a summary, with a roadmap. Briefly. Anything less is probably not enough.

I'm not quite sure what the GXF is supposed to be about, but I would suggest that it will vary from round to round. If it were me, I'd just hammer home any point I was winning, and explain why any point I wasn't winning didn't matter. Same as LD. I wonder, though. By this time in the round (and this is also true of LD, although, of course, there's no more CX toward the end of things), most judges' minds will be mostly made up. So maybe what it boils down to, if you think you're winning, figure out why you're winning and hammer that home, whereas if you think you're losing, figure out why and hammer something else home, or prove why the reason your losing is not a reason to lose. Tough thing to do, though.

By the same token, the last one-minute speech can't really be much more than an attempt by the final speaker to write the judge's ballot. That's what it would be if it were me. “This is why you vote pro/con,” and then you give a couple of sentences on the Big Idea. Anything else is pointless; I mean, what else can you do at this late stage of the game?

That about sums it up. I hope this is a good start for you.

See you at the coin flip.