

Why it is important that ALL teams rank the judges

This tournament will be employing Mutual Judge Preferences in assigning judges in LD. If you already are familiar with MJP and intend to rank your judges, you need read no further. But if you are unfamiliar with MJP, or unclear about how it works, or consider it somehow harmful to LD and refuse to do it on principle, please read on.

The point of MJP is not to narrow the pool to judges who are favorable to you as an individual. Keep in mind is the first word of the procedure: mutual. It is *mutual* judge preference (provided both sides use the system). If you rank someone at the top because you like that judge, you will get that judge only if your opponent has *also* ranked that judge at the top because your opponent also likes that judge. MJP is not a strategy for pre-determined wins. It is a tool for both debaters to face judges, whether they like them or not, that they equally like or don't like.

Let's translate this into the real world. Some debaters have a national circuit style, and would like to be judged by those familiar with and favorable to that style. Other debaters have a conservative traditional style, and would like to be judged by those familiar with and favorable to that style. Your highest ranked judges will be the ones favorable to your style. There are those who say a good debater ought to be able to win a ballot from any judge, but let's face it: if your opponent and your judge both favor a certain style different from your own, you are at a disadvantage. MJP attempts to remove that sort of disadvantage.

Here's how it works. The assignment of who debates whom is determined by the computer based on record (or random placement in the first two rounds). Then the computer will attempt to give all the debaters in the field judges that they have ranked equally. It will also do its best to give everyone their highest preference within those ranks. In other words, on a scale of 1 to 5, the computer will first attempt to give 1-1 judges, then 2-2, etc., to everyone. So if you rank someone a 3, and your opponent has ranked that person a 1, that judge will not adjudicate. It has to be mutual. Now, granted, there are times where the best that can be done is a one-off (i.e., a 1-2 or 2-3), but not for lack of trying, and for argument's sake, it's best to simply assume that, no matter how you rank someone in MJP, your opponent has ranked the assigned judge identically.

Here's the rub. If only one of the two debaters ranks, we have the following information: a ranking from the debater who did rank, and a blank from the debater who didn't rank. In those cases, judge selection defaults to the debater who ranked. That is, any judge that the ranking debater has assigned as a 1 will get the round, because we have no information on what the other debater thinks.

At some tournaments, not everyone ranks all the judges. The folks who don't rank tend to fall overwhelmingly into the traditional category. What happens, then, is that, since the traditionals didn't rank and the circuit style folks did rank, the circuit style judges get to be the highest preferred. In other words, **by not ranking you are furthering the promotion of circuit-style debate.** If that is your goal, fine, but if in fact you have issues

with this sort of debate and prefer more traditional LD, you are hurting your own cause. Further, you are placing your teams in a position where they will perhaps have more difficulty winning a given round than their opponents because as often as not they will be facing judges favorable to their opponents' style.

For the sake of simplicity, when registering for this tournament, all coaches have been asked to rate their judges as circuit, traditional or newcomer. Further information on individuals can be gleaned from judge websites, but these broad categories are the most important, and should aid anyone of any orientation to evaluate the pool when it comes time to do the MJP.

So what will happen if everyone ranks? What if we've created a pool of judges sort of split down the middle, traditional versus circuit?

You opponent ranks all the circuit judges as 1s. You rank all the traditional judges as 1s. Contrariwise, you rank all the circuit judges as 3s and 4s, and your opponent ranks the trads as 3s and 4s. What happens? You're going to meet somewhere in the middle with a 2-2, with the judge on the fence that you don't hate but don't love, that your opponent also neither hates nor loves. You'll talk paradigms before the round, but dollars to donuts this round will not transpire in a maximization of either side's preferences. You'll adjust. You'll find common ground. The winner of this round is the smarter debater, not the one who picked the judge.

Of course, that scenario only holds when traditional debater hits circuit debater. What happens when traditional hits traditional? If you've both ranked accordingly, you get a mutual 1, a traditional judge. If neither of you ranks, you get a random judge after all the other judges are assigned to the people who did rank. Here's the math: **If you both don't rank, you get the leftovers. If only one of you ranks, you get that person's preference. If you both rank, you get an equal judge.**

So, if everyone ranks, there will be all sorts of rounds among traditional folks adjudicated by traditional folks, and tournaments will look a lot different. The value of circuits learning to debate traditional (and traditionals learning to debate circuit) would increase, not decrease. Since as a rule only the circuits tend to rank, things presently go to the circuit style. Get the traditionals to rank, and it will be a different ball game. In other words, at tournaments where we offer MJP, the coaches who do not wish to see circuit style debate dominate have an opportunity to do something about it. When only the circuit style is preferred, the circuit style will dominate. It's up to you.