

The reak from the policy judge sleeping across the only three couches in the judges' lounge

The last half of a chocolate donut on Saturday night, nine o'clock, leftover from Friday afternoon, and you haven't eaten since a slice of cold pizza at lunchtime

The sweaty, virus-laden handshake of a novice debater at the end of a round

Remembering the name of some kid you judged 300 times 4 years ago, and you didn't even know his name then, and now you're on a panel together and he's acting like your best friend

Squirreling, a 10-1 decision, in the final round of the TOC

Flowing an 0-4 round with both debaters' mothers observing in the back of the room

Motel rooms in towns where there's plenty of trade, but none of it is of the tourist persuasion

Showers at tournament hotels

High schools the size of Cleveland, where all the rooms have imaginary numbers, and if you ask for directions you find out you're in the wrong wing

Sitting behind a grammar school desk in a quarter-scale classroom with your knees behind your neck

Classrooms decorated with posters for raising a healthy baby alone while taking your PSATs

Classrooms decorated with posters for a religion that is not yours, and which asserts in no uncertain terms that you are doomed

Judging every flight of every round

Not judging any flights of any round

Your kids being the last ones to show up from their rounds on Friday night, after everyone else in the school has been gone for over two hours

Twenty-three hour bus rides with your kids who have decided to replay every scene from every TV show they've ever seen, at top volume, and your iPod battery is dead and the bus breaks down when the driver decides to try a shortcut, and there's no way to get help because no one's cell phone is getting service, and the ice storm is raging so hard the door won't open, at which point the alternator blows up, the heat goes off, and one of your novices tells you he left his CIA-employee father's computer back at the school and the government is going to kill you if you don't go back for it.