

Hey, Kids: Tournament Trading Cards – Collect them all!!!

#218 The Leaver

Famous quote: “Hey, can we have our ballots now? We’re going to head out.”

Distinguishing characteristics: Shifty eyes, unfamiliar face.

Habitat: One school district over from this one. In other words, the closest of any school attending the tournament.

Details: The Leaver is the first one to want to escape from your tournament, despite being the closest of all the attendees and therefore having the shortest trip. The Leaver has never attended an awards ceremony, and probably never will.

Handling tips: Tell him you’ll mail him his ballots, then immediately proceed to lose them.

#72 The Ailer

Famous quote: “I think I’m dying, but if you really need me to judge, I’ll be lying down on the floor of the judges’ lounge praying for release from this mortal coil.”

Distinguishing characteristics: Green gills, slow gait.

Habitat: Unknown. The Ailer is never anywhere you happen to look for him.

Details: The Ailer arrives at every tournament promising to judge more rounds than you’re actually conducting, but at some point before the presets are concluded he comes to

the tab room and lists twenty or thirty chronic and/or fatal ailments, all of which he is suffering from, and although he hates to do this, he wishes to beg for your mercy.

Handling tips: Hand slot into the 0-Whatever bracket of every round on the odd chance of his accidentally walking by the ballot table. Worst case scenario: give his ballots to a non-English speaking parent.

#119 The Iconoclast

Famous quote: “Oh. I didn’t know you wanted me to pick up a ballot.”

Distinguishing characteristics: Never wears clothing available in retail outlets any time during the last five years.

Habitat: Some Iconoclasts are drawn to the other Iconoclasts at a tournament, and can be found wherever there’s cigarette smoke. Occasionally Iconoclasts are in their round but don’t want anyone to know it.

Details: The Iconoclast has been a part of the debate scene since 1983, yet never seems to realize that judging rounds requires picking up a ballot and then proceeding to the correct room. If you have specifically demanded full written ballots, the Iconoclast will fully write “Oral.”

Handling tips: Ranking as a C judge is imperative. Never tell the Iconoclast the location of the judges’ lounge, especially if your food is halfway decent, because the Iconoclast only eats at tournaments, spending the rest of the week living off accumulated doughnut fat.

#11 The Rotator

Famous quote: “I have different judges for every round. Let me write it down for you.”

Distinguishing characteristics: Entire team wears Debate Team Sweatshirts with picture of Cicero orating before the Roman Senate on one side, and dead-body forensics pun on other side.

Habitat: Judges’ lounge.

Details: The Rotator has a roster of parent judges longer than the tournament’s roster of debaters and more complicated than verb declensions in the ancient Prakrit. No judge is available for more than one round, no judge understands the activity they’re supposed to be judging, and at no time is the judge the Rotator has told you is available actually available. As a general rule, Rotators only have rosters of parent judges; the likelihood of the literal parent judge on the roster for a specific assignment showing up for that assignment is slim to nonexistent.

Handling tips: Since most if not all of the Rotator’s judges will have been struck by virtually the entire tournament, don’t bother entering them into the system in the first place.

#287 The Oralist

Famous quote: “All right. I’ll start with your opening quote and go on from there.”

Distinguishing characteristics: The last judge to return with a ballot regardless of how early the round started. Does not feel as if the job has been done if the round critique is not longer than the round.

Habitat: Back of the room.

Details: The Oralist has never gotten over his or her own debate career, and feels a need to talk, and talk, and talk, after every round. Some Oralists have been known to put competitors to sleep so deeply that they have been unable to perform at later rounds. When the Oralist has finished critiquing the round, a quiet spot will be found where a ballot as long as the Finnish Constitution will be written in handwriting about as clear as if it were, well, Finnish.

Handling tips: Never have an Oralist do the last critique in a break round. If possible, assign only to novice first-timer events. Always place in the room next door to tab. Finding an Oralist a date for a Friday night could be just the ticket for breaking the cycle, but good luck with that one.

#9 The Non-Squirrel

Famous quote: "I never squirrel."

Distinguishing characteristics: Squirrels on all panels: 2-1. 4-1. 6-1. 8-1. Size never matters.

Habitat: Wherever someone will listen.

Details: Claims to never squirrel but, of course, always does. Ascribes lack of unanimity in round to sun spots, brain damage and/or microwaves affecting the other judges.

Handling tips: Nod. Smile. Agree.

#88 The Jargonbuster

Famous quote: “Don’t use debate language. Just because I know what you’re talking about doesn’t mean anyone else will.”

Distinguishing characteristics: Conspicuously wears NFL Triple Diamond pin.

Habitat: Wherever debate isn’t.

Details: Although the Jargonbuster has been in the activity since first grade, this particular species of coach has a passionate disdain for the so-called lingo of the activity. Will write an entire ballot decrying use of terms like “contention” or “warrant” or “argument.”

Handling tips: Talk. Very. Slowly. And. Never. Use. A. Word. Bigger. Than. A. Breadbox. That. Any. Other. Intelligent. Adult. Would. Understand. Perfectly. Serve only mayonnaise sandwiches, unsalted potato chips and vanilla ice cream.

#46 The Downmaybe One

Famous quotes: “Three oh, maybe two one.” “Four oh, maybe three one.”

Distinguishing characteristic: Confidence oozing out of every pore.

Habitat: High school cafeterias, schematic in hand, surrounded by people who are not paying attention.

Details: The Downmaybe One naturally assumes that he or she has won every round so

far, but always allows for a statistical deviation of perhaps being down one. The Downmaybe One has not broken at a tournament in the last three years.

Handling tips: Nod and move away slowly, otherwise the Downmaybe One will tell you exactly how this figuring has been arrived at.

#199 Attila the “Huh?”

Famous quotes: “I didn’t know there was a round going on now.” “Does this mean I get a bye?”

Distinguishing characteristic: When everyone else in the room is running over to collect a schematic, Attila the “Huh?” is heading in the other direction thinking about pizza.

Habitat: Wherever the rest of the tournament isn’t.

Details: Attila the “Huh?” seems to have no idea when to be where. Rounds come and go, and AtH doesn’t show up, and then comes to tab complaining that it must be somebody else’s fault. Again.

Handling tips: Look back into AtH’s eyes with exactly the same expression as AtH’s. Say nothing. Eventually AtH will shuffle off for another piece of pizza. Don’t expect to see him or her in the next round either.

#305 Clark Kent

Famous quote: “Can I go now?”

Distinguishing characteristic: A general air of tortured annoyance.

Habitat: Tab, before and after every round.

Details: Clark Kent is a parent who has never been to a debate tournament before and hasn't quite figured out that if the debaters expect to debate every round, they will probably need judges. Clark would prefer to be living his or her other, secret, life. Having double-booked their calendar with business lunches, theater tickets, elevenses, papal audiences and relatives dying alone in the hospital who must be visited just one more time before passing on is obviously a problem for the tournament staff and not Clark.

Handling tips: Shed a tear and promise you'll do whatever you can because you understand completely. Rinse. Repeat.