

Part 3: Shutting down registration

At some point, registration has to shut down. You need to order food, finalize trophy orders, hire judges (who have a tendency to back out willy nilly after the most fervent commitment promises)—all those things that depend on knowing exactly how many people will be attending your tournament.

There are five different shut-down dates you can play with in tabroom:

- *New Entries due*
- *Fees & Obligations freeze*
- *Judge entries due*
- *Online drops and name changes*
- *Nuisance fines apply*

As far as I'm concerned, there should just be one:

- *Registration closes*

The whole point of shutting down registration is getting your final numbers and proceeding accordingly. You will now be laying out money; if the number of people attending your tournament isn't the number you think it's going to be, you can develop a real pain in the balance sheet. On the other side, there comes a point where your guests have to make their commitment. For the sake of both sides, closing registration a week to ten days before the first day of the tournament is the way to do it. At this time, fees and obligations are frozen. Whatever a team says it's bringing, they have to pay for, and cover with judging. End of story.

This includes judge entries. In a world of MJP and strikes, teams attending a tournament need to know who is judging. Teams hemming and hawing and changing their judge names at the last minute is unacceptable. Your other customers are penalized by this bad behavior, and tournaments that allow it are, indirectly, condoning it. So, I suggest making it a rule: **No judge entries/changes after registration closes.** Think about it. You opened registration two months ago. Schools have had plenty of time to get their judging organized. The schools that haven't are the ones that should be penalized, not the schools that have. Maybe this means forcing them to buy hired judging, if you've got it. Or maybe this means their dropping uncovered entries, if the tournament can't cover them. It's not your problem, it's their problem. No tournament has unlimited judging to cover unlimited entries. (We'll talk about this in detail later.)

More absolute is this rule: **No judge entries/changes after preferences/strikes open.** While you might be lenient a week in advance, it is completely unacceptable for teams to change judges once prefs are open. That means that everybody else has to pref multiple times. You just can't allow this.

As for online name changes and drops, who cares? Once a school is committed and fees are frozen, what's it to you if John Doe becomes Jane Row? Let people change names

online themselves up until the point where you're printing registration documents, say the night before the tournament. (An argument could be made that teams want to know who they'll be debating, but in real life, people who are registered at the freeze point are the ones who tend to come, and few to zero coaches are in the business of posting false names to trick the opposition.)

Nuisance fines? I recommend against them. Here's what's going to happen. Maybe there will be ten or fifteen last minute changes at the registration table. It's hard enough getting those changes into the system and tabbing around them. Do you really need the extra \$10 for each? They're almost inevitably out of the coaches' control, and as often as not unaccounted for by their administrations, so the money is coming out of their own personal pockets. And it makes you look mean, for no great reason, while they scramble into their wallets and hold up the registration line. Let's face it. Little Petey got dengue fever the night before. You've already paid Petey's registration. Now you have to pay another ten bucks because he got sick? This is an educational activity, not a financial wringer exposition. As the tournament director, you've already got their money. Let it go.

(By the way, this does not apply to fines for missed judging. This is malfeasance on the part of the judges, and should be punished accordingly.)

I do have one suggestion. There's a fee you can set up in tabroom for how much people owe you if they show up at the tournament without enough judges. This shows up on the invoices until judges are put into the system. A lot of tournaments set the cost of a missing judge as the same as a judge hire. This means that people who were unable to purchase judges because you didn't have enough in the first place, will now be able to purchase judges by default, judges you may not even have! I recommend putting \$500 in the box for every missing judge. This shows up on their invoices from day one, and puts the fear of God into your potential freebooters. You should not allow people to sneakily steal hired judges. Again, we'll talk about judge numbers elsewhere, but if people are going to try to pull a fast one, you've got to be even faster. A couple of thousand dollars of fines on an invoice for a school that isn't covering its judges is a mighty strong incentive to get out and do the job. (By the way, over the years I've seen some entrants who are perfectly willing to pay these exorbitant fines, usually independent entries you probably shouldn't have accepted in the first place, and private schools where another couple of Gs is barely their daily bagel allotment. Proceed accordingly.)