

## **An Odd Little Wrinkle regarding MJP Panels**

This is what we might call a nice point, and it's worth knowing about.

When I was working with the Paginator at some point last year, he noticed that debaters were getting judged in elims by people who had voted against them in previous elim rounds. There is a button that prevents being judged by someone who has voted against you, and we had selected that option. But it was happening anyhow. So we went to tabroom.com and filed a notification that the option wasn't working. But, in fact, it was. The thing is, the option was moot. The tournament we were running was using MJP, and if you have prefs, they are prioritized over other issues. That is, if your judge was ranked a 1 in the octafinals, and your judge votes against you, your 1 ranking does not magically become a strike in the quarterfinals.

I guess one could make an argument against this, but the logic seems pretty strong to me. Once we accept and use prefs for a tournament, those are the prefs for all of that tournament. Given how much we're trying to optimize panels in tab (and, presumably, how much the software is trying to optimize panels), the idea that rankings are not fixed for the tournament is nightmarish. Also, it really doesn't make sense. The idea behind MJP, like it or hate it, is that you rank a judge because that judge is the kind of judge you like to debate in front of, not because that judge always picks you up. After all, the judge you gave a 1 to is the same judge to which your opponent also gave a 1. If the rationales for those 1s was a guaranteed win, you have some learning to do about the way competition works. At the point where rankings are mutual, they inherently become preferences for style over an assumption of a victory. (Actually, the idea that MJP is a path to guaranteed victory is an old one that came up back in the earliest days of the option, when dinosaurs still roamed the earth. We should be past that by now.)

In a tournament where there are no prefs, on the other hand, it does make sense to block judges who have voted against you, which tabroom can do automatically. When there's no prefs guiding the hand of tab, one judge on a panel is presumably just as good as any other, until the point where that judge has just voted against a student. Since presumably it is no big deal to put in a different judge, and not doing so can easily have a negative effect on the debater who didn't pick up that ballot last time, especially on the same side, it makes sense to avoid this situation. Everyone is happier (who wants to judge a kid you just voted against?) and no one is unhappier.