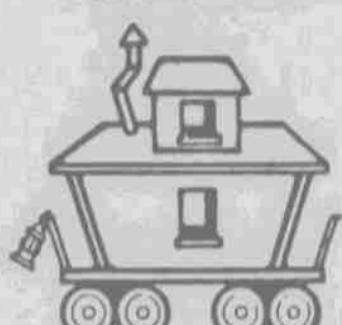


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Debaters travel to national tournament

By Tish Mockler

For the second time in 25 years, a UNL debate team qualified for the National Debate Tournament.

Juniors Mike Overing and Ed Sisson, partners for the past two years, qualified for nationals at the district tournament at St. Olaf College in Minnesota March 4 through 6.

Overing and Sisson tied for first place with two other teams in the eight-round tournament with a record of six wins and two losses. Schools from a six-state region participated, including Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wisconsin.

"They (UNL) were the top-rated team going into the tournament," said Jack Kay, who has been the director of forensics at UNL since 1979 and coached a team at the National Debate Tournament in 1980.

"They have done very well at national tournaments," he said.

Kay said the two most important qualities for the National Debate Tournament are research and analysis skills. He said he expects them to do very well at the tournament as they have done in the season with an 80 percent win record.

"They spend lots and lots of hours in the library. They are one of the best research teams in the country. Their ability to tear apart arguments is just superb," Kay said.

Before the district tournament, the National Debate Tournament Committee reviews the records of teams and picks 16 teams from across the country to participate in the national tournament. The district tournaments qualify 36 teams for nationals. After the district tournament the committee reviews the remaining records and picks 10 teams to go to the tournament. This gives well-regarded teams that did not qualify because they had a bad weekend another chance to attend.

The debate topic this year deals with the problems of U.S. military intervention in countries in the western hemisphere. Teams debating the affirmative side must present a case that justifies the prohibition of all U.S.

military intervention in the internal affairs of foreign nations in the western hemisphere.

The thesis of their case is that the United States should not invade Cuba and it should give back Guantanamo Naval Base, Sisson said. They have won 75 percent of their affirmative rounds running this case all year, changing the emphasis of the case from round to round.

Overing and Sisson began their research in June when the general topic for the year was given. They started more specific research when the exact topic for the 1982-83 year was decided and announced in July. Sisson said they spent two to three hours a day researching and working on debate, but are working more now.

The debate season starts in mid-September and lasts until March for most teams. Students usually must leave for tournaments on a Thursday evening, debate Friday, Saturday and Sunday and return home early Monday morning, Sisson said.

Sisson, a chemical engineering major, said that in order to cope with the rigors of the program he has had "tremendous support from all the instructors, especially the department chairman, Luh C. Tao." He said his schoolwork comes before debate. However, he tries to shuffle both around and reach a happy medium.

Sisson is president of the Delta Sigma Rho Chapter of the Tau Kappa Alpha, a debate honorary; documentarian of the Forensics Union and president of Cather and Pound residence halls.

Overing, treasurer of the Forensics Union and the Delta Sigma Rho Chapters, said he has arranged all his classes for Tuesday and Thursday so he has plenty of time for tournaments.


The long hours that go into research and planning are necessary because of the trend in debate towards more information processing and the formulation of more complex causal relationships in arguments, Overing said. But the large workload before the round makes for less pressure in the round, Sisson said.

Dealing with pressure is one of the most important things that he has learned to do, Sisson said.

In a high pressure round, "you don't panic," Overing said. He has learned not to whine or look for a way to squirm out of an argument, Overing said, but rather to look for the natural flaws in reasoning.


Sisson said debate gives him a break from school and allows him to travel and do something he enjoys. He said

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