

TOURNAMENT MANAGAEMENT PRACTICES

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THE GRADUAL ELIMINATION FORENSICS TOURNAMENT

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Having served as a Director of Forensics for the past thirty three years; having hosted the Pi Kappa Delta National Tournament, the Phi Rho Pi National Tournament, the National Tournament of the National Forensic League and over 100 local and regional invitational tournaments during those years, it seems to me that the number one problem in forensic tournament management is how to give each contestant in an event an equally fair chance to reach the final round.

As our national tournaments become ever larger it is imperative that we devise a system of gradual round by round elimination rather than our current system of going from over 300 entries in an event to only 24 after four preliminary rounds. I would therefore propose that the following plan be implemented in at least one of our National Individual Events Tournaments during the spring of 1990.

Step #1: We set up the first two rounds of each event based upon a geographical distribution system. We attempt to have six contestants in each section of an event. In no case will a section have more than six (6) contestants nor fewer than five (5) contestants.

Step #2: A.-After the two preliminary rounds, all contestants with a total cumulative ranking of nine (9) or higher are eliminated from the event. This means that contestants that ranked 3-6, 4-5, 4-6, 5-5, 5-6, or 6-6 are eliminated. (This example is based upon one (1) judge per section. If more than one judge per section is used we should multiply the number of judges used by nine (9).

Step #2: B.-The remaining contestants in each event are divided into six groups on the basis of cumulative ranks with ratings used to break ties. Our goal is to have six groups of equal size with all those in a group having the same total cumulative ranking, i.e.-those with a cumulative rank of (2) might be in one group, (3-4) in a second group, (5) in a third group, (6) in a fourth group, (7) in a fifth group, and (8) in a sixth group.

C.-Round number three (3) is paired by putting one contestant from

each of the six groups in each section with care being taken to insure that they do not compete against someone they have already competed against during the previous rounds of the tournament.

At this point in the tournament we will have accomplished two things:

- 1.-We have eliminated the weaker contestants who would not have made it to the elimination rounds anyway.
- 2.-We have seeded the remaining contestants based upon their performance in the first two rounds and have thus balanced the relative strength of each section in round three.

Step #3: A.-After three (3) rounds all contestants in an event with a total cumulative rank of twelve (12) or greater are eliminated. This means that a contestant going into the round with a cum of eight (8) which is the highest they could have and still be in the event would only be eliminated if they ranked 4th, 5th, or 6th in their section during round number three.

B.-We again divide the remaining students into six groups--seeding as we did in step two.

Step #3: C.-Round number four (4) is paired by putting one contestant from each of the six groups in each section with care being taken to insure that they do not compete against someone that they have already competed against during the previous rounds of the tournament.

Step #4: A.-After four (4) rounds all contestants with a total cumulative rank of fourteen (14) or greater are eliminated. A contestant going into round four with a cum of eleven (11) would be eliminated with a rank of 3, 4, 5, or 6 in their section during round number four.

B.-We again divide the remaining contestants into six groups seeding them as we did in step two.

C.-Round number (5) is paired by putting one contestant from each of the six groups in each section with care being taken to insure that they do not compete against someone that they have already competed against during the previous rounds of the tournament.

Step #5: After five (5) preliminary rounds we break to quarter finals as we have been doing in the past. Quarter finalists are selected on the basis of low total cumulative rankings with ties broken on the basis of high total cumulative ratings.

Advantages of the "Gradual Elimination Tournament."

- 1.-Contestants have more of an opportunity to make the finals as they gradually eliminate their rivals.
- 2.-Better able to balance the various sections because of the seeding process that is used to pair all sections of each round after the two preliminary rounds.
- 3.-Less need for judges as we start eliminating contestants after two

rounds. We should eliminate 20-25% of the contestants after two rounds. And should have eliminated 2/3 of the contestants by round #5.

4.-More of an opportunity for eliminated contestants to observe other rounds of the tournament and/or concentrate on doing well in the events that they have not been eliminated in.

Disadvantages of the "Gradual Elimination Tournament" 1.-"Some students will be eliminated after two rounds." This will happen but these are the students that can gain the most from observing other competition and they should be encouraged to do so. 2."Much pairing must be done as the tournament progresses." This is true but with three or four conflict patterns we have the time to tabulate, seed, and pair the next round of one pattern while the last round of the other patterns are going on.

3.-"This would lengthen the tournament due to five preliminary rounds." The fact that we are working with fewer and fewer contestants each round after round two, makes for a faster and more efficient tournament. We should be able to conclude the tournament within the same time span used in the past.

I am convinced that this system is a better and a fairer way to determine who breaks into the elimination rounds. Our students after working hard all season long deserve a national tournament that gives them every opportunity to prove their ability. The Gradual Elimination Tournament will provide them with that opportunity.
