

**INTEGRATING WELLNESS AND FORENSICS:
TOURNAMENT MANAGEMENT AS A STARTING POINT**

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Though wellness on college campuses has begun to gain recognition and support, forensics activities have yet to be influenced by the wellness movement. Starting from the premise that attending forensics tournaments is essentially an 'unnatural' experience, this paper examines the basic dimensions of the wellness lifestyle as well as provides specific examples of how wellness can be integrated into forensics tournament management practices.

INTRODUCTION

The past decade has witnessed a surge toward 'wellness'. Business and industry as well as college campuses world wide have embraced the wellness movement. Integration of social, physical, intellectual, career, emotional, and spiritual well being--perhaps seen as an admirable but unobtainable goal--is viewed by supporters of the wellness movement as not only possible, but a necessary prerequisite for well functioning individuals.

As is obvious to any participant in forensics, this activity has remained untouched by the wellness movement. As most of us have acknowledged at

one time or another, attending forensics tournaments is a decidedly unnatural activity. Rising early, rushing to school, missing breakfast in the rush to get the team packed and on the road is the order of most of our Friday mornings. Driving for several hours to the tournament site gets us there in time to grab a quick bite to eat at the university cafeteria or a local fast food establishment. This meal, supplemented by coffee, soda, cigarettes and candy bars somehow keeps us going as we spend the afternoon and early evening walking miles between rounds in shoes that are not meant for walking. Finally, around 8 or 9 p.m. we eat dinner, consuming inexpensive and highly caloric food.

Relaxation takes place back at the hotel in the few minutes before the onset of the tournament's social activities. At these functions coaches and students alike may drink, smoke, and stay up longer than they would or should normally.

Rising at the crack of dawn the next morning in order to attempt to secure at least a warm shower, and again fortifying ourselves with doughnuts and coffee--we go off to the second day of competition. The critical issue of the day is breaking finals--not because it means the chance for a trophy or qualifying for nationals, but because it determines the more important issue of who gets to eat lunch and who doesn't. Finally, around dinner time, we get ready to return to our respective schools: exhausted, interpersonally frayed, hungry, and frequently more than slightly stressed.

Does this sound like a weekend we would chose to plan if we had other options? Probably not. Though the social aspects of tournaments are certainly enjoyable--it is likely that most of us also return from tournaments feeling somewhat less 'well' than when we left. The costs of a heavy tournament schedule can be high both physically and mentally, including high stress among both coaches and competitors, low morale among team members, tournament 'burn out,' interpersonal conflict, and physical problems--just to name a few. The final result is clear to all of us--talented coaches and competitors resigning from the activity. Ironically, it is the most talented coaches and students who are especially vulnerable, as it is these individuals who travel the most often and with the most students, and the most talented competitors who break finals in all three groupings.

Though an obvious solution is simply to host and to attend fewer tournaments, this is generally an unpopular notion--even though several of the most successful teams in the country travel what most of us would consider a 'limited' tournament schedule (UW-Madison and Northern Iowa for example). There seem to be several reasons why schools don't seem willing to cut back on their travel. First, most of our schools have an implicit Traditional Tournament Schedule which is followed annually, partially out of fear of insulting schools which traditionally attend out own tournaments. Secondly, we want to enhance the educational opportunity for our students and at the same time pro-

vide ample opportunities for our students to qualify for nationals. In some districts, there are virtually no 'free' non-holiday weekends from the end of September until the end of March! Finally, cutting back on tournament schedules is likely to have a disastrous effect on our budgets as the logic behind most budgeting decisions would be that if we travel to 1/3 fewer tournaments (even with larger groups of students traveling to these tournaments), we only need 2/3 of our present budget!

Even understanding that cutting down on tournaments will help foster our own and our students' wellness, few of us are going to go back to our universities and change our tournament schedules for the upcoming year. It is more realistic to understand how we can make attending forensics tournaments a healthier and more enjoyable experience.

WELLNESS

The wellness movement began in the workplace as employers became interested in a program that would combat disease. Later, according to Maricopa Community College's Wellness Report, wellness became an issue in cost containment. For example, it has been estimated that a company could spend as much as \$1.5 million for every employee who suffered a heart attack. From there, the wellness movement evolved into concern for the employee by creating a supportive environment for a wellness lifestyle. In the last ten years colleges and universities have begun to recognize the benefits of wellness programs for not only their employees, but students as well. According to some experts, every dollar invested in wellness programs brings a threefold return in terms of greater productivity, less absenteeism, higher satisfaction, lessened stress and fewer illnesses among employees. On the college campuses, wellness programs have resulted in greater awareness of health maintenance, stress reduction techniques, self esteem, and spiritual growth as well as more tangible benefits such as healthier diets, better physical fitness, and higher grades and retention.

Wellness authors identify six dimensions to wellness, with each dimension having equal importance for the living a well-rounded life. The Wellness Institute at University of Wisconsin at Stevens Point defines the six dimensions as

Social measures the individual's contribution to the common welfare of the community. This emphasizes the interdependence with others and the creation of meaningful relationships.

Physical not only concerns physical fitness (cardio-vascular fitness, strength, endurance, etc), but also the degree to which one chooses foods which are nourishing and balanced.

Intellectual measures the degree to which one engages in creative, stimulating mental activities. An intellectually well person uses the resources available to expand his or her knowledge in improved skills along with ex-

panding the potential for sharing with others.

Career refers to the satisfaction gained from one's work and the degree to which one is enriched by work.

Emotional concerns the degree of awareness and acceptance that one has of one's feelings, abilities and limitations. This includes the degree to which one feels positive and enthusiastic about one's self.

Spiritual measures one's ongoing involvement in seeking meaning and purpose in human existence. It includes a deep appreciation for the depth and expanse of life and natural forces that exist in the universe.

While forensics has made steps towards encouraging individual growth (for both students and coaches) in several of these areas, as coaches and tournament directors, we have the opportunity and responsibility to further enhance our own as well as our students' wellness. By examining how we can incorporate the dimensions of the wellness lifestyle into our coaching and tournament directing, we can help 're-create' the forensics "culture" by enabling positive, healthy choices and opportunities for our students and ourselves.

WELLNESS AND FORENSICS: WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Psychologist Robert F. Allen, a leader in the wellness movement, identified three interrelated factors--a shared vision, a positive culture, and a sense of community--which enable successful cultural change efforts (Allen & Allen, 1987). To a degree, each of these three factors is already in evidence in forensics. The fact that this development conference exists is a testament to the fact that we are willing to look at ourselves and this activity with an eye toward the future--and to consider future changes.

It would be ideal if each college and university that we represented had its own wellness program that would help us and our students understand the dimensions of wellness and incorporate them into our everyday lives, such a ideal is a long way off. Schools like the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, Maricopa Community College (Phoenix, Arizona), and Roanoke College (Virginia) provide models of successful wellness programs--as well as evidence of their success. For most of us however, wellness is an alien concept on our campuses or one that has gotten caught up (or lost) in administrative red tape, budget problems, staffing issues, and space utilization questions.

Although we may have to wait for the wellness movement to move onto our campuses, we can begin now to foster a wellness-forensics interface which would have a number of benefits for all individuals involved in this activity. A wellness model for an entire forensics program would be valuable--but also require a great deal of commitment in terms of emotional, physical, and financial resources. A more reasonable and immediate approach is to start integrating the wellness perspective into forensics by directing the tournaments we host with this perspective both in mind and in evidence. The change in perspective would require require a bit more pre-tournament preparation as well as

relatively minor changes in scheduling and tournament management.

IMPLEMENTING WELLNESS

Tournament Schedule: Tournaments need to be scheduled with an eye toward the position in the school year. Early tournaments (October and November) may want to consider offering a limited slate of events, or if room space and judges are available, only two groupings. At this point in the season, quadrathlon seems to be a more reasonable offering than pentathlon--discouraging students from including ill-prepared high-stress 'throw-away' events in order to come up with five entries. Unless there is an unusual number of specific announcements which cannot be handled any other way, time reserved for the General Meeting might be better utilized by giving participants time to have lunch before the competition begins. The other consideration should be in terms of providing at least an hour off before the start of finals to insure everyone has the time to relax and have lunch before final rounds.

Food. Depending on the location of the host college or university to the town, providing food options during the day may or may not be a concern. What should be a concern, however, is the type of food and snacks available on campus or close to campus. Selling fruit, yogurt, juices, and mineral water at the ballot table would be welcomed by many participants. Offering these items at a little above cost might also serve as a small fund-raiser for your team. Even a small gesture such as having ice water or tea available would be favorable to the usual alternatives of soda and coffee. If university food service is not available on Saturday, be sure plenty of time is allowed in the schedule for participants to go off campus to eat. If car travel is required to get to a restaurant, providing a shuttle van would save 'getting organized' time for teams as well as provide a social opportunity. The host school might also consider having a box lunch catered in to the tournament participants.

Deciding on the evening meal is often difficult. Most tournament directors already provide participants with lists of restaurants in the area. Even more helpful would be an annotated listing which includes information in regard to the menu variety, prices, and service. Having menus available from the restaurants and a map on how to get around town is essential. Keeping in mind the usual criteria which limit the dining options for most forensics teams (i.e. students are on a meal allowance so it must be inexpensive, nobody knows there way around town so it must be close to the hotel/school, everyone is exhausted and hungry so it must have quick service, everyone has to agree, which usually means it must be a franchise place that people are familiar with) should prompt a tournament director to make specific recommendations as to restaurants with affordable and healthy options. Restaurants in the area might also be willing to give special prices to teams on specific entrees if recommended specifically to visiting teams.

Even a better choice when considering the long Friday tournament schedule would be hosting a timely and nutritious Friday dinner (at around 5:00 or 6:00 p.m.) on campus. A check with the campus food service would determine the feasibility of this alternative in terms of reasonable cost as well as food options available. This option may help assure a reasonably-priced healthy dinner to the participants within a time frame that not only is more 'normal' in terms of our usual schedules, but even allow for an additional round or two to be held after the meal.

Saturday morning's legendary continental breakfast can easily be made a wellness experience by altering the standard doughnut and coffee fare. Many schools in the upper midwest have begun offering bagels, muffins, juice, and fruit and have found the participants appreciative, while also noticing that these alternatives are usually less expensive than the usual continental breakfast.

Tournament Activities. Off rounds are generally a time for relaxing and socializing. A tournament hosted from a wellness perspective offers healthy (and still social!) alternatives. Some possibilities for off-round activities for participants might be the creation of non-smoking coaches' and students' lounge areas, and a quiet relaxation area with relaxing music for reading or meditating. Maps of walking tours of your campus might be provided with distances marked off (be sure to tell your guests to bring their jogging shoes!), and special exhibits or events at your university (gymnastics meets, art exhibition, guest speaker) should be promoted. More active choices might include offering free coupons for bowling or shooting pool at the student union (as does UW Stout), providing equipment such as frisbees available for check out (climate permitting), or initiating some kind of team contest. Students on the host team not participating in the tournament could facilitate these activities.

Entertainment. It seems that in the past few years evening entertainment has become a bit more subdued than it had been in the past. This is probably due in part to the raising of the drinking age to 21 in combination with stricter college and university restrictions on serving alcohol at college functions. Besides calling for smoke-free social gatherings, other suggestions include a structured competition in dance (UW Stout) or team song (SDSU), theme parties, talent competitions, pool parties at the tournament hotel, a bowling tournament at the local or university lanes, or parties featuring mixed-team games such as Trivial Pursuit, Pictionary, Jeopardy!, or Wheel of Fortune. Mixed-Teams competing in adapted versions of Family Feud or other popular game shows might also provide a fun alternative for the evening as well as promote interaction between members of different schools.

Educational Activities. While by its very nature forensics competition provides exposure to a number of new ideas and experiences, tournaments can

be designed to provide even more of an educational experience for participants. Making sure as many rounds as possible are held in rooms large enough to accommodate spectators and encouraging students to observe during their off rounds is essential. In addition, the time between final rounds and awards provides an excellent opportunity for the host school or district to sponsor mini symposiums on judging philosophies, final round oral critiques, discussion of the experimental event, and other issues or questions of importance and interest to the district.

Educational activity is closely tied to the emotional growth of forensics participants. In order for our students to really benefit from attending tournaments they need to not only be encouraged to observe rounds, but they also need to receive helpful feedback. Tournament directors can encourage more effective feedback from judges several ways. First, provide ballots which are large enough (5" x 7" minimum) and also include extra ballots for more in depth critiques. Second, provide ample time between rounds for ballot writing and try not to schedule judges in back-to-back rounds. Third, make sure hired judges have specific instructions regarding rank and rating norms in your district. It is time to rethink the scale which appears on many schools ballots. While most experienced judges disregard these labels ("Average = 15-11 points"), a hired or inexperienced judge may believe a score of 12 or 13 is within the normal range. Next, it would be helpful if tournament directors would casually examine the ballots turned in to the tab room. Ballots which are blank except for rank and rating should be returned to the judge for additional and more helpful comments. Additionally, ballots outlining specific issues to be addressed by the judge might also be considered (NDSU has used these ballots in the past). Finally, oral critiques by the judge following the round might be especially helpful early in the season and at novice tournaments.

CONCLUSION

Though we all enjoy forensics, we are all too familiar with the physical and psychological costs of being involved in it. That we continue participating is a tribute not only to the rewards of the activity--of which there are many--but also to our own abilities to deal with the stresses involved. It is the assumption of this paper that incorporating the wellness perspective into the tournaments that we host would make attending tournaments a healthier and even more enjoyable experience.

After examining the dimensions of the wellness movement and how tournament hosts might make specific changes to facilitate wellness at their tournaments, there appear to be two important and interrelated ideas leading to wellness in forensics.

Information/Opportunities: Tournament hosts need to provide information to guests pertaining to wellness options and activities available on their specific campuses. In addition, host schools need to create opportunities for stu-

dents and coaches to engage in wellness activities while at their tournaments.

Choices/Implementation: Ultimately, information and opportunities will lead to healthier choices being made by both coaches and competitors. Coaches and tournament directors have the opportunity and responsibility to serve as role models for their teams by actively providing and promoting healthy choices.

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