

**POSITION PAPER ON DOUBLE ENTRIES**

**MIKE WARTMAN  
NORMANDALE COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

**A rushed and flustered contestant enters the room 45 minutes into the round. The contestant is the remaining speaker but still writes a name on the**

board, scribbles DE (for double-entered ... and at times TE for triple entered) behind the name, and then crosses a line through the DE indicating that the other event has been completed.

This "courtesy" of indicating that the contestant is through with the first part of the "double entered dash" has always amused me. As a judge, common sense dictates that the contestant should definitely have been in the other round. Yet the writing of DE and crossing it out has become one of the many forensics rituals we love and hate in forensics competition.

I'm not bugged by the name writing and nonverbal symbols used in forensics. What does concern me, however, and what will be the premise and position of this paper, is the increasing number of double entries within conflict patterns that exists in forensics competition. While the idea of contestants trying and gaining experience in many events is admirable, I believe the "double entry movement" is potentially harmful and damaging to the quality of forensics competition and the abilities of most contestants. In this position paper I will briefly explain double entries, describe problems that may be caused by double entries and then generate some general suggestions to the concern. In an educational setting such as forensics, it is essential to occasionally limit experience for the sake of quality.

#### EXPLANATION OF DOUBLE ENTRIES

I believe the phrase double entry is self explanatory and nationwide, but I will define it for clarity. Simply stated, if a contestant enters two events within the same conflict or time pattern, the contestant is double entered.

If Prose, Poetry and Extemp Speaking all take place at 3:15, round One, Friday and the contestant is entered in Prose and Poetry, the contestant is double entered. The contestant must complete Round One of Prose and Poetry in the same time period.

#### PROBLEMS WITH DOUBLE ENTRIES

I feel that five problems or difficulties surface within forensics as a result of allowing double entries. The first two are practical in that they relate to forensics outside of the forensics context. The remaining three are specifically related to forensics competition and tournament management. The problems have not been quantified and are based on observation, conjecture and student comments. However, they do represent some serious difficulties which may be lessened by limiting double entries.

**Problem 1: Double entries decrease audience numbers in the round.**

We are all familiar with too many rounds of forensics competition being held with the judge and one or two contestants in the room. In many tournaments, there are so many contestants in transit between rooms or courteously waiting in the hall, that there is rarely an audience to listen to the contestants. I have heard students brag (?) that they did not have the chance to listen to any prelim selections or speeches because they were double entered throughout the

tournament. This may cause several problems:

a. Forensics is often criticized as being formal and rigid. A student should not be forced to mechanically present a speech or interp selection to one or two people pretending that there may be other audience members present. An audience of the judge and 5-6 contestants would provide some opportunity for audience adaptability and interaction.

b. The double entered student is rarely present to listen to other selections or speeches. If we argue that there is a practical listening component in forensics, it would seem logical to require listening to other contestants. Our students complain that they have heard the selections and speeches of other contestants over and over throughout the year and this should excuse them from additional listening. Even if the selection has been performed 267 times that season, it is still the responsibility of the audience to be present and to listen courteously. Double entering allows the student the opportunity not to listen. **Problem 2: Double entries may result in an overly stylized speaker or interp style**

A student who enters many events in a tournament is asked to develop a wide variety of skills and abilities. For example, a person entered in an interp and a public speaking event must demonstrate both interpretation and presentational skills in addition to research, organization and analysis. A person who enters five or six events may simply NOT have the time or energy to master all of the events. For example, assuming there is a difference in selection and presentation between Dramatic and Prose Interp, I argue that the majority of forensics contestants may not have the time and ability to develop the distinctions and intricacies in their events. The end result, I feel, is a general and "stylized" presentational style. This style may not capture the unique features of each event but it may be enough to get by. For example, a public speaker may have the general style to gain finals in impromptu, persuasive and extemp, but has this speaker truly mastered the separate events? I feel that contestants may sacrifice quality in order to enter many different events.

**Problem 3: Double entries cause tournament logistics problems**

Although told it is their responsibility to compete in both events within the same time period, double entered students invariably slow down the tournament schedule. Efficient tournament managers have recently added 10-15 minutes per round to allow time to complete rounds. Tournaments may run behind schedule despite double entries, but I feel the double entries slow down the overall tournament. As judges, we have all had to wait for the contestant who is running between double entries. He/she may make it to the round on time, but as judges, we may get behind because we need time to fill out the ballots and tab sheets, drop them off and run to our next round. The tournament may simply get behind due to the waiting and time element.

**Problem 4: Individual sweeps awards may be "forcing" double entries**

The competition for top speaker awards at tournaments is incredible. Recently, more and more tournaments are offering Individual Sweepstakes Awards and more and more students are entering the competition for these awards. Because of the intense competition for these awards, it has almost become a necessity to enter as many events as possible to have a chance at the top speaker award. Granted, the top speaker award should be given to the top speaker in the tournament, but do we have to define the top speaker as that contestant who completes the marathon requirements or 5 events? Typically, the student must accumulate as many points as possible in finals competition to be eligible for a top speaker award. To accomplish this, a student must obviously compete in as many events as possible to get into the finals. The end result is to double enter in many conflict patterns. Double entry often becomes a necessity for individual sweeps.

**Problem 5: Double entries help Team Sweepstakes and "Legs" for Nationals**

Like problem four, competition for Team Sweepstakes and national qualifications is also quite intense. It makes sense for a coach to enter as many students in as many events as possible to have a chance for a Team Sweepstakes Award. Financially, it makes more sense to take five students entered in four events each than it does to take 10 students in two events each. A coach who has to justify a forensic program to college administrators through winning trophies may need to enter as many students in different events which may cause double entering throughout the tournament. Couple this need with the guidelines for nationals qualification (either by the tournament, the local school or the coach) and a student may again be forced to enter as many events as possible throughout all tournaments. For example, to obtain the three "legs" necessary to be eligible for the AFA-NEIT, a student may need to double enter as much as possible to be eligible for national competition. Overall, the coach and the contestant may be encouraged to double enter for Team Sweeps or nationals qualification.

All of the problems may NOT be the effect or result of double entering but they are related to multiple entries. All five problems provide a convincing general argument that double entries may be somewhat responsible for some practical and logistical problems that exist in forensics. The following solutions and suggestions may not be practical considering the philosophies, demands and purpose of all forensics programs throughout the country. They may, however, provide an awareness to limit double entries.

#### SOLUTIONS/SUGGESTIONS

**Solution/Suggestion 1: Change double entry rules**

The ideal solution to double entries is to eliminate the opportunity to double enter within conflict patterns at tournaments. As an example, the Phi Rho Pi National Tournament prohibits double entries within a time pattern. The obvious trade off is a longer time schedule than a weekend tournament can

afford, but it does provide a model for coaches to limit participation. A student must simply choose which events to participate in at this tournament. As coaches, we may be better off by having a student master one or two events rather than generalizing 5 or 6 events.

**Solution/Suggestion 2: Limit double entries**

Since solution one may not be practical or realistic considering the time schedules of tournaments or the demands of some programs, solution two suggests to simply limit the number of events a contestant may enter in a tournament. Limiting a contestant to four events in a three-conflict pattern tournament would obviously eliminate the opportunity to double enter within two of the conflict patterns. Entering four events would still be a tremendous responsibility and effort for the individual contestant and would be helpful for individual sweeps and provide opportunities for team sweeps points in four events.

**Solution/Suggestion 3: Change Individual Sweepstakes eligibility and Tabulation Procedures**

If we limit the number of events a contestant may enter, we may diminish the opportunity to obtain individual sweepstakes points. By changing the minimum number of events needed to be eligible for individual sweepstakes a contestant may not have to be entered in so many events to be in the running for top speaker awards. By lowering the number of events necessary to be in the competition for individual sweepstakes the tabulation procedures for determining winners may need to be changed. Points for individual sweepstakes may have to given for rank and rating points in prelim rounds in addition to finals. This may eliminate the number of ties and close competition that may result from counting three events as the minimum necessary to be eligible for individual sweepstakes. The top speaker awards may at this time be more indicative of top speaker throughout the tournament versus final round competition only.

**Solution/Suggestion 4: Coach control over double entries**

The final and overly ideal solution is simply for coaches to stop allowing their team members to double enter in all tournaments. At times, the student may not be ready for competition in an event but uses a tournament as a practice tournament. At times it may be the coaches responsibility to not allow a team member to run ragged at a tournament simply because they can earn sweepstakes points for themselves and the school. At times, coaches should be aware that team members are entered in so many events that they cannot possibly be listening to other contestants. As coaches, it is necessary to limit the numbers we enter in tournaments in order to provide audiences and fair competition at tournaments. As coaches, it is within our abilities and control to occasionally limit competition.

The elimination of the double entry at forensics tournaments may not be

perceived as a real problem for coaches and contestants. The solutions and suggestions generated may be simplistic and ideal. However, I do feel it is essential to examine problems caused by double entries in competition. I certainly do not expect that I will never see DE scrawled behind a name in forensics competition. I would like to see the number of double entries lessened by coach control and tournament procedure.

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