Wisconsin Debate Coaches Association

**Minutes**

September 26, 2020

Online Meeting

**Voting schools represented:** Reagan, Marquette, Sheboygan North, La Crosse Central, Fort Atkinson, Sheboygan South, Brookfield East, West Bend, Madison Memorial, Madison West, Bradley Tech, Waukesha South, Edgewood, Janesville Parker, Rufus King, Neenah, Brookfield Central, Madison East, Cedarburg, Appleton North

Proxy assignments were communicated to the President and Secretary by Homestead, Golda Meir, and Neenah.

Tim Wells of De Forest and Adam Jacobi of WHSFA were also present.

The meeting was called to order by President Ben Sauer at 9:05 a.m.

**President**

Ben announced that the Executive Committee had decided to ban three individuals from WDCA-sanctioned meets: Shawn Matson, Miloran Robinson, and Kedrick Stumbris. The membership may overturn any of these decisions by a two-third vote.

Ben explained that NSDA Campus will be used for the first two meets and that Yaatley might be tried later as well.

Ben reported that Miloran filed for bankruptcy but that it has been agreed that payments will continue to be made.

The Executive Committee has decided to use school codes for the WSDT, and John Knetzger is working on this. Other meets are encouraged to try this as well.

Ben discussed three ad hoc committees which will work on important items:

The Constitution Committee will discuss structural and mission decisions for the WDCA.

A decision at the spring meeting was that a survey needed to be conducted before amending the constitution to address the Equity/Diversity and Inclusion Committee. That survey has not happened yet, but the committee will still exist. Ben invited people to join that committee to address the important issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion.

The Code of Conduct Committee was intended to be an ongoing committee but has not really taken shape. It now needs members so it can function.

A Novice Booster Packet Committee of policy coaches will work on updates for the locked novice packet.

We still have the same standing committees as we have had in the past, and all need members.

The Executive Committee voted to have a special general meeting during the Hilltopper meet on December 5 to go over any committee or individual proposals for any needed updates.

Ernest Chomicki asked why Shawn Matson had been barred from WDCA events. Ben responded that there were school districts who had indicated that they did not want Shawn on their property. Tim Scheffler questioned whether Shawn was afforded due process, especially since he was a coach last year.

Stephanie King explained that student safety concerns caused a specific school district to ban Shawn from their buildings.

Tim asked whether Shawn was given the opportunity to give his side of the story. Ben responded that none of the individuals on the list were contacted.

**Treasurer**

Dan Hansen presented his report, explaining how progress has been made in re-establishing the good financial standing of the WDCA. The report will be made available to all members. Loans have been paid off, and some money has been saved because of cancellations due to the pandemic. We received a $1,000 check from Miloran as recently as two days ago.

Dan has communicated with schools that have outstanding balances owed to the WDCA.

We have a much better financial outlook than we had one year ago and reason to believe things will continue to go well.

In response to a question from Pam Brown, Dan said that we are a non-profit, and that he is pursuing tax exempt status through the state of Wisconsin. We had to wait a year because you have to show a year of financial records, which we can now do.

**Secretary**

Brian Devine moved the approval of the minutes, and the motion was seconded. **The motion was passed by unanimous consent.**

**Old Business**

Ben explained that the calendar has been updated and shared with everyone. Rufus King is now October 24, and the Hilltopper is now December 5.

Stephanie pointed out that the NSDA qualifier will be on January 23, and the CFL qualifier will be January 9. The change was made.

Ernest mentioned that if schools were interested, some Friday night debate opportunities could be made available as well.

Ben moved adoption of the calendar as revised, and it was seconded. **It then passed by unanimous consent.**

**New Business**

Ben asked for suspension of the rules to consider the special debate rules, and the motion was seconded. **Suspension of rules passed by unanimous consent.**

Ben started leading us through the rules proposals.

Ernest recommended that the appeals committee at each meet should be coaches who do not have debaters in the specific division of debate in question, to avoid bias. John expressed agreement and said that we do substitute other committee members when needed to avoid conflicts of interest. Ben pointed out that the rules are designed to set a floor rather than a ceiling. Ernest recommended that having coaches specifically pulled from each division of debate so we can always avoid having potential bias. Ben pointed out that this is a matter that is in the general standing rules, and that if we want to change this, we should go through the regular process for changing the standing rules, as this is not unique to online debate.

Dan pointed out that hosts often do not know who will be attending their meet, so it is hard to choose committee members. John suggested changing the special rules to require that the committee be announced in the tournament materials rather than in the invitation. There was no objection to making this change.

Isaac Dorn asked whether non-registered debaters can observe rounds, in light of the wording of the rules. Ben responded that the intent was to have everyone who is observing to be registered in Tabroom. John explained NSDA Campus makes it difficult for observers in rounds. Ben mentioned that Yaatley does allow observers who are registered with a school.

Ben Hamburger asked about situations where people are in the same house. Ben Sauer responded that our policy is to have students in separate rooms but acknowledging there may be cases where that is not possible. Tim Scheffler asked if this is also the case if debaters who are not siblings feel they need to be in the same room to have adequate internet access to compete. Ben indicated that we want students to be able to compete, and if that is the only way they can do so, that would not be considered a violation.

Ernest asked whether we would get enough notice to prepare judges to use platforms other than NSDA Campus. Ben responded that we are starting with NSDA Campus and we might just keep using it if it’s working well. But we have Yaatley available if we feel we ought to try another platform at some point. As much notice as possible will be given.

Ernest asked what the outcome would be if tech issues made file sharing difficult. Ben responded that every team will get 15 minutes of technology time to resolve such issues. Teams will be expected to share whatever they would have shared had the round been in person. Annabelle Arney stressed that any method of file sharing is acceptable, given that everyone will in different places with technology. Even just holding up evidence in front of the camera for the other team to see would be acceptable if needed.

Ernest asked if we should require everyone to post cases to a wiki. Ben responded that doing so is an excellent idea, but that we would leave that decision up to schools.

David Henning asked whether the file sharing requirement applies to sharing with the judge as well. Ben responded that the current standing rules requirements on this would simply continue to apply.

Tim Scheffler pointed out that the statement that crossfire should not include interruption might lead to 3-minute speeches. Ben responded that students should not see this as an opportunity to filibuster.

Ernest raised a concern about the video-on requirement given the possible stigma of living situations. Ben Hamburger echoed this concern, along with a concern that students might have trouble with bandwidth if they are using video. Annabelle responded that using video has been seen as a priority, however in light of the pandemic, we should be flexible about this issue. Ben Sauer agreed that this would be reworded to show that we would like students to use video, but that if that is not possible, it is acceptable to have it off. It was decided to move this from the rules section to the recommendations section. A clarification on this issue will also be added to the judges’ section.

In response to a concern raised by Tim, Ben agreed that the requirement to send the chat log would be changed to have it sent to a designated official rather than to the host. John indicated a special email address could be set up for this purpose.

John then walked us through the Tournament Procedures portion of the proposal packet.

Ernest asked whether we should increase the number of judges we require schools to bring, given the possible tech problems. John responded we always have extra judges, and that tournament directors should always hire a couple extra judges just to be available for covering rounds here and there as needed.

Stephanie led us through the judging standards section of the proposal packet.

John mentioned that our judge training materials would be updated to cover all these topics as well.

Ernest requested that coaches be notified if anything of concern is seen during rounds, due to the possibility of something innocent being misconstrued.

Ben moved adoption of the proposal packet, and the motion was seconded. **The motion was passed by unanimous consent.**

Dan offered the following Constitutional Bylaws amendment for consideration prior to a vote at the next general meeting:

Article IX – ~~Coaching~~ Ethics

Section I – Recruitment If students are recruited by a coach from another program, a letter of such recruiting attempt should be sent to the WDCA Executive Committee and to the recruiting school’s principal.

Section II – ~~Coaches’~~ Code of Conduct Coaches, tournament directors, and volunteers are expected to conduct themselves in a professional manner including, but not limited to: refraining from illegal activities, behaving in a harassing and/or intimidating manner, and any other morally reprehensible behaviors as deemed by the association, in the context of WDCA activities, meeting, and tournaments.; ~~pending appropriate sanctioning from the Executive Board~~.

The WDCA Executive Board, upon receipt of a report alleging such behaviors, shall conduct an investigation. Thereafter, they shall determine appropriate consequences for such behavior up to and including banning persons from WDCA sanctioned events. In the event a person is banned, this fact will be published to the membership. A ⅔ vote of the membership at a meeting may overturn such a ban.

In response to a question from Tim, Dan expressed his thought that this does not change our current practice but makes it clear that it covers all adults at tournaments.

John moved the following amendment to the standing rules, and the motion was seconded:

. Replace 330.30 (B)i.

Current: In Lincoln Douglas, Public Forum, Novice Policy and Varsity Policy, judge preferences should be entered and verified for all teams utilizing ordinal ranks with the weighting recommended by the tabulation software. First Year out judges shall be appropriately labeled by the hiring school in its registration.

Proposed: In Lincoln Douglas, Public Forum, Novice Policy and Varsity Policy, judge preferences should be entered and verified for all teams utilizing a 5 tiered ranking system. Coaches/Teams will preference judges with the following percentages

1(A): 35% Minimum

2(B): 20% Maximum

3(C) 20% Maximum

4(D) 20% Maximum

5(E) 15 % Maximum

First Year out judges shall be appropriately labeled by the hiring school in its registration.

Becky Hansen asked if there is a way to prevent low preferenced judges being all that is left for the elim rounds. John explained that some judges are no longer obligated to be there late in the elim rounds, and the computer does its best to give mutually preferenced panels. John discussed some of the options Tabroom allows for repeat judging under different circumstances.

In response to a question from Dave, John indicated that this proposal would eliminate strikes because those were only available when preferencing was not.

**The motion was passed by unanimous consent.**

Two proposals have put forward, one by Tim and one by Dan, to address LD and PF. The proposals are mutually exclusive. We will ask that everyone vote for the JV proposal, the Novice breakout proposal, or the status quo.

Dan addressed the membership in support of his JV proposal:

**Change One**

Current - 300.20 Eligibility

(1) Schools whose dues are up to date in the WDCA as of December 1 and have met the qualification procedures for any of the WDCA sanctioned divisions of competition (Policy Debate: Varsity and Novice; Lincoln Douglas Debate; and Public Forum Debate) are eligible to compete in the Wisconsin State Debate Tournament.

**Proposed:**

300.20 Eligibility

(1) Schools whose dues are up to date in the WDCA as of December 1 and have met the qualification procedures for any of the WDCA sanctioned divisions of competition (Varsity Policy Debate, Novice Policy Debate, Varsity Lincoln Douglas Debate, Junior Varsity Lincoln Douglas Debate, Varsity Public Forum Debate, and Junior Varsity Public Forum Debate) are eligible to compete in the Wisconsin State Debate Tournament.

**Change Two:**

Current - 300.22 Student Participation

(1) Any debater who qualifies for the Wisconsin State Debate Tournament in the varsity policy division and has competed in the varsity policy division at three or more tournaments during the season is not eligible to compete at any other policy division of the Wisconsin State Debate Tournament.

(2) Debaters may enter into a division higher than the division they earned a qualifying record in.

**Proposed:**

300.22 Student Participation

(1) Any debaters who qualifies for the Wisconsin State Debate Tournament in a varsity division and has competed in that varsity division at three or more WDCA-sanctioned tournaments during the season is not eligible to compete at the corresponding novice or junior varsity

division of the Wisconsin State Debate Tournament.

(2) Debaters that qualify in novice or junior varsity may enter into the corresponding varsity division at state. Debaters that have exactly one qualification from a novice or junior varsity division and one qualification from a varsity division may enter either state division.

**Change Three**

Current - 330.10 Divisions

(1) Varsity divisions are offered in Policy, Lincoln-Douglas, and Public Forum.

(2) Novice divisions are offered in Policy. Novice is defined as a high school student debating their first high school resolution. Students with identified exceptional educations needs may remain in the Novice division beyond their first high school resolution at the discretion of the coach. Should this rule be invoked, the coach must notify the WSDT Tournament Director by the registration deadline.

**Proposed:**

330.10 Divisions

(1) Varsity divisions are offered in Policy, Lincoln-Douglas, and Public Forum.

(2) Junior Varsity divisions are offered in Lincoln-Douglas and Public Forum.

(a) Junior Varsity is defined as a student debating in their first or second high school season.

(3) Novice divisions are offered in Policy.

(a) Novice divisions are offered in Policy. Novice is defined as a student debating in their first high school season.

(4) Students with identified exceptional educations needs may remain in a Novice or Junior Varsity division beyond that division’s experience limits at the discretion of the coach. Should this rule be invoked, the coach must notify the WSDT Tournament Director by the registration deadline.

(5) In the event that the State Tournament Director, in consultation with the Executive Board, decides that a division is not viable due to a low number of entries or teams, they may combine the non-varsity and varsity divisions of a type of debate. In such a situation, separate trophies may be given to the top-ranked non-varsity teams if deemed appropriate.

**Change Four:**

Current - 330.40 JUDGING OBLIGATIONS

D. Judges in the novice or varsity policy division must submit their ballot and conclude any comments given to debaters within two hours of the announced start time for preliminary rounds, or two hours and fifteen minutes for elimination

rounds. Judges in the Lincoln Douglas or Public Forum division must submit their ballot and conclude any comments given to debaters within one hour of the announced start time for preliminary or elimination rounds. Schools whose judges do not abide by this rule are subject to a fine of $15. A judge may be removed from the judging pool for repeated violations, following the procedures in the adjudicator guidelines.

**Proposed:**

330.40 JUDGING OBLIGATIONS

D. Judges in the novice or varsity policy divisions must submit their ballot and conclude any comments given to debaters within two hours of the announced start time for preliminary rounds, or two hours and fifteen minutes for elimination

rounds. Judges in the Lincoln Douglas or Public Forum divisions must submit their

ballot and conclude any comments given to debaters within one hour of the announced start time for preliminary or elimination rounds. Schools whose judges do not abide by this rule are subject to a fine of $15. A judge may be removed from the judging pool for repeated violations, following the procedures in the adjudicator guidelines.

**Change Five:**

Note: As the ordinal rank system is also up for vote at this meeting, it shall be considered a friendly amendment to adopt the proper language of the new system if one is adopted.

Current:

330.30 WSDT OPERATIONS PROCEDURES

B. The following criteria will be used to run the WSDT. Unless specified, these procedures apply to all divisions.

i. In Lincoln Douglas, Public Forum, Novice Policy and Varsity Policy, judge preferences should be entered and verified for all teams utilizing ordinal ranks with the weighting recommended by the tabulation software. First Year out judges shall be appropriately labeled by the hiring school in its registration.

**Proposed**

330.30 WSDT OPERATIONS PROCEDURES

B. The following criteria will be used to run the WSDT. Unless specified, these procedures apply to all divisions.

i. In Lincoln Douglas, Public Forum, Novice Policy and Varsity

Policy,Judge preferences should be entered and verified for all teams utilizing ordinal ranks with the weighting recommended by the tabulation software. First Year out judges shall be appropriately labeled by the hiring school in its registration.

He explained what occurred at the last meeting when he introduced a novice proposal, and how this led him to change his proposal to the current JV proposal.

Tim that introduced his Novice Breakout proposal:

As a one-year test for the 2020-2021 Season the WDCA State Tournament shall offer break-out novice elimination rounds

Prior to the tournament, by a deadline established by the tournament director, coaches may designate any of their school’s entries as either novice LD debaters (first year in CX, LD or PF HS debate), or PF teams comprised of two novices (first year in CX, LD or PF HS debate). An accurate designation prior to the tournament is required to be eligible for novice breakout rounds.

Novice designation shall have no impact on any pairings during the preliminary LD or PF rounds of the tournament.

Any novice-designated entry that achieves a winning-record in prelims will advance into the championship bracket as normal.

Novice entries shall advance to a novice elimination bracket in accordance with the tie breakers used for seeding in their respective division. No minimum record is needed to advance.

At minimum, a semi-final and final shall be held. If either division has more than 16 novice designated entries, a quarter-final shall be held.

A school’s judges are obligated for use in both the varsity and novice elimination rounds in accordance with tournament obligation rules if entries advance in either bracket.

The tournament director may stagger novice elimination rounds to maximize judge flexibility during the highest need rounds.

For example:

Varsity partial doubles - Novice quarters Varsity octos - Novice not scheduled Varsity quarters - Novice semis

Varsity semis - Novice finals

Varsity round judges in a time slot should be scheduled prior to novice rounds.

Novice rounds prior to finals, which shall have a panel, may be scheduled with a single judge or panel based on the tournament director’s determination as to the judge needs of the tournament. Mutual preferencing (other than a functional strike-level preference, if used) does not need to be applied to novice pairings.

Team awards shall correspond with the awards given in Novice CX. No novice speaker awards will be awarded.

Dan responded that he believes that the Novice Breakout proposal does not address the concerns raised by coaches last spring in support of JV. He pointed out that JV would include novices and would give coaches flexibility on how they pair students.

Liz Smith spoke to the benefit of JV for new programs and new students who need an appropriate learning curve. In response to a question from Dave, Dan explained that JV would include the first two years of debate.

In response to a question from Dave, Tim explained that novices would compete in the regular prelim rounds but would be pulled out for their own breakout rounds.

Becky spoke to the value to PF and LD debaters to have an appropriate secure place to be debating by the time they reach state, allowing a novice, for example, to be paired with a second-year debater.

Tim indicated that he would be willing to modify his proposal to a JV breakout instead of a novice breakout.

Isaac pointed out that having only one division in LD and in PF makes it harder for those who move to those division after their first year.

Ben Morris spoke in favor of the Breakout proposal on the basis that the policy-type division between varsity and novice level of preparation are not the same in LD and PF.

Tim clarified that this is a one-year test that he is a proposing and that this is why he did not include speaker awards, but that he is willing to have something like that included.

Dan pointed out that under his proposal, students can achieve more success in their prelim rounds. He also mentioned that he does not find that his last year’s novice policy debaters are not finding PF so easy this year. He also questioned whether we should be placing prestige above access.

Justin Flynn indicated that his students almost unanimously oppose both of these proposals. They feel everyone should be at the same level. Justin said that he personally likes the Breakout proposal because it does give second chances to newer debaters at state.

John mentioned that if Dan’s proposal passes in that registration would need to happen earlier so that awards could be ordered on time, since we would not know whether the division run. Dan offered to accept breakout rounds as a backup plan in case a division needs to be folded. Tim pointed out that judge preferencing becomes meaningless when divisions get too small, and that if a team has many first and second year debaters, the other JV teams would likely hit that team every round.

Dave spoke in support of a JV division in the hope that it might trickle down to invitationals as well.

Ernest spoke in favor of the Breakout proposal, comparing it to the consolation categories that have been offered at the state forensics tournament in past years.

In response to a question from Justin, Dan indicated he would not object to making his proposal a one-year trial but does not think it is necessary since it could simply be undone next year if it doesn’t work out well.

Annabelle moved to call the previous question, and the motion was seconded. By a vote of 14-8, having failed to reach a 2/3 majority, **the motion to call the question failed, and discussion continued.**

Max Donovan asked for information on the size of divisions that could actually operate at state. John responded that there were a number of factors to consider, including total entries in both divisions and the number of schools in the field and how many teams each has. He pointed out this might look quite different for LD and for PF as well. He said that Tabroom makes it very easy to merge divisions.

Ben Morris pointed out that there are more PF and LD entries than policy at state, suggesting that a combined field at state does not seem to be deterring participation. Dan responded that there might be many more entries if were not for the combined field. Ben also expressed concern that having to round up judges in two divisions might be a burden on a number of coaches. Dan responded that this represents a good problem to have because it means there is more debate going on as we grow numbers.

Max moved to call the previous question, and the motion was seconded. By a vote of 21-0, **the question was called.**

Voting occurred on the three options: Tim’s proposal received 10 votes, Dan’s proposal received 13 votes, the status quo received 1 vote. **Dan’s proposal for a JV division at state passed with a majority vote.**

Tim addressed the Executive Committee’s decision to ban Shawn Matson. He spoke to the effect this could have on Shawn’s career. He explained that Shawn was not contacted and was not told about it, nor was Tim told about it when he employed Shawn. He further explained that this requires a procedure to guarantee fairness.

Ben acknowledged this concern and suggested lifting the ban pending a more thorough investigation. Brian supported this on the basis that the process followed was irregular and that Shawn did not have the opportunity to respond to allegations.

Doris Sexton pointed out that the allegations are from several years ago. She said it was brought to her attention after the state tournament that Shawn was involved with debaters in a non-professional way. She did not know if it was true. She shared the information with her administration, who then notified the West Bend police. The police officer told Doris that if Shawn were to show up at state, the police should be called to have him removed from the property.

Upon hearing this, several coaches spoke in favor of keeping the suspension in place pending an investigation.

Tim agreed to modify his motion to leave Shawn suspended pending the results of an investigation.

A vote was taken on whether to sustain the permanent ban, to lift the suspension, or to continue the suspension pending an investigation. There being no majority for any one choice, and lifting the suspension having received the fewest votes, a runoff was held to determine whether Shawn should be suspended pending investigation (requiring a 2/3 majority as it would overturn the Executive Committee’s decision) or permanently banned. There were 12 votes for suspension pending investigation and 9 votes for a permanent ban. As the 2/3 vote to overturn was not achieved, **the Executive Committee’s decision to permanently ban Shawn Matson was sustained.**

The meeting was adjourned at 1:46 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Brian Devine

WCDA Secretary