Canadian National Debating Championships
The Bracketing System

• For competitive debating tournaments, we often use a "bracketing system" which is also used extensively in university style debating tournaments. It is one in which teams essentially debate other teams with the same win-loss record. The purpose of bracketing is to ensure that teams need to beat the best teams to get to the top of the standings, as opposed to being successful as a result of random luck. One fundamental difference in this system is that win-loss record is used as the primary criteria for determining the standings, and total team points are the secondary criteria.

• In a tournament using bracketing, it typically works as follows. The first round is randomly paired, so that you do not debate teams from your own province. Then, for the second round teams that have a 1-0 win-loss record debate each other. The top 1-0 team (on total team points) will debate the bottom 1-0 team, etc. All the teams that are 1-0 are said to be in the 1-0 bracket. Then the teams in the 0-1 bracket are paired with the top team facing the bottom team, and so forth.

• **However**, in the case of the National Championships, where we use a prepared topic, the first **TWO rounds will be paired randomly**. You will not debate anyone else from your own province, and you will debate both sides of the prepared motion.

• After the second round, there will be some teams in a 2-0, a 1-1 and an 0-2 bracket, and they are paired according to speaker points within each bracket. This system is followed through the entire tournament. All results from a particular round need to determined and standings produced after each round before proceeding to the next round. When the pairings for each round are announced, teams are not told what bracket they are in, and the pairing are presented in random order.

• When there are an odd number of teams in a bracket, it becomes impossible to match the top team vs. bottom, etc. What will happen is that one team in the bracket with an odd number of teams will debate a team in the bracket below. A typical policy is to use what is called "middle pull-up and reseed".

• At the National Championships, an effort will be made to ensure that you debate against different provinces, and to ensure you do not debate the same team a second time. However, in the case where teams are still in contention to make the break rounds, no adjustments will be made to the brackets, and you may possibly debate your own province, or even your own school.

• For the four impromptu rounds, every effort is made to even out the number of times teams debate on each side, although it cannot be guaranteed to be equal. The only guarantee is that teams will debate once as Proposition and once as Opposition in the four prepared rounds, although a large majority of teams should get an even split of two on each side.

DISCLAIMER: No amount of rules written down on paper can anticipate every scenario. There comes a time when some discretion is needed to ensure proper match-ups, especially with a small tournament. Such decisions are made by the tournament tabs director.

• Final team standings are produced which rank teams first by number of wins, then by speaker points. In the unlikely case of a tie in wins and points amongst teams that make the break round, the following criteria are used to break the ties: (ties will not be broken for other teams)
- standard deviation of the speaker scores
- W/L against team(s) tied with, if any
- points against team(s) tied with, if any
- the two prepared rounds only, using all of the same above criteria in order
- a coin toss
EXCEPTION: In the case of a tie between two teams for the eighth and final spot amongst teams in the break, a special run-off round will take place to determine 8th place.

• Eight teams will make the quarter-finals in each division. The 1st place team will debate the 8th place team, the 2nd place team with debate the 7th, etc. A coin toss will decide who is on proposition and opposition, with the higher ranked team being allowed to call the coin toss. For the semi-finals, teams will be re-seeded.

• For the final individual standings, each of the six rounds will count equally. In the case of a tie between speakers, the following criteria (where necessary to distinguish amongst prizes for the top 10 speakers only), will be used to break the ties:
- standard deviation of the individual round scores
- scores in the two prepared rounds
- single best score from a single judge, and if still tied, the second highest score, and so on.
- a coin toss