

Moundridge debate wins 2nd at state champs

Despite the fact that none of the debaters on the 2011 state debate team had prior 4-speaker state experience, MHS won 2nd place at the 3-2-1A state championships held at Blue Valley Northwest on January 14-15.

Finishing first was Sterling with 11 wins, 3 losses, 29 ballots, and 185 speaker points. MHS was second with a 10-4 record, 28 ballots, and 174 speaker points. Silver Lake was third, also with a 10-4 record, 28 ballots, and 184 speaker points. Wichita Independent was 4th.

"What all these statistics mean," observed coach Mark Stucky, "is that we were really very close to Sterling. We only won one fewer ballot than they did, and we had substantially fewer speaker points (fewer is better)."

Many coaches felt that Sterling was the heavy favorite coming into state because most of the members of the 4-speaker team had been 2-speaker state champs and runners-up last year. Additionally, many felt Silver Lake had a great shot at the championship, because several Silver Lake teams have qualified for national debate competition to be held in spring and summer. Moundridge, which lost the 4 starters from its state championship team, was definitely a dark horse.

According to Stucky, "the team worked hard to prepare an unusual case and to block out possible negative arguments." The topic for competition this year was: Resolved: The United States federal government should substantially reduce its military and/or police presence in one or more of the following: South Korea, Japan, Afghanistan, Kuwait, Iraq, Turkey. The Moundridge affirmative contended at state that the current planned withdrawal from Afghanistan to be completed by 2014 does not give the counter-insurgency enough of an opportunity to gain the footing it needs to be successful. So MHS contended that the US withdraw, but with a different timetable. The negative team defended current US foreign policy against a number of different affirmatives. Popular affirmatives included the use of private military contractors in Iraq and Afghanistan, the use of drones in Afghanistan, tactical nuclear weapons in Turkey, the US's "nuclear umbrella" that helps protect allies Japan and South Korea, and the status of Futenma, the US military base on the Japanese island of Okinawa. "This topic ended up teaching the students a lot about US involvement abroad and how complex formulating foreign policy is," said Stucky.

During the tournament, the team received intense coaching sessions between rounds by Mr. Stucky, because coaches can read ballots from previous rounds and determine what teams need to fix in order to be more successful. The team owes its success not only to Mark Stucky (whose debate teams have now won 11 state championships with 3 second place finishes), but to assistant coach Larry Temple, who not only provides critiques but also zwiebach, assistant Gail Stucky, who not only critiques post-season rounds at the Campus High School state warm-up, but also provides research assistance, and to Katie Stevens and Marike Stucky, members of state champion teams, who provided critiques of debates and strategies on how to beat a variety of cases.

The debaters won't rest on their achievement at state, however; they now prepare for forensics competition which begins in 2 weeks.