

judged as having fallen short. However, over the course of a competition, organizers take care to ensure that no one team gets more than their fair share of their turns in this slot.

Some evidence exists that it is harder to win—or, perhaps, “easier to lose” would be more accurate—from the Affirmative side in general and this position in particular. However, simply by dint of being first, the speaker has the opportunity to control the debate; in those formats where Points of Information are used, First Affirmative has more time to prove herself in offering them. Everybody finds this position hard, but the strategic debater views this as a challenge and as motivation. The speaker who can master this role will consistently win competitions by excelling in an area where others tend to fail. Assuming that a majority of teams win a comparable number of rounds from other positions, it is this capacity to win from First Affirmative that is the hallmark of successful teams.

THE SPEECH

For the sake of simplicity and clarity all round, First Affirmative should announce the definition explicitly: “Our definition is . . .” Don’t imply, don’t suggest, don’t intimate. State it as clearly and concisely as possible, trying to anticipate any reasonable questions that other speakers might have about the details—chances are the adjudicator has them, too. This doesn’t mean that you should go into minutiae; it does mean offering a general idea of how Affirmative will accomplish their program and what the impact would be.

First Affirmative should also outline the arguments that her teammate(s) will make to support their case and, usually, tackle at least one substantive argument herself. She should use the opportunity this presents to demonstrate that her speech is the start of a coherent line of thought, developing her own argument and outlining those of her teammates. In doing so, she can begin to establish the perspective that she hopes the adjudicator will take to see Affirmative’s case as the more reasonable.

Because this position, uniquely, has no required rebuttal, First Affirmatives are often tempted make some up—to try to rebut what hasn’t yet been said. Resist this temptation; attempting to address what you think the Negative might say makes no more sense than Negative trying to guess what the definition is going to be and writing a speech accordingly. If you want to build a defense into the definition, just build it in—don’t endlessly speculate on what might happen.

It may be a fine line between preempting rebuttal and putting defensive bulwarks into place around your case, but that distinction will largely come down to phraseology. When preparing your case, think through the possible attacks on it and how you would address those and then, when you are speaking, set out the answers as an integral part of your