

*ments with which a judge personally disagrees are not by themselves a legitimate basis for a judge's decision. A judge can take weakness into consideration only if a debater explains why an argument is weak. If the other team doesn't refute an argument, the judge cannot do so. Thus, the affirmative team could win the debate because the negative did not explain why the opponent's case was weak. Again, judges must limit their focus to what is actually said by the debaters.*¹

Judges also must refrain from making comparisons with other debates. A judge may think that the case he is hearing is not as strong as one constructed by another team, but he must judge the case he is considering. Other debates are irrelevant. The judge's focus must remain on the cases presented in the current debate.

UNDERSTAND CRITERIA FOR JUDGING

Judging a debate is not formulaic. The judge does not award a precise number of points for each section and then total them to determine the winner. Nor does he base his decision on the debaters' execution of technical minutiae. Rather, the judge must decide which team, on the whole, was more persuasive. Some debates will be close, and the judge will have to weigh the relative strengths and weaknesses of each side. Perhaps the affirmative team has done a mediocre job of rebutting the negative arguments, but has done a superior job of establishing its own case; whereas negative has had a more compelling constructive and has held its ground in cross-examination, but has not answered some affirmative arguments. Sometimes, however, debates are not decided on small factors, but on the basis of weighing the key issues in a debate. During the rebuttal, a team may do a good job of "boiling down" the conflict to one major disagreement. When the debaters work toward such clear voting issues, the judge's task is easier.

The technical rules of debating rarely figure strongly in the judge's decision. For instance, a debater cannot be disqualified for slightly exceeding the time limit in cross-examination. When such violations occur, the judge must acknowledge them and give them appropriate weight in making a decision, but such infractions incur no automatic penalty. Furthermore, a judge should not reduce speaker points or assign a loss to a team that has difficulty speaking English. Again, a judge must decide the winner or loser in a debate based on the relative merits of the arguments presented.

MAKE AN INDEPENDENT DECISION

In Karl Popper debates, judges make their decisions independently, without any discussion either with other judges or others present at the debate. At the conclusion of the debate, the judge should quietly reflect on what has occurred and decide which team did the better job of making and defending their case. Frequently judges will consult their notes, but they must not consult another person.

Karl Popper debate is a team effort. Although the judge will award points to individual speakers, she decides the winner of the debate based on team performance. The three debaters on each team are expected to offer arguments that are