

consistent, coherent, and persuasive. Judges must remember that the essence of debate is the conflict of ideas and values; the winner should be the team with the best ideas, the best values, and the best arguments, even if their opponents have a smoother style and a more ingratiating and impressive manner.

EXPLAIN DECISIONS

Judges must not merely say who won; they must offer an explanation for why and how they made their decision. They must explain the central issues in the debate, point to the aspects of the winning case that made it more persuasive, and identify the shortcomings of the losing side.

Explaining decisions is not only a matter of fairness, it is also an educational duty. Debating is a learning experience, and if students do not know why they have won or lost, they will not have the tools they need to improve their performances.

Judges should remember that many debaters are new to the activity and they may have certain sensitivities. When explaining a decision, judges should be careful to not personalize their criticisms or be hurtful or demeaning in their explanation. They can never offer enough positive comments or constructive criticism!

MAINTAIN AN ETHICAL MEANS OF DECISION MAKING

We have noted that judges should do their best to be impartial in evaluating arguments, but they must also be free of bias toward the debaters. As a matter of course, coaches should never judge the students from their own teams. The same prohibition applies to parents and volunteers who are representing a school. Even if the students in the debate round are not known to the judge personally, she would find it difficult to vote against her own school when making a decision.

Coaches come to know students from other schools and are aware of the teams that routinely do well in competition against their own students. But that, too, must be left out of consideration when judging a round. It is profoundly unethical for any judge to attribute a loss to a superior team simply because the judge wants to eliminate that team from the competition to improve the chances of his own team.

As a matter of principle, judges should arrive at their decision based solely on merits of the debate they heard. A judge should not consult with someone about the issues involved in the debate or, as we mentioned above, confer with other judges before making a decision.

UNDERTAKE PRACTICAL TASKS

The judge's primary responsibilities are to decide who wins the debate, make constructive comments to the debaters, and offer reasons for the decision. But the judge has other responsibilities as well.

- 1. Keeping time.** Judges are responsible for keeping track of time. They may delegate the task to a spectator, but they are ultimately responsible for ensuring that timekeeping is accurate.