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George Mason Debate Tournament hosted by George Mason University

Fairfax, VA – George Mason University hosted the George Mason Debate Tournament on the weekend of September 15-17, 2023. The tournament was attended by 47 teams across Novice, Junior Varsity, and Open.

Debaters from across the country were asked to debate both sides of the season-long resolution about nuclear weapons in 6 preliminary debates. The full wording of the topic is “Resolved: The United States should restrict its nuclear forces in one or more of the following ways: adopting a nuclear no-first-use policy; eliminating one or more of the legs of its nuclear triad; disarming its nuclear forces.”

Students participating at the tournament debate half of their preliminary debates in favor of the resolution and half of their preliminary debates in opposition to the resolution.

At the conclusion of the preliminary debates, the tournament seeded teams in all divisions based on their win-loss record and speaker points. Elimination debates are single-elimination for the top 4 teams in Open, 7 teams in Junior Varsity, and 11 teams in Novice.

The Novice division features students who are in their first year of competitive debate. The Junior Varsity division showcases students competing in their first two academic years of intercollegiate debate beyond the novice level.

In the Open division semifinals, two James Madison teams defeated two teams from Wake Forest University. The James Madison teams - Jameson Balda & Roy Rinehart and Eric Pelletier & Matthew Conway were named winners of the tournament in the Open division.

In the Novice division octafinals, teams from the United States Military Academy, Liberty University, Binghamton University, and James Madison University advanced without debating. A team from the United State Military Academy defeated a team from Binghamton University. Liberty University and the United States Military Academy advanced over other teams from their school.

In the quarterfinals, Liberty University, the United State Military Academy, Binghamton University, and Liberty University advanced to the semifinals. Liberty University was victorious in both of their semifinals debates so Gabriel Sanders & Brielle Jefferson and Patrick Foos & David Heath were declared winners of the division.

The Junior Varsity division cleared to a quarterfinals debate where Wake Forest University, James Madison University, and Liberty University advanced over teams from George Mason University, and Wake Forest University. In the semifinals, teams from Liberty University and Wake Forest University were bested by teams from George Mason University and James Madison University. In the final round, Nathan Stolzenfeld and Megan Rodak from George Mason University defeated Berkley Smith and Maggie Matzen from James Madison University.

Debaters participating also receive speaker points for each of their preliminary debates. In the Novice division, Gabriel Sanders from Liberty University was named top speaker. Megan Rodak from George Mason University was the top speaker in the Junior Varsity division and Michelle Gong from Wake Forest University was top speaker in the Open division.

The George Mason Debate Tournament is the ADA tournament of the new season. The next ADA tournament will be hosted by the University of Kentucky.

About the American Debate Association

The American Debate Association began in 1985 as an intercollegiate debate association. It uses the resolution selected by the Cross Examination Debate Association and the National Debate Tournament. Currently they have 44 member schools. The ADA's mission is increasing participation, maintaining a balance between education and competition, and ensuring an equitable and fair activity for all programs, regardless of their size or experience.

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