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ADA National Championship hosted at Indiana University

[Bloomington, IN/US] – Indiana University hosted the American Debate Association (ADA) National Tournament the weekend of March 9-11, 2024. The tournament was attended by 71 teams total – 51 in the open division, 10 in the junior varsity division, and 10 in the novice division.

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 who participated at the tournament debated 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 were single elimination for the top 5 teams in the novice division, top 5 teams in the junior varsity division, and the top 25 teams in the open division.

In the open division, teams from Northwestern University, Macalester College, the University of Kentucky, the University of Kansas, Wake Forest University, Michigan State University, Emory University, and the University of Minnesota advanced over teams from the University of Kansas, Wake Forest University, George Mason University, Georgetown University, Emory University, the University of Wyoming, the University of Houston, and Wayne State University in a partial double octafinals.

In the octafinals, team from California State University Long Beach, the University of Texas, the University of Kansas, the University of Kentucky, Georgetown University, and Macalester College advanced over teams from the University of Minnesota, the University of Kentucky, Emory University, Michigan State University, Wake Forest University, Northwestern University, and Georgetown University.

In quarterfinals, teams from Macalester College, the University of Kentucky, and the University of Kansas were bested by teams from California State University Long Beach, the University of Texas, Georgetown University, and the University of Kentucky.

California State University Long Beach and the University of Texas advanced to the championship round after defeating the University of Kentucky and Georgetown University. Diego Jay-Z Flores and Curtis Ortega from California State University Long beach defeated Het Desai and Arnav Kashyap from the University of Texas to be named Open Champions of ADA Nationals.

The novice division is typically for students who are in their first year of competitive debate and junior varsity is for students competing in their first two academic years of intercollegiate debate.

In a junior varsity partial quarterfinals, teams from Samford University and Wake Forest University advanced without debating. Two teams from Liberty University were set to debate each other so one team advanced directly to semifinals without debating.

In semifinals, a team from Liberty University defeated a team from Samford University and a team from Wake Forest University defeated a team from Samford University. Patrick Foos and Gabriel Sanders from Liberty University won the final round against Shatavia Bellmon and Destiny Hale from Wake Forest University to be named Junior Varsity Champions of ADA Nationals.

In a novice division partial quarterfinals, teams from the University of Houston, Liberty University, and George Mason University advanced without debating. Two teams from George Mason University were set to debate each other so one team advanced directly to semifinals without debating.

In semifinals, a team from the University of Houston defeated a team from George Mason University and a team from George Mason University defeated a team from Liberty University. Sonia Chen and Autumn O'Connor from George Mason University won the final round against Krishna Lathish and Cooper Armstrong from the University of Houston to be named Novice Champions of ADA Nationals.

Debaters participating also receive speaker points for each of their preliminary debates. In the novice division, Krishna Lathish from the University of Houston was named top speaker and Destiny Hale from Wake Forest University was named top speaker in the junior varsity division. In the open division, Diego Jay-Z Flores was named top speaker.

In addition to the awards related to tournament competition, the ADA presents several other awards recognizing individuals at the national tournament. Dr. Ryan Galloway from Samford University received the Excellence in Coaching Award to recognize the excellent performance of a coach, whether a director, assistant or graduate assistant at an ADA school. Dr. Brendon Bankey from the University of Texas received the Outstanding New Director Award to recognize a new director who demonstrates outstanding achievement in scholarship, service, community building, or competitive success. Nick Ryan was given the Founders' Award for Service to recognize someone in the ADA that goes above and beyond the requirements of their job.

To recognize teams with season-long success, the Front Royal Cup is awarded to two-person teams in each division with the strongest tournament results during the invitational season. The award is named for the site of the American Debate Association's founding meeting in Front Royal, Virginia.

In novice, George Mason University (Chen & Gorman) placed third, George Mason University (Badmus & Patel) placed second, and George Mason University (O'Connor & Taxali) were awarded the Front Royal Cup. In junior varsity, Samford University (Hackett and Hammon) placed third, Samford University (Chew and Pack) placed second, and Wake Forest University (Bellmon and Hale) were awarded the Front Royal Cup. In varsity, Northwestern University (Chuang and Deo) placed third, Emory University (Pierce and Wallen) placed second, and the University of Kentucky (Adam and McBain) were awarded the Front Royal Cup.

In addition, the ADA tracks season-long points received by team to recognize squads who demonstrate high levels of success as a group. Samford University had the top points in Junior Varsity, Liberty University had the top points in Novice, and the University of Kentucky had the top points in Open.

In a balloting process that included participants at the tournament, Sonia Chen from George Mason University was named Novice Debater of the Year, Destiny Hale from Wake forest University was named Junior Varsity Debater of the Year, Diego Jay-Z Flores was named Varsity Debater of the Year, and Rob Glass from the University of Houston was named Judge of the Year.

The ADA also presents the Julia Burke Award annually. The Julia Burke Award recognizes the ADA debater who most closely upholds the combination of characteristics that Julia Burke displayed in her love for the activity. These qualities include excellence in and passion for debate, a commitment to helping others, love and respect for the debate community and dedication to maintaining friendships despite the pressures of competition. This year's recipient was David Griffith from the University of Kentucky.

The ADA National Championship was the final ADA-sanctioned tournament of the year.

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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