Review of Professional Resources
Millard F. Eiland, Editor

FORENSIC TOURNAMENTS:
PLANNING AND ADMINISTRATION
by G. Thomas Goodnight and David Zarefsky
Skokie, IL: National Textbook Company, 1980

Perhaps one of the great traditions in forensics is the semimystical practice invoked to schedule a tournament. Few formal sources of information exist to help the inexperienced coach deal with the intricacies and subtleties of tournament management. One attempt to remedy this information gap is Forensic Tournaments: Planning and Administration by G. Thomas Goodnight and David Zarefsky.

Forensic Tournaments suffers from an understandable identity crisis. The book attempts to consider the practices of both debate and individual events tournaments at the high school and college levels. The result is that the advice offered, while sound in theory, lacks generalizability to most realistic tournament situations.

The books' five chapters can be considered as three sections. The first section covers the general preparation for hosting a forensic competition. This section contains a great deal of good advice on facilities acquisition, tournament staffing, and the responsibilities of a host. Unfortunately, a number of pivotal practical questions are virtually ignored. How does one determine fees for the competition? What is adequate compensation for hired judges? How many hired judges are likely to be needed? How can tournament dates be selected to avoid conflict with more established tournaments? To an experienced director, these are perhaps trivial matters, but if this book is designed to aid the inexperienced director or as a text for students contemplating a forensic career, these matters are of critical importance.

These initial chapters also tend to provide a distorted view of tournament preparation. For example, nearly two pages is spent on managing banquet preparations and organizing a coaches and/or contestants party, but only two paragraphs are devoted to the need for obtaining tournament awards. In reality, virtually every tournament manager awards trophies and this major outlay of tournament income deserves more consideration of the fiscal details involved in the award process. Contrarily, very few current tournaments offer banquets or elaborate parties that require much attention to detail.
The second major section of the book deals with debate scheduling and tabulation. Goodnight and Zarefsky are clearly most comfortable with these issues. It is easy to understand the quality of Northwestern University debate tournaments after the authors explain in concise practical terms how to schedule and pair a debate competition. The delicate issue of random judge assignment versus discretionary assignment is discussed cogently and professionally. There is enough information in these two chapters to please either the would-be host or the experienced director.

The final section of the work deals with individual events scheduling and tabulation. Despite their years of tournament management experience (both Goodnight and Zarefsky are highly respected, eminently qualified debate coaches), they are not in touch with contemporary individual events practices. They devote 42 pages to debate scheduling and tabulation and only 12 pages to the same processes for individual events. The description of scheduling follows a debate-oriented approach including references to individual events power matching and semi-finals of 18 contestants in three sections. There is no mention of how to tabulate pentathlon or even that such a competition exists. Scheduling examples employed by the authors are simplistic (they never exceed more than five sections).

What may be most troubling is that the scheduling system proposed by the authors is based on totally random selection for each round. Such a procedure ignores the principles of "spreading" a school's entry throughout an event schematic and rotation of a contestant in multiple-round competition to guarantee maximum competitive exposure. (A much sounder system is detailed by Donald F. Peters in the inaugural issue of this journal.)

On the whole, this is a viable handbook for debate tournament management, but for individual events it is shallow at best.

EDWARD J. HARRIS, JR.
Director of Forensics
Suffolk University, Boston