The 1980s have witnessed the dawn of an era in which computers have become a mainstay in much of organizational life. In concert with these advances, the forensics community has endeavored to utilize computer technology. Specifically, several programs have been developed to administer forensics tournaments. One of the latest programs to be released is the *Debate Tournament Administrator* (DTA), created by Dr. Stephen C. Wood and Joseph B. Miller.

Two versions of DTA were analyzed for this review, version 1.1 which was released in 1988 and version 1.2 which will be released in 1990. To review this program, a mock six-round tournament was set up, with four teams entered. The minimum number of rounds and participants was used for the sake of efficiency; a larger tournament would not provide any additional data. The following review will consist of a description and review of each section, or option, of the DTA program.

**Enter Tournament Information**

After gaining access to the system, the first option available to the tournament director is the entry of tournament information. Once that option has been accessed, the director has several additional choices. First, he or she may determine tournament parameters, such as the tournament name, date, and host, as well as division names and number of preliminary rounds. Then, the director may enter, add, or delete teams, judges, and rooms. Finally, there is an option to edit team information for last-minute team or name changes.

In general, this option is easy to follow and execute. We found several problems with the program, however. First, the DTA manual suggests that the director make two copies of the program after entering team names so that if teams drop during registration,
DTA can easily re-pair round one. We find this to be an excellent suggestion, but it does not account for later drops. Thus, if a team becomes ill during the tournament, it is very difficult to drop the team from the program; the director must manually swap pairings to take the drop into account. Second, the room list does not allow the director to specify when rooms are open or closed. Therefore, if classroom space changes throughout the tournament, the director must make those changes by utilizing the "change rooms" option of the menu. We did like a provision on version 1.2 which allows rooms to vary by division, but there is still no way to make room changes except by hand.

**Round Information**

This section of the program allows the director to enter results, and to review and print round information. Entering results is easy with DTA, perhaps too easy. For example, if the affirmative team wins, the director only needs to hit "return." If the negative team wins, the program indicates that the director needs to hit an "N." However, we found that a negative win was recorded if any key were pressed, so that an affirmative win could accidentally be recorded as a negative win if the ";" key were hit. In the rushed atmosphere of a tournament it would be easy to make such an error. Both versions allow the director to abort an entry. While this is a great check, it creates some unique problems to change a decision later in the tournament. The review and printing of round information is useful. The DTA manual urges the reader to print round information after each round, and we agreed that this is essential. The final results sheet also is an excellent plus in using this program.

**Random Match**

The random matching option is also simple to utilize. The programmers have made some initial assumptions about random matching. First, all teams from the same school are placed on the same side of the bracket. Second, if a director chooses to split teams from the same school so that some debate affirmative and some debate negative, they could meet each other, creating many potential problems. Finally, the director cannot reschedule round two after round one is set, further emphasizing the need for a second copy of the tournament information so that rounds can be rescheduled.
The judging assignments work in an interesting way in the DTA program. For example, if the director chooses to change a judge assignment, the program apparently overrides any school or scheduling conflicts that were previously recorded. Thus, the director must be satisfied with the assignments, or be extremely careful when re-doing the assignments by hand. Also, judges are assigned based on the first available judge on the list. It has been our experience that we like to vary the judge pool from round to round, so this method in our opinion is unsatisfactory. One helpful aspect of the program is a judge matrix which allows the director to see the judging assignments and constraints by team and by individual judge. The matrix, however, does not override the more pressing judging concerns.

Power Match

The DTA program allows the director to power match or power protect rounds, with or without side constraints. For either type of powering, DTA does not (according to the Manual) prevent teams from meeting teams previously debated in randomly matched rounds. The director must therefore carefully check all pairings and swap teams to avoid this occurrence. Additionally, if a team must hit an opponent more than once, the program makes no effort to switch sides. In our tournament, teams obviously had to meet opponents more than once, but in all except one case, the teams did not switch sides. A final concern is that once the pairings have been set, the computer will print the schedule on top to bottom order, again requiring the director to manipulate the pairings.

The power protect option is one that is rarely used on the college circuit. Instead, usually in even-numbered rounds, teams are paired high-low within brackets. The DTA program does not allow for that option; it pairs the best team against the worst team, and so forth. Therefore, if the director chooses the more conventional method, the rounds must be paired manually and then later added to the computer. Otherwise, the director must settle for an option which is generally unacceptable to most college coaches, or must power all rounds high-high.

Elimination Round Pairings

The elimination round pairings option selects the teams which should advance in the tournament. Version 1.1 of the program actually paired the first elimination round, an option which could
be quite useful; version 1.2 eliminated this option and simply lists, in rank order, the top teams. This method allows the director to eliminate teams that cannot advance (i.e., teams from the host school). We generally react favorably to this change, although we would like to have seen the pairing option continued. Our tests of version 1.1 indicated that if teams tied on win/loss record and points, that high and low individual speaker points were dropped to break the tie. Again, this practice veers from tradition in which high and low team points typically are dropped to break ties for elimination ranks. We were unable to manipulate the data in version 1.2 to determine if the same phenomenon occurred.

The final element of the program which does not work well for elimination rounds is that only one judge is assigned to each round. The programmers suggest that the director re-pair each round three times to get three judges, but this seems terribly cumbersome.

**Speaker Awards**

Speaker awards can be tabulated by DTA as well. In our test, version 1.1 tabulated awards based solely on round one. Version 1.2 did compile results from all six rounds. In this program, ties were broken based on dropping high and low points only once, then going to ranks. While we do not see much difficulty with this system, traditionally in cases of ties, high and low points are dropped until they cannot be dropped further, and then ranks are considered.

**Final Options**

The final options offered by DTA are necessary and helpful. One option allows the director to retrieve information from the disk after the computer has been turned off for the day. Another option provides a method for backing up data files, which the authors strongly suggest performing frequently.

**Conclusions**

We found that DTA is relatively user-friendly. The Manual is easy to read, although there were several typographical errors in the text. The program itself is easy to follow as well, even without the use of the Manual. If an error is made, the program is usually quite specific about the nature of the error. Finally, the consumer
support for this program is excellent; we received prompt and courteous attention when we utilized this service.

Despite these advantageous, we would not use this program in an actual tournament. The authors emphasize through the Manual that back-up cards and manual checking is necessary. Thus, using the program could simply consume additional time. In addition, there are nonconventional aspects of the program which we do not feel comfortable utilizing in a typical college tournament. In fact, in the case of power protection and elimination ranking based on dropped high and low individual points, we are opposed to the method utilized by the program. Therefore, our objections are based upon the nature and philosophy of the program, not simply on the minor "glitches" that occurred in our small sample.

While computers may be useful in most organizational settings, in this case the computer still cannot handle all of the constraints imposed by a typical tournament. Thus, while the rest of society benefits from technological advances, we strongly recommend the tried and true method of tournament tabulation—using cards, pencils and paper.

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