

THE EX FILES

**TOC & CFL Nationals Edition
Volume 1, Issue No. 6**

From the Publisher

Over the next two weeks, two crucial tournaments on the extemp calendar take place: the Extemp TOC at Northwestern University and the CFL national tournament in Albany, New York. These tournaments have big implications for the national points race, which has not moved since our last edition because of the “dull period” in April, and provide an early test for extempers seeking to write their names into the national record books.

To provide some information about the TOC, *Ex Files* contributor and TOC co-tournament director Michael Garson, sat down for an interview about the tournament, sharing some details on how it operates and how it hopes to grow in the coming years.

In preparation for the CFL tournament, this issue will provide a breakdown of the eight topic areas. This topic breakdown will provide a synopsis of major issues and some sample questions for extempers to practice with before the tournament.

Rounding out this issue are a topic brief over the future of the Supreme Court after David Souter’s departure and how Obama might go about choosing a nominee. We also have an article on canned intros from Hunter Kendrick and Omar Qureshi, both of which were finalists last year in IX at NFL Nationals.

The next issue of *The Ex Files* will be a NFL Nationals preview, which will feature an USX and IX topic area breakdown by Colin West (2006 NFL USX National Champion) and Omar Qureshi (2008 NFL IX Runner-Up). This will also feature an update on the national points race, a roundtable discussion of NFL, and a few strategy articles by our writers.

As always, the staff of *The Ex Files* thanks you for your support of this magazine and Extemp Central. Good luck in the prep room and at the Extemp TOC and CFL Nationals!

-Logan Scisco



Volume 1, No. 6

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Can Do's and Don'ts

(A discussion on canned intros in Extemp)

By OMAR QURESHI¹ & HUNTER KENDRICK²

OMAR: First of all, I believe that discussion of introductions in extemp will continue until the end of time. They call on ideological differences in the school of thought on extemp so it will never be easily resolved. That being said I recall a conversation I had with NFL National Champion Spencer Rockwell, where we came to the agreement that it doesn't matter where and when someone comes up with an introduction so long as it pertains directly to the topic. Whether that be a minute before the round or at home three months before.

HUNTER: Thus far, I agree with my friend. However, once we delve deeper into the issue, he and I come to some serious disagreements about what is kosher and what is not in terms of how far developed the idea should be before a tournament.

OMAR: When it comes to the event of extemp, I believe that everything must be intrinsically rooted to the topic. A good speaker should read a substantial amount of material before tournament time and think about particular areas of analysis from his/her reading. Just like preparation should be used with evidence and analysis I think good preparation includes introductions. This isn't to say I advocate a "canned" intro. Rather, I am in favor of developing the concept of an intro and perhaps even giving it in the practice speech setting if it has a clear and direct link to the topic at hand. I think it is important I clarify what I mean by a link to the topic. A link to the topic means that the subject of the introduction is explicitly

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² *Hunter Kendrick is a 2008 graduate of Danville High School in Danville, KY. He competed in speech and debate for four years, and over that period of time he amassed fourteen different state championships in six different individual events – including eight different titles in Extemporaneous Speaking. Nationally, Hunter is most notable as a two-time finalist at the Barkley Forum of Emory University, the 3rd place finisher at the 2007 NCFL National Championships, the 3rd place finisher at the 2008 MBA Southern-Bell Round Robin, and as the 4th place finisher in International Extemp at the 2008 NFL National Championships. In the summer of 2007 Hunter was named an NFL “Academic All-American,” and by the end of his forensics career he had earned the degree of “Premier Distinction” from the NFL. Hunter is a freshman at the University of Kentucky where he is pursuing degrees in History and English.*

the topic area. For example a funny story about Yulia Tymoshenko that a speaker read about a month before the round and made into an intro could be used perfectly in a Ukraine speech because it is tied directly to the topic. I think that is a mark of a well prepared extemper.

HUNTER: Well, Omar and I got to the disagreements before I estimated we would. As I said earlier, I am not against "coming up with" and intro before a tournament. To me, though, that means something entirely different than what Omar was hinting at.

To me, the development of an intro should stop entirely after the initial brainstorming. Going back to the Tymoshenko example, if a speaker read said article and thought, "Hm... that could be a funny intro..." I have no problem with that. However, if that speaker read the article and then began to plan what they would say/how they would say it and then began to practice it, that is where I would take offense. To me, the practice of the intro, or the development thereof beyond the brainstorming, perverts the event and turns it into more of an oration and less of a limited prep event.

OMAR: Allow me to apologize for not smoothly delving into our disagreements. Hunter is far more subtle than I am, and I feel it is his punishment for allowing me to begin the conversation. I believe that the nature of extemporaneous speaking is dynamic- that is to say it changes with every speech every day- and it requires a dedicated focus of preparation. While I do agree that extemp must be a limited preparation event, I strongly believe that extemp tournaments are won outside of the tournament itself. I think that coming up with an intro beforehand that pertains to a topic actually enhances the event. It places a focus on preparation. Instead of perverting the event, as Hunter noted, I believe it shows the most prepared speakers. Just like quality analysis shows the most prepared speakers in the gathering and reading of evidence. I feel like an introduction is an extension of the preparation before the limited preparation. Despite sounding redundant, I strongly believe that this event is bent upon preparation as I am sure Hunter agrees. I don't see a problem with fully developing an introduction and practicing it. It will change with every speech and become better. Showing a true mastery of the event itself, not a butchery of it. I mean eventually the introduction will be fully thought out- why not earlier than later?

HUNTER: Why not? Because that is a violation of the spirit of the event. Omar likes to make the comparison with analysis, however, analysis is a completely different topic unto itself. The difference is quite evident, but, nonetheless, I will explain in a bit more detail. Omar's line of reasoning is that, if you don't fault an extemper for using a line of analysis more than once (and thus, intrinsically practicing it), then why would you fault him for practicing the intro. For my response, let me use a personal example. In February of 2008 I got a question at the Harvard invitational about oil prices. I had a very similar question about a month later at my state championships. I used a very similar line of analysis both times. Was I canning? No, and here's why: the economic theory behind the analysis didn't change. So, it is not like I really had the ability to use a different

take on the same argument. Besides, I had not practiced saying that analysis aloud between the speeches - so it wasn't truly practiced - I wasn't repeating it word for word. I was merely reciting the ideas and beliefs behind it. When it comes to "canned" intros, though, there is a big difference. The point of an intro, as Omar points out, is to seem more prepared. After all, the first 60 secs or so are the most crucial in any speech, because that is when the audience forms their first opinion. So, yes, feel free to spend plenty of your prep time before the round developing the intro. But, by no means would I condone practicing an intro before the tournament even begins because that is not extemp, that is oration.

And, yes, my subtlety was a punishment for Omar being a snakin' bastard Who took the opening statement (for those who don't know us, this is how we joke – we don't actually hate each other).

OMAR: After Hunter's last comments I think it is important to address another underlying issue here. This issue being the very nature practice in extemp. I believe strongly that practice is essential to a good extemper. I believe that it builds fluency and makes you more prepared for a limited preparation event. Naturally, I believe that what happens in practice is absolutely fair game come tournament time. To return to the original example of the Tymoshenko introduction- If I was to practice a speech on Ukraine's economy and then draw a topic on the political stability of the ruling coalition in Ukraine I think it is fair game to use some of my economic sources that were previously used in my practice speech. While I understand that analysis changes everytime a speaker delivers it, I must say that it is an unfair burden for an extemper to be crippled because he/she used a funny, topic specific introduction earlier. It devalues the purpose of practice and weakens the overall quality of the event to prohibit a speaker from using a previously developed introduction. The very nature of the event requires outside consideration. There is no prewritten speech with the speaker, the introduction is not plagiarized, and it is coming explicitly from the speaker's head. My defense of this type of topic specific introduction is used as a tool to emphasize practice in extemp. Additionally, I have a problem with Hunter's argument of how far one can develop an introduction in one's own head.

After all what happens in a speaker's head stays in a speaker's head- except at tournament time.

That horrible attempt at humor is further punishment to Hunter for allowing me to speak first...

HUNTER: Two thoughts came to me after reading Omar's last post, 1.) He must have a huge crush on the admittedly-cute blond who leads Ukraine, and 2.) There may be some mis-communication between the two of us (as often tends to happen when extempers who dabble in LD have theory discussions). I do not mean to imply that a speaker cannot practice a speech, that truly would be a ridiculous request to make of any speaker with any claims to success. However, I stand by my assessment about developing an intro to far. If I got out and rent the movie *Charlie Wilson's War* and say to myself, "Hm... That could work for an Afghanistan

speech," who's to blame me. On the same token, using the same intro idea in a round that you use in practice does not rub me the wrong way either, as long as it is not a cookie-cutter intro or self-plagiarism.

OMAR: It seems that my good friend Hunter and I have come to a clear agreement. I absolutely believe that something used in practice is fair game for a speech. Unfortunately, I don't quite understand the delineating factor between the two of us. If Hunter could explain his definition of a cookie cutter intro then I think I can continue.

Yulia Tymoshenko is a very attractive world leader.

I feel like I need to put that out there.

HUNTER: You're so needy.

A cookie-cutter intro would be an intro that could literally be applied to almost anything.

Hey, she's no Ségolène Royal - I wish she had won the French election just so the Economist would have kept printing pictures of her.

OMAR: Well by that logic, my original position still stands. The criteria that I set up for predeveloping an introduction was that it must be exclusively topic specific. If I am not mistaken it seems that Hunter and I have come into predominant agreement. Developing an introduction beforehand is fair game so long as it is not a "cookie-cutter" introduction.

Also, it seems that Hunter prefers brunnettes.

HUNTER: Hunter does prefer brunnettes. Of course, if the old saying is true, props to you, Omar, because "gentlemen prefer blonds."

Omar assumes that we are in agreement, however, I still feel as though he is glossing over my point of view. Let me add this caveat again: brainstorming is fine, practice to the point of memorization (or just shy of it) should be avoided at all times.

OMAR: Well, I don't believe anyone should do anything in extemp to the point of memorization. In my own personal experience I have never practiced one particular part of a speech- instead the speech as a whole. That being said, I suppose I don't see the difference in independently practicing an introduction and doing it within the context of the speech. I feel like adding the necessary criteria of practicing the entire speech for it to be kosher is not a burden that should be placed on an extemper- though it would probably be a wise decision to practice a whole speech.

HUNTER: But, Omar, how could practicing an intro independently not be considered canning?

- OMAR: As opposed to practicing it within a speech?
- HUNTER: If someone is just sitting at home in front of a mirror saying an intro over and over ad nauseum, that is far too much preparation.
- OMAR: Once again, I must stress that it is a very bad habit to practice independent parts of a speech. A speaker should always practice a whole speech. That being said let's say it is a very turbulent year for Ukraine and a speaker gives 5 Ukraine speeches all with the Tymoshenko introduction, I would say that it is okay to give that intro at a tournament. Similarly, I would say that practicing the introduction independently in the mirror 5 times isn't wise either. Are you saying that one is kosher and the other isn't? If so I must stress that in my opinion what an extemper does in practice is his/her own business. I see no reason to delineate one as not okay and the other as okay.
- HUNTER: Well, I have trouble believing that one Tymoshenko intro could be wide enough to be applicable to five entirely different questions about Ukraine. But, again, over practicing a speech is like overcooking grits - it just doesn't taste right in the end. Not only is there the ethical dilemma of canned vs. fresh (it kind of sounds like we're having a debate at the Future Farmers of America convention), but it is also dangerous for the performer.
- I have found, as an orator as well as an extemper, that there is a point where something has become too performed. If it is no longer fresh to the performer then, sometimes, it is difficult for even the best actors to deliver the line with feeling. The more practiced it is for a speaker, the more boring it becomes to repeat. And, if it is boring for the speaker, imagine for a moment how much the audience will hate it. Thus, it may not be such a good idea practically or ethically to keep using that Tymoshenko (or any other) intro... No matter how attractive the person in the anecdote may be.
- OMAR: Alas, for the third time we agree. Unfortunately, for the hundredth time we disagree. Allow me to begin by saying that grits taste bad regardless. I agree that there is an enormous practical dilemma of giving something over and over again. It always sounds bad and not entertaining. Where I disagree is the ethical dilemma. Earlier we came to the agreement that using a topic specific introduction in practice and then at a tournament was ethical. So I don't necessarily see how practicing an introduction is unethical (though I could never do this because I can't ever stick to a script-hence why I extemp). In other words I don't believe that there is any ethical dilemma- simply a practical one.
- HUNTER: There is an ethical dilemma because the act of "canning" occurs when an individual prepares an intro not for practice, but, rather, for the sole intent of passing it off as something they developed off-the-cuff at a tournament. Which, if you take the traditional definition of extemp, violates the spirit of the event.

OMAR: What if a speaker prepared an introduction for practice, because he/she knew it could be used at a tournament?

HUNTER: Is that intro attached to an entire speech that the speaker gave in full at practice?

OMAR: Yes.

HUNTER: Then no, the delivery of the full speech would prevent the abusive development.

OMAR: Well, I suppose I don't see what the difference between delivering it in the context of the speech is and delivering it independently. I see the difference only in the practical arena because quality extempers practice whole speeches not just parts, but not in the ethical arena. Why is it abusive development as opposed to within a speech where it isn't?

HUNTER: Here's the difference: when in the context of a full speech, there is not abusive development of an intro because, after all, how likely is it that a speaker will have a question in practice and in a round that are similar enough where they could pull off using the same intro? But, even if they could do so, because they are giving the full speech they are inherently preventing themselves from merely regurgitating the same words in the same way. It will ultimately be a different intro - an extemporaneous intro - and not a pre-developed intro.

Just because the ideological foundation of an intro is the same, does not mean it is the same intro.

OMAR: Well, I understand your point, but that comes down to the slight split in extemp ideology we brought up earlier in the discussion. This brings me to a crucial question- Would Hunter Kendrick hold an intro he thought was canned against an extemper even if it was topic specific?

HUNTER: Let me make sure I understand where you're coming from. In your scenario, I'm judging a round. One of the competitors, as far as I can tell, has canned an intro. Would I punish that competitor? Is that the question?

OMAR: Yes, but the intro is topic specific.

HUNTER: If the competitor was clearly better than the rest of the round in every other area, I would not let my ethical suspicions - because, after all, I could never know for sure unless I confronted the speaker - alone sink the competitor. However, if it is a close round and could truly go either way between that competitor and another one... Well, then it may play into my decision some, if my suspicion was great.

OMAR: Well I certainly think that is fair. I, on the other hand, would only punish if the introduction was not good or didn't apply specifically to the topic.

HUNTER: Well, that is because you are a liberal... And, therefore, weak on crime ☺

2009 CFL Nationals Extemp Topic Area Analysis

By Logan Scisco

In less than two weeks the 2009 CFL national tournament will commence in Albany, New York. It will offer the first nationwide test of extempers across the country, occurring three weeks before the NFL national tournament in Birmingham, Alabama. As a well versed extemper knows, preparation is everything before a competition and to assist in this process CFL, like its NFL counterpart, releases the extemp topic areas prior to the competition. These eight topic areas have been listed on the organization's website, www.ncfl.org.

For an extemper who has not been to the CFL national tournament, there are eight rounds of competition. Extempers compete in for preset preliminary rounds followed by four elimination rounds. A typical preliminary field starts with nearly 200 competitors and each preliminary rounds is adjudicated by three judges. The average size of a preliminary round is seven competitors. It must also be said that there is no precise order for the topic areas. All topic areas are drawn at random prior to each round of competition, so there is no point in guessing what topic areas you will hit in each round, although there are probably some topic areas that you would rather see in preliminary rounds and avoid in elimination rounds.

The CFL extemp tournament is unique in that it centers more on domestic issues than international ones. While there have been exceptions in the past, the topic areas of the tournament have often placed domestic concerns over those in the international arena and this year's topic areas signify a continuation of that process. At first glance, five of the topic areas are named for domestic concerns or departments in the federal government and three of the topic areas represent a broad collection of global regions.

While these topic areas are broad, I will reiterate a point made by Colin West and myself last summer when we did the NFL topic area analysis for International and United States extemp (and which will appear in the next edition of *The Ex Files*). This is that although these topic areas are broad (sometimes extraordinarily so), they do provide a framework that the rounds of competition will take place in, and the judges you will see in each of these rounds will be listening to a maximum of seven speeches about the same topic area. Therefore, preparing for possible questions, and using those in your practice routine before the tournament, may make the difference between going far in the tournament or having to sit and watch the remainder of the tournament on the sidelines.

As with last year, this topic area analysis will break down each of the eight topic areas released for the 2009 CFL national tournament, providing some issues that extempers should look into and some sample questions extempers can use to practice.

Topic Area #1: The Americas

This topic area is the first of three international topic areas that extempers will encounter at the tournament. One of the themes this topic area will revolve around in the political tilt of Latin America. The region has continued to move in a very leftist direction over this season, albeit the recent Panamanian presidential election shows how political changes in Latin America do not need to be monolithic. Nevertheless, the political changes in Latin America have often posed a challenge to U.S. leadership in the region and now are being tested by the global economic crisis. Countries like Venezuela, who has long railed against U.S. capitalism, are seeing recessionary impacts on their economies and the true test will be whether or not they are blamed for these

economic problems or can successfully continue to shift the blame to the United States. To prepare for these issues, an extemper would be wise to read some history about U.S. relations in Latin America, especially in regards to the Monroe Doctrine and U.S. activities in the Cold War, and also understand economic information about the major powers in the region (Brazil, Venezuela, Argentina, Mexico, and Colombia). Also, Sarah Anand's topic brief on leftism in Latin America from the last edition of *The Ex Files* might be a good read as well.

If there are two countries that extempers will have to be prepared to encounter in this round it is Cuba and Mexico. Cuba emerges after the recent Summit of the Americas where countries in Latin America are starting to pressure the U.S. more into dropping its embargo against the island. Also, Cuba's political changes with Raul Castro at the helm do provide the opportunity for extempers to get questions about what the future of Cuba holds, a point accentuated by the recent lifting of travel and financial restrictions on the island by the Obama administration. Mexico will be a focus area for one of two concerns: drug violence and H1N1 flu. Felipe Calderon's handling of both issues has major political impacts for his administration and the H1N1 issue has serious economic ramifications for the Mexican people.

Out of all international topic areas, this is the one topic area that extempers should expect to have their judges have some basic knowledge about. Your judge has probably heard of Mexico's problems or Hugo Chavez, even if they do not know specifics about them. Explaining how these issues relate to the U.S. can greatly assist you inside of a round, especially since many of the judges you encounter at CFL tend to be parents moreso than coaches, a trend that does not change as you move farther into elimination rounds.

Sample Questions:

1. What impact has the H1N1 virus had on the Mexican economy?
2. Why is Hugo Chavez entrenching his power in Venezuela?
3. How would the lifting of the U.S. embargo impact the Cuban economy?
4. Are leftist economic policies good for Latin America?
5. Is the Kirchner political dynasty coming to an end?

Topic Area #2: Europe, Asia, and Africa

Wow, this topic area is not broad at all! It might have been better for the topic committee to just create a "International" round that involved all three of these continents and let the best extemper survive. As with the Americas topic area, the committee this year did not create a global economics round. Considering that, and based on my past experience at the tournament, you may still get economic questions pertaining to country or region specific issues in this round. All three continents, especially Europe, which has seen the downfall of governments in Iceland and Latvia over the economic crisis, have experienced negative ramifications from the economic downturn. Continent-wide economic analysis pieces, especially from regional think tanks or from the International Monetary Fund, may be valuable sources of information to have on hand for this round.

Elections are also a predominant concern for all three continents, most notably in Asia and Africa. The Indian elections are nearing the home stretch and when a new government is selected it will greatly impact policy with Pakistan, which is crucial because that relationship stands to enhance or reduce the chances of success of our winning in Afghanistan. Furthermore, Afghanistan is holding a presidential election this summer, so extempers may have to speculate on whether or not the polls will be fair or how they will impact U.S. policy. However, I must add

that extempers may not see any questions about Pakistan or Afghanistan in this topic area, as those may be shifted to the U.S. State Department topic area or the Homeland Security topic area. Extempers will also want to keep an eye on the political upheavals in Thailand and Nepal. In terms of Africa, there are bound to be questions about the South Africa elections that brought Jacob Zuma to power and ushered in yet another term of ANC rule. For these questions, extempers must be aware that each country has different voting patterns and political cultures. Issues that one would assume would have universal appeal, such as the status of the economy or terrorism, do not necessarily play well everywhere. For example, the recent Indian elections have showed that voters are caring more about mundane local issues than terrorism or the performance of the economy.

Extempers cannot ignore power politics involving the European Union, Russia, and China in this round either. Human rights questions are still a favorite of topic writers when discussing Russia and China and Russia's actions against Ukraine and Georgia this year provide fertile ground for questions pertaining to those regions or in regards to how the European Union can contain Russia. China's movements towards more passive reunification with Taiwan also deserve attention.

More so than any other topic area in the tournament, this is one where extempers *really* need to communicate well with their audience. Judges often hate judging international topic rounds because they do not understand any of the issues being discussed. If you make your judge frustrated you run a high risk of being dropped in the round. When discussing these topics you must develop strong historical background, explaining clearly what is going on in these countries and why, and develop a detailed impact story. You do not have to relate all of the impacts to the U.S., but you must identify what these issues will lead to later. Simply saying that China's rise as a global superpower is bad is not enough. You must explain *why* China's rise as a global superpower is bad. Using this technique will allow you to speak *to* your judge rather than *at* your judge and in bigger rounds at the tournament, which are classically a crap shoot, this can make a world of difference.

A final rule of thumb here is for extempers to try to find local sources of information to cite in their speeches. While it can be hard to find objective reporting in China or Russia, having sources close to where these issues are occurring can add some uniqueness to a speech. Judges expect to hear *The New York Times* or *The Washington Post*, but their ears tend to perk up when they hear *The Far East Economic Review* or *The South China Morning Post*.

Sample Questions:

1. How should the EU deal with Russia?
2. Why is Sarkozy's popularity falling in France?
3. Were the South Africa elections bad for COPE?
4. Should Algeria investigate the disappearances that took place in its civil war?
5. Should the Sri Lankan government cease its offensive against the Tamil Tigers?

Topic Area #3: The U.S. State Department

With this topic area, we start to get a listing of U.S. cabinet departments as opposed to the traditional language that is seen when looking at topic areas. When initially looking at the wording of these topic areas, I was trying to figure out what exactly they mean. On one hand, the topic area could have questions specific to the U.S. State Department. On the other hand, they could be code for a broader issue that extempers should look at. After much debate, I chose to go with the second idea that I came up with, and that these topic areas are about a larger theme. As

such, this round should be a round concerning U.S. foreign policy and recent foreign policy decisions, which makes sense because that is the operation of the State Department.

Nevertheless, to prepare for anything, it might be wise for extempers to peruse the Internet and clip briefings and analysis that are posted on these government websites. It might also be a good idea to do some background research and clip some information on the functions of the U.S. State Department (as well as other departments that will emerge later). Having this knowledge would add some nice touches to a speech and showcase the breadth of an extempers knowledge about the U.S. government.

Foreign policy questions are classic questions that involve a simple equation: “how does x affect y?” This is where you see questions such as “How big of a threat is North Korea to the United States?” or “How can the U.S. play a more constructive role in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process?” A typical problem for a speech of this magnitude is that an extemper spends way too much time explaining background information in the introduction and reduces the time they need to spend in their three points. When facing these questions, a good rule is to quickly summarize each side’s motivations and then move into your speech, where you can explain these details in more depth (with adequately cited source material).

Moreso than any other topic area, historic knowledge is critical for U.S. foreign policy questions. The United States has been very involved in global affairs since the end of World War II, but our alignment with certain countries or our past actions in supporting rebel movements, dictatorships, or certain economic policies have alienated parts of the world and help to explain some of the hostility we face by these countries on a global scale. Also, understanding foreign policy theories such as realism, international liberalism, and neoconservatism can add more intellectual depth to a speech. The classic book I never hesitate to recommend to extempers so that they can handle foreign policy questions is Henry Kissinger’s *Diplomacy*, which does an excellent job detailing the history of international interaction.

Since CFL is a “mixed” extemp tournament, extempers do not have to worry about not bringing enough files, a typical dilemma that the U.S. extemper experiences at NFL. The questions for this topic area will probably cover the U.S. relationship with established or rising global powers such as Russia, China, India, Brazil, and Great Britain and/or with international bodies such as the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Trade Organization. International economic agreements may also emerge such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). So-called “international hotspots” are also a favorite of topic writers so the U.S.’s troubled relationships with Venezuela, Cuba, North Korea, Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bolivia, Nicaragua, and Syria could arise.

While foreign policy rounds are nothing new to competitors, there is one problem most foreign policy rounds create. This is that extempers often give unbalanced speeches that focus more on the “x” or “y” than both variables. Remember that U.S. motivations are not the only thing that matter in these questions and that the other side is just as important. Also, be prepared to have some solutions for the world’s conflicts because questions such as “How can the U.S. save Pakistan?” or “How can the U.S. better engage South Africa?” do emerge and the more detailed your solution is and the best you can articulate it, the better off you will be.

Sample Questions:

1. Should the U.S. see China as more of a threat or as an ally?
2. How can the U.S. stop Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon?

3. Should the U.S. put pressure on Israel to stop settlement building?
4. Has Obama successfully rehabilitated America's image abroad?
5. Should the U.S. support an expansion of the UN Security Council?

Topic Area #4: Agriculture, the Interior, and Energy

For one of the first times that I can remember, agriculture is listed as a topic area for the national tournament. This round is shaping up to be a traditional "environment and energy" round that domestic extempers are familiar with, especially because the Department of the Interior is tasked with conserving wildlife and other aspects of the U.S. environment.

The agriculture portion of the topic is a hybrid topic area of how the U.S. should handle the safety of its food supply and has an economic dimension as well. Questions about genetically modified crops or hormones in cattle (especially after a recent trade spat was thawed with the EU over hormones in beef products) could be written, as well as whether the U.S. should overhaul its system of agricultural subsidies.

Of course, once I said environment most extempers probably thought global warming, which is not a bad place to start when looking at this topic area. In fact, questions on the merits of global warming or solutions about carbon emissions, most notably recent cap and trade schemes in Congress, can and will emerge. However, an extemper should not get completely caught up in global warming and carbon regulation that they ignore other pressing concerns such as whether the U.S. should strengthen standards for environmental regulations in the Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, and the Endangered Species Act. Also, the topic of cleaning up toxic waste has always been a favorite of national topic area writers, so getting research on the Superfund program may not be a bad idea. Sometimes extempers even encounter really broad, vague, and (to be blunt) stupid questions such as "Does the environment matter?"

This topic area could also ask you to evaluate how good of a job certain leaders are doing in their cabinet departments so far. Remember, Tom Vilsack is in charge of the Department of Agriculture, Ken Salazar is in charge of the Department of the Interior, and Steven Chu is in charge of the Department of Energy. Lest we forget another important position, also remember that Lisa Jackson is in charge of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). This is where getting background information on each of these leaders is important, which can be found at their respective government websites, and getting news briefings about recent decisions in these departments can greatly assist if one of these evaluation questions comes up.

The energy portion of the topic will require extempers to be well versed in alternative energy technologies. Having files for solar, wind, clean coal, and nuclear energy will be of great help in this round, as most veteran extempers could probably list at least ten possibilities for questions about the merits of these different energy sources. Also, extempers should be aware of the impact these energy sources could have on transportation technology, which is where questions about hybrid or electric cars could come into play.

A major theme extempers need to prepare for in this topic area is how regulation in any of these three areas could impact the economy. Debates have occurred all year, especially with the rise in oil prices last summer, about U.S. energy security and whether the U.S. should drill offshore for oil (or classically in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge). The debate over whether to enhance oil production or tax oil production to enhance alternative energy sources is a fierce one and extempers need to have a few cards up their sleeve to handle this issue.

Sample Questions:

1. Should the U.S. reduce its agricultural subsidies?
2. Is nuclear power necessary if the U.S. wants to create a fleet of electric cars?
3. Will a carbon trading system be a benefit or a detriment to the U.S. economy?
4. What is America's most pressing environmental issue?
5. Should the U.S. create a public transportation system?

Topic Area #5: Education, Housing & Urban Development, and Health & Human Services

If there is one topic area that cries “eww” at the tournament it is this one. As a result of that, I would almost be willing to bet that this topic area emerges in semi-finals or finals. All kidding aside, this topic area is yet another extension of the tournament's focus on domestic issues, but enough has been published over the last year that should provide extempers with enough material to survive this round. If you are a veteran domestic extemper, and someone who loves domestic programs, though, this round is your gold mine

With education, the topic of education reform has heated up over the last several years, especially as U.S. schools continue to lag behind their international counterparts. Questions about education reform such as school vouchers, charter schools, merit pay, and the infamous No Child Left Behind law will rear their ugly head in this round. Extempers also need to have a college file because the cost of college education continues to rise with tuition hikes and that has the potential to exclude students from higher education, a move that could prompt federal involvement in the future. A random question about affirmative action could also squeeze into this topic area as well.

The housing and urban development topic area is probably foreign to many extempers, who never have to cite this department much in rounds. I cannot recall ever doing so in my six and half year career. However, with the downturns in the housing market, this department has been the one to spearhead reforms to make it easier for homeowners in default to retain their homes. Therefore, economic questions about the federal government's efforts to assist the housing market could face extempers in this round. Also, efforts to rebuild New Orleans post-Katrina (and who thought we'd still be talking about that) fall under this department's purview as well.

I forecast, though, that the final part of this topic area, with Health and Human Services will be the key focus for this round. The recent H1N1 flu shows how the U.S. needs to continually reinforce and fund its pandemic flu plan and offers a test for U.S. medical services. Also, one of the Obama administration's priorities is in passing some version of a universal health insurance plan, although there is significant disagreement between it and some members of Congress about how this should be done. Furthermore, reforms in Medicare and Medicaid programs are debated by think tanks, which would be good for extempers to get a hold of, and efforts to decrease the price of prescription drugs are also a big political issue. Finally, major public health issues in regards to AIDS or tobacco always squeeze their way in here as well as ethical debates over medical technology such as cloning and stem cell research.

As with the previous topic area, extempers would be wise to research each of these departments and clip information about their leadership and priorities (and I will warn you that the Department of Housing and Urban Development's website looks like it was designed by a six year old). Also, clipping medical journals might be wise, but check the credentials of the writer because bias might be an issue (this is a good procedure to follow when you read any major article).

Extempers also need to take into account the political dimensions of what they are talking about. There is no domestic politics topic area for this tournament so the odds are that those political questions will find their way into these domestic topic areas. This is also where extempers need to be careful about their audience. At the tournament do not bash the entire U.S. education system as many of your judges will be either teachers or parents who have children in the U.S. education system. Also, if you are forced to discuss a controversial issue such as stem cell research, cloning, or abortion, be careful to give each side of the debate its due because you cannot guess which side of the issue your judge is on and how that might impact their decision. Sometimes its best to avoid these topics, but if you must speak on them you need to have all your facts correct.

Sample Questions:

1. What adjustments need to be made to No Child Left Behind?
2. Are plans to help trouble homeowners creating a moral hazard?
3. Is there a solution that can break the political deadlock on reforming Medicare?
4. Should the federal government institute a cap on college tuition rates?
5. Can the U.S. medical infrastructure absorb the burden of a universal healthcare system?

Topic Area #6: Labor, Treasury, and Commerce

Without question, this is the main topic area of the tournament. More articles have been written about the economy this year than nearly any other issue. The only other issue that would come close would be President Obama's victory in the 2008 election, but there is no topic area at the tournament where you will be talking about that. As economy files have expanded exponentially this year, extempers need to make sure that everything has been subdivided accordingly. If you have an economy folder that is humongous, I would suggest cleaning it out prior to the tournament.

Economy questions, like international topics, can be some of the worst rounds for judges to observe (unless you get Steve Moss as a judge in the back of the room). At local tournaments and in pockets of the national tournament, there are judges who have no grasp of economic theory or its activities. To handle these judges, it is best to give them a clear story of what your discussing. If you mention a major economic theory or concept, it might be wise to become more "audience friendly" and give a 1-2 sentence explanation of that theory or concept. You do not have to beat a dead horse, but the fault of many extempers is they are more concerned about sounding smart on economics than on actually *explaining* economics, which is your burden in these types of rounds.

My prediction is that many of the topics you are going to encounter in this round are going to be evaluations of current economic policies or the effectiveness of federal actions rather than proposing economic solutions (although there will most likely be a few questions in the pool about this). Government policies such as TARP, the PPIP, the stimulus package, its solutions for the nation's automakers, Obama's budget plans, or steps it has taken to shore up the bank system (i.e. stress tests) are all fair game here. Also, evaluations of how much government interference in the economy is appropriate can be expected.

Extempers should not just limit their analysis, though, to national economic issues. State governments are also facing their own budget shortfalls and they are often more painful than what the federal government experiences. While you will not face questions specific to a state (with the possible exception of California), but questions about their overall economic situation may arise.

The move towards protectionism in trade markets, or its effects on the global economy, may also come up, and extempers should prepare for a question about the Employee Free Choice Act, which would allow unions to form via “card check” instead of having a secret ballot to determine if they could form inside of a company.

Sample Questions:

1. Will “card check” damage the U.S. economy?
2. Should the federal government nationalize troubled banks?
3. Is Obama’s call for tougher tax enforcement a good idea?
4. Was Chrysler’s bankruptcy mismanaged?
5. Is the worst of the economic recession over?

Topic Area #7: Justice Department & Attorney General

The “attorney general” part of this topic area is a little confusing, since the obvious inference would be that it would entail questions about current attorney general Eric Holder, is too limiting for a variety of questions. However, I see this round as more of a “Criminal Justice”-type round.

This labeling, though, might be too limiting as well. With David Souter’s recent decision to leave the Supreme Court, extempers need to be ready to explain who might replace him or what the implications might be for the Court when he leaves. Since the Supreme Court is also hearing cases right now, extempers need to be familiar with those cases and be able to explain what the pressing legal issues are and how the Supreme Court might rule. The Supreme Court has already ruled on cases concerning identity theft, “fleeting” expletives, and a mandatory sentence for a gun crime this year and will rule on cases concerning strip searches in schools, the Voting Rights Act, and conflicting parts of the Civil Rights Act. While you may think your not going to hit a specific case question, you are wrong because the 2007 final round at CFL saw questions that asked extempers to evaluate cases just like that.

This is also where extempers could get questions about the possible prosecution of Bush officials who authorized enhanced interrogation techniques. If that does not emerge in this topic area, it could emerge in the Homeland Security topic area. However, just because this topic area might appear to have a legalistic dimension does not mean that it cannot have a political one as well.

Legal questions are a different animal in the extemp world. Instead of having to base your ideas on facts, you also have to take the perspective as a lawyer or judge and look at arguments in their legal dimensions. This requires knowing prior Supreme Court cases and the legal theories of different justices on the Court. Framing your arguments and sounding like a lawyer when you give these speeches can be very impressive.

You also should not forget about Obama’s attempts at closing down tax havens as well. If not framed as an economic issue, it could come up in this round as a criminal one.

Sample Questions:

1. Should the U.S. legalize illegal drugs?
2. How should the Supreme Court rule in *Ricci v. DeStefano*?
3. Should Obama appoint a strong leftist to the Supreme Court to replace Souter?
4. Is the death penalty cruel and unusual punishment?

5. Are strip searches of high school students a violation of their Fourth Amendment rights?

Topic Area #8: Homeland Security

The final topic area is a mainstay for national tournaments since September 11th, but this is one that has lost steam over the last several years, especially as the perceived risk of a terrorist attack continues to be reduced in the minds of Americans.

Unlike previous years, I believe that this topic is going to have more of a focus on America's international activities in regards to containing terrorism than it will be about domestic terror prevention. Issues like the Patriot Act and national ID cards are so 2002 and 2003, while recent actions in Pakistan and Somalia have grabbed global attention.

This topic area will probably be where military questions will be inserted. There is no round that is about the Defense Department, so I believe that question writers will tie U.S. military activities in Iraq and Afghanistan into this round. Extempers should understand the shifts going on in Defense Department policy and will want to read up on the latest QDR that outlines America's strategic focus.

Getting briefings from the Department of Homeland Security will be a vital preparation for this round, especially because gaffes by Janet Napolitano have led to some Republicans calling for her resignation.

The controversial topic of illegal immigration is also going to be placed in this round because border security is still a significant concern among Americans. Knowing the proposed laws to solve the illegal immigration dilemma and their merits/disadvantages will help you in navigating this topic, one that is more complex than it initially appears. It is also a political hot potato, so make sure to explain that if you draw this issue as well.

Finally, a comparison question between Obama's policies towards terror sponsors and towards terrorism compared to President Bush's is a possibility. You may be asked to grade Obama's policies so far or how they make America safer/more vulnerable than the Bush era. You may also be asked if the so-called "Bush doctrine" in handling terrorism and terrorist sponsors is dead.

Sample Questions:

1. Can Pakistan's government successfully defeat the Taliban?
2. Should the U.S. security focus be more on rising global powers or failed states?
3. If it is closed, what should be done with Gitmo's prisoners?
4. Did President Bush make America less safe?
5. How can America best secure its borders?

Extemp Central National Points Race

by Logan Scisco

Although there have been no changes in the national points race from the last edition, the next two tournaments (the Extemp TOC and the CFL national tournament) will have a major impact on the standings. The trophy for both the individual and team standings is being searched for and ordered as we speak, and pictures of those will be released on the website when they become available.

Since the Extemp TOC is a “second tier” tournament, the points available for the Extemp TOC are as follows:

<i>Ranking</i>	<i>Points Received</i>
1 st	100
2 nd	85
3 rd	70
4 th	55
5 th	48
6 th (not awarded for MBA)	41

The CFL national tournament is a “first tier” tournament. The points available for the CFL national tournament are as follows:

<i>Ranking</i>	<i>Points Received</i>
1 st	50
2 nd	40
3 rd	30
4 th	20
5 th	16
6 th	12

Below is a snapshot of what the standings look like heading into this weekend’s Extemp TOC.

Individual Standings:

RANK	NAME	SCHOOL	POINTS
1	Stacey Chen	North Allegheny Senior HS (Wexford, PA)	240
2	Matt Arons	Millburn HS (Wyckoff, NJ)	180
3	Dillon Huff	Carroll HS (Southlake, TX)	178
T4	Nick Cugini	Cypress Ridge HS (Houston, TX)	135
T4	Evan Larson	Bellarmino College Prep (San Jose, CA)	135
6	Jovalin Dedaj	Fordham Preparatory (Bronx, NY)	76
7	Brennan Morris	Randolph-Macon Academy (Front Royal, VA)	70
8	Aaron Lutkowitz	Montgomery Bell Academy (Nashville, TN)	62
T9	Ryan Pereira	Nova HS (Davie, FL)	60

T9	Michael Watson	Desert Vista HS (Phoenix, AZ)	60
T9	Alex Tolkin	Newton South HS (Newton, MA)	60
12	Morgan Booksh	McNeil HS (Austin, TX)	52
T13	Alon Elhanan	Bronx High School of Science (Bronx, NY)	50
T13	Jane Kessner	Walt Whitman HS (Bethesda, MD)	50
T13	Jason Bernstein	Nova HS (Davie, FL)	50

Team Standings:

RANK	SCHOOL	POINTS	# OF FINALISTS
1	North Allegheny Senior HS (Wexford, PA)	240	5
2	Carroll HS (Southlake, TX)	194	5
3	Millburn HS (Wyckoff, NJ)	180	3
4	Nova HS (Davie, FL)	140	4
5	Cypress Ridge HS (Houston, TX)	135	3
6	Bellarmino College Prep (San Jose, CA)	135	2
7	Newton South HS (Newton, MA)	90	3
8	Fordham Preparatory (Bronx, NY)	76	3
9	Randolph-Macon Academy (Fort Royal, VA)	70	2
10	Montgomery Bell Academy (Nashville, TN)	62	2

David Souter Retirement

By Logan Scisco

Last Friday, Supreme Court justice David Souter announced his retirement, pending the confirmation of a successor. Souter has been a liberal vote on the court, progressively moving in that direction since arriving to the Court in 1990. He was a former New Hampshire Attorney General, New Hampshire Supreme Court justice, and First Circuit Court of Appeals justice before serving on the highest court in the United States.

As most extempers are aware, mostly from their U.S. history classes in high school, the Supreme Court is one of the more powerful branches of government. It derives its power from judicial review, the power to declare acts of Congress unconstitutional. This was a power that was not expressly given to the Court in the Constitution, but was created in the 1803 Supreme Court decision of *Marbury v. Madison*.

With Souter's retirement, President Barack Obama will have his first opportunity to appoint a Supreme Court justice, enjoying this power earlier in his presidency than his predecessor George W. Bush, who had to wait until his second term to receive his first Supreme Court appointment (and he selected John Roberts).

This brief will explain Souter's arrival to the Court and his legacy, discuss possible successor options, and the political minefield that this decision creates for President Obama.

Souter's Arrival & Impact on the Court

David Souter was selected for the Supreme Court after only serving two months on the First U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals by President George H.W. Bush in 1990 to fill the vacant seat once occupied by William Brennan. Conservatives had hoped that Souter would be a reliable vote on the Court and would eventually hope to overturn *Roe v. Wade*. Many of these hopes were based on a guess, though, because the Bush administration had decided to go with a so-called "stealth" pick to ease Souter's confirmation through the Senate.

Souter's confirmation came just three years after the Supreme Court voted down Ronald Reagan's nomination of conservative judge Robert Bork, a vote that largely heralded in the politicized judicial selection process we see today. In fact, today the process of politically going after a nominee with the purpose of defeating them is known as "borking." Conservatives hoped that they could avoid the same mistake Reagan made by selecting a candidate who did not have many scholarly writings that outlined controversial political positions. This would decrease the ammunition given to Senate opponents.

Strategically speaking, the "stealth" nomination worked and Souter joined the Court in October 1990. However, by 1992 it became obvious that Souter was not the conservative justice many had hoped for. In the 1992 Supreme Court case of *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*, Souter created a compromise with fellow justices Sandra Day O'Connor and Anthony Kennedy that upheld the right to an abortion as part of the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment, a right that originated in the 1973 Supreme Court case of *Roe v. Wade*. It is this decision that is often referred to by court watchers as Souter's legacy. Following the *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* decision, conservatives were outraged and became ever moreso in coming years as Souter started to join liberal colleagues on other social issues such as affirmative action and the death penalty.

Souter also voted in favor of Al Gore in the infamous *Bush v. Gore* decision that decided the 2000 presidential election for George W. Bush.

Replacements

Souter's decision to leave the Court comes at a personal and politically good time. Souter had always argued that he did not want to be on the Court into his 70's and since he is approaching 70, now is the time for him to leave Washington D.C. Also, Souter's retirement comes where there is a Democrat in the White House and with Arlen Specter's switch from the Republican Party and, assuming Al Franken holds onto the Minnesota Senate seat, the Democrats enjoy a filibuster-proof majority in the Senate. This allows a liberal justice to replace him and retain the 5-4 balance that exists on the Court between conservatives and liberals.

Legal scholars are already considering judges who can replace Souter on the Court, with most guesses centering on female candidates since there is only one woman on the Supreme Court, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, after Sandra Day O'Connor left several years ago (and was replaced by Samuel Alito). There has been a hankering for another female justice to replace O'Connor after Bush failed to appoint one and this will be one of the pressures the Obama administration faces when choosing a nominee.

The leading candidate is said to be the current U.S. Solicitor General Elena Kagan. She is the first woman to occupy the Solicitor General position and despite not having served as a judge, she appears to be well liked by both sides of the aisle, having been confirmed early this year by a 61-31 vote. It might also be a welcome change for a Supreme Court justice to be selected from outside of the traditional judicial system in order to add more diversity to the Court.

The Christian Science Monitor last week also laid out a few other possible nominees. Pamela Karlan and Kathleen Sullivan, who teach at Stanford University, are considered to be good picks if Obama wants a nominee with strong liberal credentials. Karlan is seen as an especially good choice if Obama would like to have the liberal equivalent of an Antonin Scalia on the Supreme Court. Another possibility is Sonia Sotomayor, a Hispanic judge on the Second U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. She is also a strong liberal justice and would help Obama woo the Hispanic community, who voted for him in large numbers in the presidential election.

Political Minefield

While this nomination allows Obama his first chance to modify the Court to his liking, it also presents a variety of challenges. Obama indicated during the third presidential debate with John McCain that he wants his judges to have empathy for the different groups in the United States such as racial minorities, the elderly, and the disabled and not to base their decisions solely on past legal decisions that lack emotion. The problem here is that justice is supposed to be about facts and Supreme Court decisions tend to rely on precedents. Conservative judicial groups are already warning that Obama's criteria for selecting judges will lead to an activist Supreme Court that ignores the intent of laws and tries to become a lawmaking body, a power that is specifically designed for legislators.

Obama also needs to evaluate his political capital when making this decision. The 2010 midterm elections could either enhance or reduce the Democratic filibuster-proof majority in the Senate, which has to play into Obama's calculation. Court watchers suggest that if Obama wants to appoint a strongly liberal justice now is the time to do it because he will most likely not enjoy this

scope of power for the remainder of his presidency when another appointment, coming from the possible retirements of John Paul Stevens or Ruth Bader Ginsburg, will come up.

However, pursuing this liberal strategy could cause immense political problems for the administration. Conservative legal groups have already mobilized and are prepared to oppose any nominee with pro-choice credentials. Also, appointing a strong liberal nominee could center the confirmation hearing on social issues such as affirmative action, abortion, and gay marriage, which are still divisive issues for the American public. As such, a divisive confirmation battle could inflame the culture wars that Obama is trying to move his administration beyond and could complicate other items on Obama's agenda such as a cap and trade system and healthcare reform. This is not an unlikely scenario when looking at how past Obama measures such as next year's budget and the stimulus package failed to get conservative backing.

Inside the Extemp TOC: An Interview with Michael Garson

Interview by Logan Scisco

Gearing up for its seventh installment, the Extemp TOC at Northwestern University has gradually established itself as one of the premier tournaments for extemporaneous speaking. Seeing its talent pool continue to increase in quality over those seven years, the Extemp TOC is now the place to be in early May prior to CFL and NFL Nationals. Michael Garson, former NFL IX finalist, Ex Files contributor, and current co-tournament director of the Extemp TOC sat down to discuss his experiences at the tournament, some changes the tournament is making for the 2009 edition, and what competitors can expect at Northwestern University this weekend.

Logan Scisco: Thanks for sitting down with us Michael to discuss the Extemp TOC. I think a question from those who may not know you is how long have you been involved in the Extemp TOC and what made you want to be involved in running this special event?

Michael Garson: I first got involved back in March 2005, when I met Dr. Steve Moss at my NFL Districts tournament. It was there that Dr. Moss suggested that I "go national". TOC Extemp was my first foray into top-notch competition. I haven't checked the old tab sheets, but I think I finished somewhere around 42nd out of a pool of 47. Needless to say, it was a very humbling, and educational, experience. In 2006 I went if for no other reason than to visit Northwestern and finalize my college plans. At that time, I barely qualified for NFLs and was resigned to mediocrity. Through a combination of luck, attitude, and a style particularly well-suited to the TOC Extemp, I ended up finishing 4th.

Part of the reason I came to Northwestern was the TOC Extemp and the NU Speech Team. I have since stopped competing to pursue other endeavors, but I haven't left the tournament. For everything that it gave me, I just can't let it go.

Scisco: I think many observers could comment that each year the TOC field continues to get stronger and stronger. What efforts have Northwestern University made to make this tournament one of the premier events in the country?

Garson: The best thing about the TOC Extemp is that it almost advertises itself. Frankly, there is no unified national title that brings together competitors of all states, backgrounds, and league affiliations. I think that coaches and competitors recognize that this is a rare opportunity to go toe-to-toe with the entire extemp field.

Another important selling point about the tournament is that it is entirely extemp-centric. With 6 prelim rounds and 2 judges per round, competitors will get 12 ballots from 12 extemp coaches. The quality of the field virtually guarantees a high-quality judging pool. The tournament also brings in some of the top private coaches, college competitors and coaches, and extemp personalities to round out the field.

We're constantly trying to improve the tournament. The best way to do that is to listen to competitors and coaches. A problem that I noticed when I competed was the poor timing of the tournament.

Scisco: That poor timing brings me to my next question. The Extemp TOC has traditionally taken place in the second weekend of May, a week after the debate TOC in Lexington, Kentucky. This year the tournament changed to the third weekend in May. What was the motivation behind this switch and do you think you will get a higher attendance because of it?

Garson: Being on Mother's Day and in between AP testing made it impossible for many to attend. Registration is still rolling in, but we are hopeful that attendance will increase. Even at this early juncture, I am seeing high schools register that have not been able to make it in previous years.

Scisco: Are any changes in the works for this year's edition of the TOC compared to past years? Are there any changes that you would like to see made to the tournament?

Garson: This year the tournament will move to the Hotel Orrington for Sunday's outrounds. We were able to negotiate great room rates for guests and secure beautiful rooms. As much as I love Northwestern's academic buildings, moving outrounds into ballrooms will give these rounds the mystique and credence they deserve. Also, we are working on tweaking the schedule to make Saturday tolerable and give impromptu contestants a chance to see the extemp semifinals, as well as the finals. The beauty of being involved with the tournament for five years (2 as a competitor, 3 as an administrator) is that I have watched it evolve. Sometimes unforeseen problems arise, but we learn from them and try to keep improving.

Scisco: How does an extemper earn a qualification to the TOC?

Garson: A student can earn an automatic qualification by finaling in his/her state tournament OR reaching the outrounds in two of our designated tournaments. These two ways offer an opportunity to those who do not travel often and those who do travel, but are in unusually competitive states. If a student does not automatically qualify, he/she can file an at-large application.

Scisco: What is the judging pool for the TOC like? Are there any "big names" who will be judging at the tournament?

Garson: The tournament routinely draws one of the most impressive judging pools in the country. While I cannot name names at this point, there is an illustrious list of former national finalists and champions, coaches of national champions, and extemp camp staff. Having such a high-quality field of competitors means we also get a high-quality field of coaches.

Scisco: As co-tournament director, what steps do you think can continue to be made to improve the quantity and quality of the competition at the TOC?

Garson: Growing our tradition and reputation will continue to increase our attractiveness as a post-season tournament. Because we are the only tournament devoted solely to extemp, we hope to spread the good word about our niche. Talking to coaches, competitors, and personalities creates momentum. Also, this article might help.

Scisco: Who knows, it just might. As you have indicated before, some schools are registering for the TOC that have not registered before. Since you will have some new competitors at this tournament, or prospective competitors reading this interview, briefly explain the format of the Extemp TOC (number of prelims, pairing policy, number of outrounds, number of judges in each round, etc.).

Garson: The tournament has 6 prelims with 2 judges each. As the tournament progresses, we start to seed the field throughout the prelims. We break to 24-person quarterfinals with sudden death outrounds cutting the field down to 12 semifinalists and then again to 6 finalists. A unique part of the tournament is that we have cross-ex in all outrounds.

Scisco: I agree that cross-examination in all outrounds does make the tournament unique. However, Will the CX style being used at the TOC be NFL style (2 minutes) or more along the lines of MBA (which has 3 minutes)?

Garson: Without trying to incite a riot, I have no idea why cross-ex would be cut down to 2 minutes. As someone who spent a lot (read: too much) time honing my craft on cross-ex, I think 3 minutes is the perfect amount of time to build a convincing counter-argument. In the interest of allowing good cross-ex and the building of solid dialogue and clash between competitors, we will continue to use 3 minute cross-ex.

Scisco: Having competed and finaled in the Extemp TOC before, provide some insight into your experience at the tournament and any possible suggestions for people coming to the tournament.

Garson: My TOC experiences may have representative of the two types of competitors who attend. My junior year, I came with no idea of what to expect. I had my two boxes filled with random clippings from Newsweek, Time, and the Asbury Park Press (eek!). I banked on style and assumed that arguments didn't really need evidence. I remember meeting Kevin Troy in the prep room and not wanting to wash my hand for days. Seeing Kevin Troy, James Hohmann, and a slew of other greats confused and excited me. I couldn't put my finger on it, but I immediately noticed that they were competing in a different event than me. They acted, thought, and spoke on a higher level. Likewise, I think a lot of competitors come to learn and see what extempers are capable of.

My senior year, I came in knowing what the tournament was about. Perhaps more importantly, I had a close group of friends on the national circuit. Being in the prep room with competitors like Dan Rauch, Alex Stephenson, Sally Hudson, Tony Romm, David Kumbroch and Joe St. George seemed less scary. I knew them all personally, even if I didn't feel I was on their level as a competitor. I was much more relaxed.

I barely broke and was the 21st seed out of 24 in the quarterfinals. I told myself that the rest was gravy, and was as relaxed as I have ever been. I remember my round being an absolute gauntlet. Joe St. George (2x NFL finalist), David Kumbroch (2x NFL finalist, NFL champion), Simin Lee (GMU Champion), Tony Romm (NFL finalist), and Sally Hudson (TOC finalist) were my competition. I love to tout the quality of the TOC Extemp field, but that was an unusually hellacious round. Somehow, I got through and moved on to the semifinals. I was with my mom at the time and remember thinking that me in the semifinals was ridiculous. Before that, my greatest accomplishment was getting to the Wake Forest semifinals on a tiebreaker and getting into Octofinals at Harvard.

As relaxed as I was in the quarterfinals, I was that nervous in my semifinal round. The topic was Southeast Asia...not exactly my strong suit. Also, I was being cross-ex'd by Dan Rauch, who I knew well since we competed against each other for four years in New Jersey. The first person I saw was Kevin Troy, who was then a freshman at Duke and one of my judges. It was at that point that I had my "Oh, %\$@\$" moment. I stopped for a half-second and said, "Oh, %\$@\$! I'm not supposed to be here. I'm not that good." I got lost in the pressure and the moment. Somehow, I pushed through a mediocre speech and got roughed up pretty good in cross-ex. I developed a good offensive cross-ex, which might have been my saving grace and got me into the finals. I think that most extempers have their "Oh, #@\$%" moment. It might be in a local

tournament or at the NFL Finals, but everyone reaches a point where they are not sure if they are worthy or competent enough for the moment. The trick is to recognize that you are in that round for a reason. Luck is, to a certain degree, overrated. Nearly every year, someone cracks in an NFL final and gives a sub-standard performance. It's really unfortunate, but there's nothing we can do as an audience. It is up to the competitor to soldier on. The reason you're nervous is because the stakes are so high. If the stakes are so high, that is all the reason to not throw in the towel and keep fighting.

The final round was really exciting. I remember almost not caring about the speech. I had proven to myself that someone who had no school-year coaching, having his mom as his judge (incidentally, Francine Garson is no slouch as an extemp judge!), and coming off a horrendous TOC performance in 2005 could make the finals. I told more jokes than I planned and my intro ran 2 minutes and 30 seconds. While I'm sure that my friends cringed at what appeared to be gross informalities, I was enjoying the moment. I got 4th place, which was extremely gratifying. I always try to tell friends, students, campers, and even prospective NU students (I'm a tour guide for Northwestern, so Go Cats!) that accomplishments don't make you better or worse. You are exactly as good, or bad, as you are whether or not a judge gives you a 1 or a 6. That ranking has zero effect on the quality of your speech. All you can do is control your seven minutes. Use those seven minutes to show off what you have and do not worry about what others think. Judging is a fickle mistress. Competitors are rarely as good or as bad as they think they are. Despite my accomplishments, the TOC taught me that satisfaction should come in knowing that I worked hard and think that I improved. Having a trophy is nice, but I take far more solace in knowing where I came from. No trophy can ever describe how many hours of hard work were put in. No trophy lists previous failings, obstacles, and problems. It is those who understand where they are as in relation to where they were who will be most successful.

Scisco: For the competitors who do not break in extemp there is a supplemental impromptu portion. Considering that impromptu has different rules around the country, what format does the Extemp TOC use for this?

Garson: We are still hammering out the details, but we will likely employ a single-quotation set up where each competitor speaks on the same quotation. They will have 7 minutes to prepare and deliver a speech. Since high school extemp rules are so diverse, a helpful balance of styles appear.

Scisco: The Extemp TOC has a coaching award and a extemp service award. How are these winners chosen and have they been chosen for the 2009 edition yet?

Garson: We solicit suggestions and recommendations from competitors, coaches, and those around the circuit. I would say whether or not we have made our decision yet, but that would definitely ruin all the fun of it. Wouldn't it?

