

THE EX FILES

**NFL Nationals Edition
Volume 1, Issue No. 7**

From the Publisher

It is hard to imagine that the 2008-2009 competitive year is nearing its end. From Wake Forest to Albany, New York, the season has provided many twists and turns for extempers all across the country. Next week all eyes will converge on Birmingham, Alabama for the extemp version of “glory’s last shot.” NFL will be the time when many seniors give the final extemp speeches of their careers and for many that dream will come to an end well before the final round. However, all achievements of personal glory can be seen as relative. For some, simply making the national tournament is the culmination of a career of hard work, while for others anything less than a national championship will result in disappointment.

This edition of *The Ex Files* will have a staple of Extemp Central of the last two years. Last year’s International Extemp runner-up Omar Qureshi has written a topic area analysis for International extempers while Colin West (2006 US Extemp National Champion) and myself (2003 US Extemp Final Round National Champion) have collaborated on the topic area analysis for U.S. extempers. This edition also includes a topic brief on North Korea, a national tournament psychology summary by Qureshi, an extensive overview of the NFL National tournament by 2002 International Extemp runner-up Mark Royce, a discussion of extemp styles by Sebastian Pyrek, and then an NFL roundtable discussion with Michael Garson (2005 International Extemp finalist), Royce, and myself.

This is the last edition of *The Ex Files* for the 2008-2009 competitive year. We are pleased by the amount of support given to us by the extemp community and we hope to provide you with another year of topic briefs, topic area analysis, and strategy articles for the next competitive year. Announcements about additions to staffing for next year’s magazine will be made on the website over the summer and any suggestions for future content can be directed to me at logan.scisco@wku.edu. Thank you for your continued support of the site and this magazine and thank you to all of those who have contributed results and feedback to me this season. On behalf of myself and the staff of *The Ex Files*, good luck to all the extempers competing at NFL!

-Logan Scisco



Volume 1, No. 7

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National Tournament Psychology

By Omar Qureshi¹

Nowhere will you find a bunch of 250 extempers more competitive than at the NFL National Tournament. There is not a competition that matches its size, depth, or prestige.

With emotions running high, there is no better piece of advice than to just relax. Regardless of how many people are there, the goal is still very much the same: to give the best extemp speech you can give every round. It is prudent to consider the tournament as something outside of you. It exists outside of your paper, pens, boxes, and the prep room. From the time you pick your topic to the time you give your speech, all that exists is the event. In that zone nothing else matters. It matters not how good the speeches were in your room. It matters only that yours is a dedicated reflection of your ability as an extemper.

Nationals often gets the best of people. People tend to want to analyze their competition and think more about the gravity of the round than they are walking into. To do this is to be sucked into the tournament and not into extemp. Every round it is just you and your judges. In between rounds, talk to people and make new friends- it's a great opportunity. Do anything besides think about the tournament itself, and just focus on what got you to nationals- giving great speeches.

Of course, with such a big tournament, it is easy to think your judges down. This is an enormous psychological barrier. Blaming the quality of judging after a bad speech only brings you down. More importantly, dwelling on a rough speech is completely counterproductive. Remember, the way to give a good speech is to stay actively engaged in your preparation. Thinking about rough patches last round is not the way to do this. On this issue, I remember a conversation I recently had with extemp wonderkid, Dan Rauch (2006 TOC champ and NFL IX Runner Up), at the APDA (Parliamentary Debate) national tournament. He told me that his mentality was that even if he was the best in the round, it did not matter whether he won or lost because any performance that was less than **his** best was something that could have been improved. If you think that in the round you did the best you could have done, there is no reason to doubt yourself or try to find out how good your competition was. If you think that you had room to improve from your best, next round you should relax and get into your speech rhythm.

I have already mentioned it before, but it is crucial that you just relax. Whether you are in prep waiting for your draw time to come up or back at the hotel, all worrying will do is give you premature wrinkles and take focus away from your speech. Just relax and breathe. You earned the right to compete at the national tournament- people have just as much reason to fear you as you

¹ Omar Qureshi was a competitor at Monett High School in Monett, Missouri. While not entering the national circuit due to travel restrictions, Omar won over twenty championships in Extemporaneous Speaking in the state of Missouri. He was runner up at the Missouri State Tournament in Extemporaneous Speaking as well as the Missouri State Lincoln-Douglas Debate Champion. As a national qualifier in Lincoln Douglas Debate and three time national qualifier in International Extemporaneous Speaking, Omar chose to attend the National Forensics League National Tournament in Extemporaneous Speaking for his three qualifying years. After a becoming a national quarterfinalist in International Extemporaneous Speaking in 2006, Omar was a national semifinalist in Extemporaneous Commentary in 2007. He was the Runner-up in International Extemporaneous Speaking at the NFL National Tournament in 2008 as well as an NFL All-American. Omar is currently a freshman at Johns Hopkins University and will be studying Economics and International Studies.

do to fear them. Of course, relaxing is more easily said than done. My best advice here is one that most coaches probably do not appreciate me giving: go into the tournament with a swagger. I mean like Tom Cruise in Top Gun swagger. Go in believing that you have everything under control and that you really are the real deal. Your performance is enhanced when you have full confidence in yourself. It will help eliminate insecurities that you have. Just to be at the national tournament entitles you to have a rapper like swagger. Do not, however, use this as a justification for you to devalue your competition. Use it to realize that you really are good enough to do big things at the tournament.

Respect your competition, respect your judges, and believe in yourself- these are the keys to succeeding at a national tournament. Every round is just you and the judges. Every round involves getting the opportunity to deliver a speech in the format of the event you love. Every round you speak in is a culmination of the work that you have put in all year round. No one can take that away from you. To believe in yourself is the way to success at the national tournament.

NFL Roundtable

The NFL national tournament is where extemp legends are made. With a format of thirteen rounds, two differentiated forms of extemp, three rounds of cross examination, a final round that takes place in front of hundreds of people, and \$6,000 in scholarship money going to the winner, NFL is an experience unlike any other.

To provide a preview for this tournament, Extemp Central has brought together three national finalists to discuss their preparation for the tournament and the work that had to be done in the trenches to get them onto the national final stage.

Panel:

Michael Garson: Michael competed for Freehold Township High School in Freehold, New Jersey. He is a three-time state finalist, twice in International Extemporaneous Speaking and once in Public Forum. Michael is a graduate of the University of Texas National Institute in Forensics (UTNIF) in the summer of 2005. The following spring, Michael placed 4th in the Tournament of Champions in Extemporaneous Speaking at Northwestern University and 5th in the National Forensics League Nationals in International Extemporaneous Speaking. An academic All-American, Michael also reached the level of Outstanding Distinction.

He has taught extemporaneous speaking at the Metropolitan Forensics Institute (MFI) at Seton Hall University in the summer of 2006 and at the National High School Institute (NHSI) at Northwestern University in the summers of 2007 and 2008. Currently a junior at Northwestern University, he maintains involvement through his high school's and Northwestern's speech teams. He is the Co-Tournament Director of the 2009 Tournament of Champions in Extemporaneous Speaking (TOC Extemp).

Mark Royce: Mark Royce was the runner-up in International Extemp in 2002 (and placed third in 2001). He then coached the event at Montgomery Bell Academy for several years and ran draw at its annual Round Robin. He earned his B.A. in European Studies from Vanderbilt University, his M.A. in International Affairs from American University, and this fall will enroll at George Mason University for his Ph.D. in Political Science.

Logan Scisco: Logan competed for four years for Danville High School in Danville, Kentucky where he was coached by Mr. Steve Meadows. He also competed for two and a half years for Western Kentucky University. He was the 2003 NFL United States Extemporaneous Speaking Final Round National Champion, a CFL finalist, a two-time NFA finalist in college, a two-time Kentucky state champion in extemporaneous speaking, a two-time MBA invitee, and was a four-time qualifier to CFL Nationals in extemp and a four-time qualifier to NFL Nationals in U.S. Extemp. He has coached two Kentucky state extemporaneous speaking champions, an MBA finalist, eleven extemp national qualifiers, a CFL finalist, and a NFL finalist (IX). He currently teaches social studies at Grant County High School in Dry Ridge, Kentucky and coaches for Grant and Boone County high schools.

Topic #1: How did you prepare for NFL Nationals?

Garson: I think it's important to remember that everyone prepares in a very different way. Above all else, every extemper needs to know his/her groove. Nationals was doing my Finals Week and graduation, so I had academic obligations to tend to as well. Therefore, the only way I could get my time in was to make sure I was enjoying it. As a competitor, I hated practice speeches, so I didn't do them. The three or four weeks before were spent reading and reading and reading. I only carried two boxes, so I never filed that much. I focused almost exclusively on journal articles and books. I so doubted my ability to every esoteric topic that I relied on developing a keen understanding of the multiple trends throughout different regions and the world.

Royce: I was very fortunate to have nearly a month to prepare, since my school let out so early. In addition to the usual clipping and filing, I constructed speech outlines according to the formula I outline in "Extemporaneous Speaking at NFL Nationals," available on this site. Both at home, to my mother, and at CDE pre-nats camp I gave practice speeches leading up to the tournament, probably between forty and fifty total.

Scisco: Over my four years of attending NFL my preparation was spotty. For three years I would do a few speeches after CFL and that was it. My junior year my preparation was more focused, as I gave a speech about each of the thirteen topic areas, with my questions written by my coach. I found this to be incredibly helpful as I was able to test out some ideas and theories that I would use in actual rounds. I remember specifically that a framework I practiced on how to handle a question on state economies came back to help me greatly in round eight that year in Atlanta when I drew a question about what states could do to help their economic problems. Therefore, I greatly recommend that extempers give lots of speeches before the tournament, one on each topic area so they learn what they need to work on in the weeks leading up to the tournament. I have used this strategy with great success with the extempers I have had qualify to NFL the last two years.

Topic Area #2: What do you believe is the best strategy for getting out of prelims?

Garson: I had a really risky strategy for prelims. Coming off my performance at TOC, I realized two things: 1. 9 speeches in two days is mentally draining and 2. the only way to survive is pace. I knew that I had to pace myself and couldn't go full-tilt for all 6 prelims and expect to have anything left for outrounds. It is my hope that the readers understand what it means to go "full-tilt". Extemp should be an exhausting activity, when done right. I applied just enough of myself mentally to survive and advance. With that, I also knew that the schematic is a crapshoot. I didn't know who was "good" and who was "bad", because many competitors come from nowhere. I did what I could and I did what I needed to.

Royce: Perfect your technique and do what you always do. I simply spoke, seldom giving much thought to what round I was in.

Scisco: In prelims you are going to be put in flighted rooms. This means that you compete against four other competitors in your section, but the judges who judge you have to judge both flights, which means 10-11 competitors in total. If you end up in the second flight, judges are sick and tired of hearing speeches. I love extemp and even I do not know if I want to listen to ten speeches about the U.S. economy. With this in mind, you need to be engaging and memorable. You do not necessarily have to be funny, I never was. However, you do need to be passionate about the issues you are talking about. If you go in dull that will be your downfall.

However, I have found that the best way to get out of prelims is to have a solid structure, be smooth with your delivery, and be engaging with your audience. That will get you into the top 60 and the tournament resets at that point.

Topic Area #3: What rounds of the tournament do you believe are the most critical?

Garson: I don't know about "critical", but I found the octafinals to be the most dangerous. Getting a tough room and giving a relatively bad speech can bounce even the best of extempers. Also, getting those "1"s and "2"s are crucial to building a cushion to protect you in later outrounds.

Scisco: I have always said that semi-finals decides the tournament and I am not backing off of that statement. Finals has more ballots, but as far as positioning for the final goes, I believe semis is more important psychologically. You get ten ranks in semi-finals and these days cross-examination is to be employed in semi-finals (they forgot to last year) so this round becomes even more critical. I have known extempers who came out of quarters in first place and picked up loads of bad ranks and failed to final. For all elimination rounds at NFL you need to adopt this strategy: get the 1's. Since NFL is a cumulative tournament you MUST try to win every round. You need as many judges as possible to give you 1's so that you can build distance between yourself and other competitors. In semi-finals, if you manage to go straight 1's or close to it, you can gain a ton of ground on the other thirteen people who are in it. Although obtaining straight 1's in semi-finals is nearly impossible, you have to avoid 5's, 6's, and 7's. Those will tank your score and put you behind the eight ball well before you get to the final round (if you get there at all).

Topic Area #4: How do you cope with the pressure of being in semi-finals/finals?

Garson: I've said in multiple writings that every extemper has their "oh #\$\$%" moment. I had mine at TOCs, so I was immune to it. Going into a tournament knowing that I can hold my own was a huge psychological advantage.

My second semifinals speech was the int'l econ round. I got a question on how to fix the third world and I focused mainly on the problems and pitfalls of globalization. It was early in the morning and most of the people were really wiped out from a long week. I knew that my strength was energy and personability, so I ripped off a few jokes about Britney Spears and Starbucks as primary causes of third world poverty. I knew that the only I would get out of those rounds was to be myself. Extempers often try to reinvent themselves, because they think they have to. In the end, I tried to be the same extemper and not stray from what made me successful.

Royce: Just doing what I always do, but I might add specifically that many semi-finalists, most of whom have never been there before, tend to tense up and become robotic. Just relax, smile, and try to genuinely enjoy yourself. Act human: don't speak like a computer.

Scisco: I was freaked out about being in semi-finals my sophomore year in 2002 and honestly, I was just happy to be there. Although I did okay, I was beaten very soundly by Jay Ward and Amanda Knight in both of my semi-finals and exited the tournament after round 12. I found it easier to focus the next year in 2003 since I had already been there.

I always tell my students before big rounds that if they were not nervous they would not be human. Stress is part of extemp, especially because as an extemper you have no idea what you

draw and everyone worries about being forced to speak on something they do not know much about in front of lots of people. If you make finals, the night beforehand feels like being on death row. It is very hard to get sleep and you keep playing scenarios of different speeches over and over in your head. Everyone goes into the final not wanting to screw up, since they do not want to be the person on the tape that everyone looks at years later and says "How did that person get there?" However, keep in mind that even for these big rounds that the event and what you have to do does not change. It is the same structure and the same seven minute speech. Just follow through with the basics and have fun, especially in finals, because you never know if you will get this opportunity again.

Topic Area #5: Any suggestions on how to handle CX?

Garson: Never ask the "last question". Ask a series of direct questions that could lead to a contradiction. Instead of asking the last question to reveal the fallacy/inaccuracy/contradiction, don't. Asking the last question gives your opponent a chance to wiggle out. Judges are smart enough to see what you're doing and will respect the strategy.

Royce: I discuss that in detail in my article, so I might simply refer readers to the above.

Scisco: The NFL may not like me saying this, but you do get told before the final round not to use CX to make your opponent look bad (or at least we were told this prior to the 2003 final). While I agree CX should not be used for personal attacks or to embarrass your opponent, I do believe that it serves a function of exposing the analytical flaws in an opponent's argument. The best thing you can do in CX is to include some facts your opponent glanced over in their speech in your question. For example, in Barkley Forum finals in 2004 I CX'd a speech on India-Pakistan. The speech argued that India-Pakistan relations were stabilizing, but in my CX I included the fact that two of the three wars India and Pakistan fought had been over Kashmir and this played well with the judges. If your answering questions, I suggest always hitting back to your answer, be clear in the position your advocating (NEVER straddle the fence), and hit back to parts of your speech. Do not forget about your speech in CX, relate your answers to your opponents question back to the analysis you just spent seven minutes explaining.

Topic Area #6: What is your overall description of the NFL Nationals experience?

Garson: Everyone's is different. Without a real coach and coming from an "un-predigreed" school, my coach treated it as a vacation. When I wasn't competing, I was sitting by the pool and skimming the Economist. While trying to squeeze in practice speeches may be the preferred schedule, I was as relaxed as anybody at the tournament.

Royce: The biggest, longest, hardest, but greatest speech and debate tournament. A league of its own.

Scisco: NFL is an endurance test, it is the way the tournament is built. By semi-finals everyone is tired and people start making mistakes. Everyone's fluency starts to go and people are not as sharp as they were for round one. You also do not get a lot of sleep at the tournament, especially because postings sometimes go up late and then you have to be back early in the morning. It is fun to look back at and realize that you went through so many rounds and it is an interesting experience to sit in the finals room and reflect on the other 190+ competitors who are no longer there that started with you in the gym on Monday morning. However, be prepared to be mentally drained by the end of the tournament.

Topic Area #7: What makes NFL Nationals different than any other major tournament (MBA, TOC, local state tournament)?

Garson: I don't think anything. It is very large, very long, and very diverse. While it is considered the "national" championship, I hesitate to build it up over any other highly-competitive tournament.

Royce: Nationals is of singular size, length, geographic diversity, number of rounds, and objectivity. No one wins Nationals by being rich or having lots of friends on the national circuit.

Scisco: It's larger than any field you will compete against all year and you compete against people from all around the world (i.e. Saipan and Guam). You hit people who you may never have seen before that pack a mean punch, because there are people who do not travel the national circuit. There is also \$6,000 on the line in scholarship money, but nobody thinks about that while the tournament is going on.

Topic Area #8: What is your favorite NFL memory?

Garson: I'll give two.

First, the 30 minutes before draw of the final round. We were at the Hyatt Regency ballroom, and everyone was congratulating me and wishing me luck. Seeing people I knew from camps, tournaments etc. reinforced the notion of "family". It was a great way to end my career. Steve Moss came over and reiterated something I remember him telling me 15 months prior, "Only 6 competitors (IXers and DXers I suppose makes 12) finish their career on a stage. Only 6 (12) people have their career end with someone saying their name. The hundreds of other people end their career hearing their name NOT called. You will end your career never being told you weren't good enough". I'd be lying if I didn't say those words were echoing in my mind throughout all outrounds.

Second, I went down to Dallas with my advisor and a fellow competitor from my high school. In all honesty, my mom was my de facto coach. Though she never saw me give practice speeches, she would talk to me about politics and challenge me. She also was my emotional rock and knew exactly what to say, when to say it, and how to say it. My dad was a rhetoric major in college, and he always knew how to light up a crowd. Growing up in my house was get preparation because my mom was the mind and my father was the face. Anyway, I called them before and after every round. Once I told them that I broke to finals, my mom said that she and my dad already booked a flight to Dallas. They flew down that night and watched my final round speech. I have a particularly fondness for this moment not just because it's dramatic or to give props to Mr. and Mrs. Garson. Instead, it reminds me (and hopefully the readers) that extemp takes place in a larger context. Family, and friends, are more important than any shiny pieces of plastic and pewter. My parents never let me forget that, even if it required a last-minute flight to Dallas.

Royce: Either my Finals speech my junior year or winning Wake Forest as a senior. Those were the two mountaintops.

Scisco: I have a lot of great memories from NFL, but I would have to say that the highlight is having my name called at awards for winning the final round of U.S. extemp. I was disappointed when they called me off in third place, but I remember on my way back in line I said

“I’ve got a chance [to win the final round trophy].” (Since usually only the top 4 have a shot at winning it). When they called my name it completely changed my mood, but that’s not what stood out as much as realizing that all the work I had put into that season paid off and that was a feeling I’ll never forget, especially because I never believed I would be holding the final round trophy.

<p>Topic Area #9: If you could have one moment back in your NFL Nationals career what would it be and why?</p>

Garson: I only got to NFLs my senior year as New Jersey was an extremely competitive district. I qualified for NFLs by 1 rank and skipped my hs graduation to attend. Considering the way everything panned out, I wouldn't change a thing. If I fixed one fluency break, added one more source, or truncated one necessary sentence, it wouldn't have been what it was.

Royce: I moved immediately following the tournament, and have since lamented that I did not properly bid farewell to all my high school friends. In the midst of ambition, do not ever let life pass you by.

Scisco: This might sound incredibly dumb, but I really wish I had not signed my district contract for U.S. extemp in 2004 and had signed for International extemp instead. Although I did U.S. extemp for four years, I believe that I was much better at handling International issues and after 2003 had very little to achieve more of in U.S. extemp. I never accepted the challenge of International extemp and not giving it a shot to this day still bugs me.

On Developing Style

By: Sebastian Pyrek

Being a speaking event, extemp relies not only on substance but also on style. The process of becoming better at the event is an uphill struggle, with each step becoming more difficult to grasp than the previous, but yet there is something that many extempers will overlook or save for very end that could be developed earlier along with the other facets of the event: style. Observing the final rounds of the higher extemp championships demonstrates the varied styles that each speaker has, and these varied styles reach the final because they work well at uniquely setting the speaker apart in prelims and outrounds. But don't let yourself think that completely emulating these styles will land you the championship spot at the state or national level. The point behind the event is about finding a way to place *yourself* into the information, and this is the way that developing a style should be viewed.

For many judges, watching a round of extemp can be tedious, and even for those judges that are seasoned veterans and extemp junkies, a round that contains identical styles can be just as tedious to rank. A good extemper is one who has the ability to stand out, and this becomes harder to do at higher levels because once prelims are finished, when almost all of the competitors have some sort of merit in the event. The author of this article struggled with this fact for most of his career, and was only able to win his state's title after having realized the importance of a unique style (with the help of his coach) a week before the state finals.

Though a style can be forced, this may not be the best strategy because it will not be genuine and the speaker may have a hard time maintaining it during stressful situations. The most effective style is best achieved by finding what comes naturally to the speaker. For me, it was a slightly less formal tone with sarcastic, yet tasteful humor. I had spent a good part of three seasons trying to analyze and formally explain what I was trying to argue, and though this worked well enough, it wasn't the way that I naturally thought which caused problems when the pressure began to mount.

The best styles are those that mix what the speaker does well and is comfortable with, along with what will help the speaker do well. A speech that is all humorous or all analytical may be what the speaker feels most comfortable with, but it will not allow them to win the final round on most occasions. The important point is to include what you are comfortable with so you don't feel completely out of your comfort zone; this will provide comfort when it counts most.

This is also not something I would recommend to look for the week before a big tournament. Finding the perfect balance takes dozens of practice rounds and much trial and error to find the perfect balance of what works, and what comes naturally. It may also help to have multiple opinions throughout the process, because the most effective balance is one that will work with the widest audience of judges because the judging pool is a dangerous variable for nearly every extemper. I know of extempers who would videotape themselves or record their speeches and then critique themselves also (though this will not work for everyone). During the practice process, it may be helpful to involve interp judges for stylistic commentary (be prepared to take certain things with a grain of salt, but I found interp people to be vital in my own process).

Finally, remember not to get discouraged. Extemp is not an easy event, and most of the enjoyment should come out of the process that it takes you to reach the point where you can make the final round at every tournament or to win every tournament.

2009 NFL Nationals International Extemp Topic Area Analysis

By Omar Qureshi

1: Western and Eastern Europe

This topic area is different than in years past. Generally Western Europe gets its own topic area, and Eastern Europe is more closely linked with the Russia topic area. I can't say that I consider the way that it is formatted this year is a particularly good idea. In any case, this is truly a behemoth of a topic area. Regional sources such as *The Times of London*, *The Guardian Unlimited*, *Der Spiegel*, and *the Scotsman* are all helpful places to go.

It is very important to be attentive to national politics in countries throughout Europe. Great Britain, in particular is in the middle of a wild political storm. With the Member of Parliament spending scandal shaking up public opinion, it is important to look to analyze the specific impacts of the scandal on political parties and political will. Individual national political issues in Europe will be important to the more powerful countries in Western Europe- Germany, Italy, France, and Spain.

Despite how passé it is, it seems as though the national tournament tends to dwell on EU expansion. Here it is a good idea to cover up on the basics- whether or not the EU is at a point where expansion is a good idea. Similarly, be sure to address Eastern European countries like Ukraine and Georgia. These countries have strong movements for EU integration; however they are still facing problems with Russia as well as domestic political opposition.

The fourth of June will bring European and European Council elections. It seems likely that smaller parties will be more successful than in years past. These elections are also important because they give a preliminary indicator of how the EU is likely to mature over the next few years. Pay close attention to the economic agenda being pushed in these elections.

From the perspective of Eastern Europe, it is prudent to note the structures of power domestically. This means analyzing whether or not countries like Kazakhstan, Ukraine, Georgia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Also, I think that the tournament will address the progress of Kosovo- domestically and internationally. Serbian nationalism, too, has been a major issue. Serbia is not doing very well economically. I am fairly certain that there will be a focus on the direction Serbia is going to progress in: whether it is economic progress or a continued level of fierce nationalism without political accomplish.

There is another large area that needs to be addressed when discussing Europe: Russia. However, I will address this in the Russia topic area analysis.

Practice Questions:

1. Will Brown's code of conduct legislation salvage the tarnished image of the Labour Party?
2. Can the Saakashvili government avert chaos?
3. Is Turkey making progress towards EU integration?
4. What effect will the recent European elections have on regulatory banking legislation?
5. Can Bosnian Serbs retain autonomy?

2. Russia

Russia is stirring up quite a storm in the international political community. Russia has tremendous power in the international order. I expect the questions at nationals to reflect the nature of Russia's power globally. Last year all the rage at nationals was evaluating Medvedev against Putin. This year I think that there will be a slightly different tone when addressing Russian leadership. Look to regional sources like *The Moscow Times*, *RIA Novosti*, and *Pravda*. First and foremost, make sure to fill your boxes with information on Russian natural gas control as well as the countries that they export the most amount of natural gas to. This information is tremendously significant because the more dependent a country is on Russian natural gas, the more political power Russia wields over that country. This should be the foundation of your analysis of Russian relations with Europe.

Along those same lines, also look for information detailing Russian oil pipelines to Western Europe. Pipelines from Russia that go through Eastern Europe are of special interest. Countries like Ukraine and Kazakhstan have recently had debate about increasing pipeline use fees, potentially making Russia pay more for the transit of its gas. Especially in Ukraine, Russia is pushing its political agenda. Of course, this is the case for quite a few Eastern European countries. Analysis pertaining to the pursuit of Russian interests in the domestic politics in Eastern Europe is very important.

The hottest issue in the eyes of the international community that Russia has been involved in has been Georgia. Continued involvement with Georgia- South Ossetia and Abkhazia- will certainly be an issue reflected in the questions at nationals. Russian human rights atrocities in Chechnya are also likely to be contained within this round.

In addition to western and eastern Europe, Russia's involvement in international treaties and organizations are also important. Russia's position in the WTO talks to be held in St. Petersburg will be of tremendous importance. Also, look to Russia's position towards current and potential NATO allies. Russian involvement will also be necessary if there is to be any progress made on the successor treaty to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty which is soon set to expire. While it is still important to compare and contrast Dmitry Medvedev and Vladimir Putin, it is more important to consider the state of Russia as a whole. Particularly, develop thoughts on whether or not the opposition parties in Russia can be considered legitimate threats. Also analyze the domestic economic situation. A large part of the Russian budget is derived from natural gas and oil- see how the money is being spent and how that is leading to popular support or a lack thereof.

Practice Questions:

1. How will Putin's recent talks with Tymoshenko shape Ukrainian politics?
2. Can Russia avoid the global economic turn down?
3. What's next for Russia in Georgia?
4. Does a legitimate opposition exist in Russia?
5. Has Medvedev brought legitimate legal reform to Russia?

3. Africa

This topic area is simultaneously simple and brilliant. Africa is one of the greatest challenges that the world faces. It is usually a very good round at nationals because it allows for analysis of truly perplexing problems. This past year has posed many challenges- new and old within the troubled continent. There is a lot of stuff to cover here- luckily, you will probably already have a lot of general information about warfare and disease within this trouble continent. Look to *allafrica.org* for regional news sources.

To begin, it is prudent to address issues of warfare and genocide within Africa. Sudan, Somalia, and Nigeria each have violent conflicts that I believe will be addressed by the questions at nationals. On Sudan, be sure to pay close attention to the conflict in the south which is escalating rapidly. Bear in mind that questions of this sort at nationals are often quite nuanced in that they focus on specific groups of actors. An example of this would be a question about Somalia with relation to Eritrean troops. I mean to say that you should expect the questions about genocide and war to pay particular attention to specific people, groups, or nongovernmental organizations. Political problems, too, will most certainly make their way into the questions at nationals. The Jacob Zuma government in South Africa has a plethora of challenges to face- from political opposition, crime, and the economy. Prepare to address political questions in Egypt, Congo, Kenya, and Niger. Robert Mugabe and Zimbabwe will most certainly make an appearance in this round. Also be sure to keep your African Union file up to date as questions about its usefulness have popped up in the news recently.

Invariably the two biggest issues in the news recently have been rampant disease and Somali pirates. Water shortage and sanitation have been particularly destructive throughout the continent. Quality and not quantity is very important when dealing with disease, malnutrition, water problems, and piracy. Search for thoughtful pieces of evidence with studies by researchers and opinions by top thinkers on how to best tackle these problems. General pieces of information from the *LA Times* aren't particularly helpful here. There is a tremendous amount of literature available on the topics in this paragraph. Unfortunately, a good chunk of it is quite useless to you and your boxes.

Practice Questions:

1. Have Shabab militants made extended conflict inevitable in Somalia?
2. Will Jacob Zuma effectively tackle the challenge of crime in South Africa?
3. Will the MDC continue to be a viable force in Zimbabwe?
4. How can clean water be distributed in Sub Saharan Africa?
5. Who is to blame for recent violence in southern Sudan?

4. The World: Challenges and Opportunities

This is without question my bet for the final round at nationals- though it is plausible that the final round will be the terrorism round. Though this topic area is better than last year's (just The World), it still isn't particularly fascinating. In any case, the words "challenges" and "opportunities" are quite helpful in narrowing down what is going to be contained. To a large extent the issues you cover in this topic area will also be a part of your preparation for all the other rounds of the tournament.

I definitely think that a question about the state of the global economy will be involved with this round. Needless to say, I would hope that the finalists (assuming my prediction is correct) are sure that they can be engaging with an economics topic before drawing it. I also expect there to be questions about the coming expiration of the Kyoto Protocol and the writing of its successor treaty. Read up on the hindrances involved with global cooperation on an environmental treaty. Nuclear non-proliferation is also a major issue to read up on for this round. Really look to sink into those deeply analytical journal articles for thoughts on a way to draft up a successor treaty to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Really go in for quality analysis here. A speech about nuclear non proliferation demands really thoughtful analysis. It is difficult for judges to swallow overly ambitious rhetoric on the issue of nuclear non proliferation. When analyzing nuclear weapons you should really consider the gravity of the topic at hand. It will allow you to give deft yet cautious analysis.

Global development is simultaneously a challenge and an opportunity for the world. I strongly believe that questions on international development organizations will be present at nationals. The World Bank and International Monetary Fund are two major organizations associated with development. Polish up on their current flaws as well as the potential benefit that these organizations can have. The United Nations is another group to think about in on the issue of global development. As Aaron Mattis and I can both attest to, the chances for a UN Human Rights question in the national final round is pretty high.

Another general area I think will be encompassed under this topic will be what I call global tragedies. AIDS, malnutrition, malaria, water, poverty, and famine are all major global issues. These are challenges that face a disturbingly large part of the global population. Be attentive to issues covered by the *International Crisis Group* and *Human Rights Watch*. The plight of the underdeveloped world is a very difficult topic area to tackle. When thinking about analysis for these topics be bold and take a stand. Make sure you read think tanks and expert opinions here.

Practice Questions:

1. Is the World Bank an effective organization in alleviating poverty?
2. Is the United Nations doing enough to combat AIDS globally?
3. Can the international community come to an agreement on a successor treaty to the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty?
4. Has the WTO fallen out of significance?
5. Can the world go green?

5. China, Taiwan, Japan, and the Koreas

In my opinion, this is a very well crafted topic area. It is pertinent, however, it is not too big or too small. Be sure to look at regional resources here. I'll give you a list of potentially helpful ones. *Yomiuri Shimbun*, *the Far Eastern Economic Review*, *the Japan Times*, *Hong Kong Standard*, *South China Morning Post*, *Chosun Ilbo*, and *Taipei Times*.

China's economic growth tends to always be a hot issue at nationals. Specific information concerning economic development and sustainability is an issue to be attentive towards. Also brush up on the economic relationship of China with Australia as it has been a very hot topic recently. Be very attentive to the way that the Chinese economic system is set up. Extempers cannot hope to just assume that the function of China's economy is identical to western free market economies. Find background in encyclopedias and information databases.

In terms of China it is also important to observe the way in which they interact with Tibet and Taiwan. On the issue of Tibet, China is particularly strict and aggressive. The government of China frequently denies basic human and political rights in Tibet. Tibet is a region that is struggling for solidarity. Taiwan on the other hand is a thriving territory. However, China has placed a ceiling on its expansion by attempting to get countries to isolate Taiwan. Both regions are of tremendous significance when analyzing China. Independently, extempers should consider the domestic, political situation in Taiwan; especially the recent shift to more moderate demands from China.

Japan is likely everything extempers would expect it to be: politics and the economy. Focusing on these areas will be very beneficial for the tournament. While you should be meticulous in your research, on Japan don't bend over backwards to find evidence on ridiculous issues for the country. For instance, you can probably skip over the article about the electrical grid. South Korea is much the same. Just patrol the regional news sources and be attentive to recurring issues. It seems that North Korea always jumps into the headlines during the time surrounding the NFL national tournament. This year is no different. Unlike Japan and South Korea, you should be

really attentive to all sorts of issues about North Korea. This is because the tight media restrictions in North Korea prevent a lot of information from coming out- so the stuff that does come out is tremendously important. Any news about food shortages and decreasing quality of life is very important. A question on North Korea should be approached with the help of a lot of think tanks and not just arbitrary newspaper reports.

Practice Questions:

1. How can social class discrimination better be combated in Japan?
2. Can political opposition gain political preeminence over the old political dynasties?
3. Are Chinese ties with Taiwan warming?
4. Is North Korea a legitimate nuclear threat to the west?
5. Will the Chinese economy be able to weather the global recession?

6. US Foreign Policy: The Foreign Perspective

Well this topic area is going to be fun. For the past 6 years international extempers could just give different variations on the same narrative in this round: a lot of the international community just didn't like Bush. With the election of Obama there is an enormous complication both in and out of extemp speeches. There is a tremendous amount of uncertainty as to what precisely Obama will bring to US foreign policy. This is reflected in the foreign perspective of US foreign policy. I cannot stress the importance of using think tanks and international sources enough within this topic area.

Literally the whole world is testable under this topic. Resultant from this is a lot of information to cover. A wise extemper would prepare for this round by looking for information on foreign opinion of USFP while researching all the other topic areas. Doing this will increase efficiency tremendously. Be wise in the perspectives you look at. For example, a question on a US missile defense system in the Czech Republic (a big issue last year) would require analysis of what the people want in the form of percentages. However, popular support is not enough. Look to what specific political actors are saying. Consider the question on a variety of levels relevant to the opinion of a country- economic, political, popular support, strategic defense, and benefits of support.

In light of Obama's recent speech at Cairo University- considered to be his Middle East address- prepared extempers should really be attentive towards the Middle East and the Muslim world under this topic area. I expect a good part of the rounds questions to come from the Middle East and Muslim world. It is an issue that is tremendously relevant, especially because of the media coverage surrounding the Obama speech. Also, I would spend a good time dealing with leftist countries in Central and South America.

This topic area can be overwhelming if you let it be. A good strategy to prevent this from being the case is watching Secretary of State Hillary Clinton like a hawk. The places she travels and the countries she addresses in her press briefings are all likely to be reflected in the questions at nationals. This topic area draws upon all the other topic areas and questions you on foreign perspectives. As a result, if you prepare well for the other rounds at nationals, this round will just require a bit more research.

Practice Questions:

1. Will Syrian ties with the US warm?
2. Has Colombia become disenfranchised by the Obama administration?
3. Will the United States hinder the development of a successor treaty to the Kyoto Protocol?

4. Has the US done enough to support Kosovo?
5. Is AFRICOM helpful to African states?

7. Central and South America

Again, I quite like this topic area. It is a big topic area, but it is by no means unmanageable. I have never been very successful in finding many country specific sources for Central and South America- thought there do exist some. However, one think tank that I find tremendously useful is *the Upside Down World*. It is a fantastic source that really gets into the meat of issues across Central and South America as well as Mexico and the Caribbean.

One thing that is fascinating about Central and South America is the similarity between countries. Leftist countries like Venezuela, Bolivia, and Nicaragua all have very charismatic leaders. They operate in similar ways and are in close dialogue with one another. There is a great deal of solidarity between these countries as they identify with each other. For right leaning countries there is a relatively favorable view of the United States. It is important not to get into the habit of making generalizations in extemp, but when it comes to this topic area it is important to keep in mind whether the country leans left or right (if you can make a distinction that is).

Research on charismatic leaders like Hugo Chavez, Lula De Silva, Evo Morales, and Daniel Ortega is very important. All of these high profile leaders have been in the news recently, and being able to give a deep analysis on Venezuela, Brazil, Bolivia, and Nicaragua necessitates a thorough understanding of these men and their policies. Similarly, look to the Kirchner family in Argentina. Really look to the background of the aforementioned leaders. Observe the context in which they are able to retain power as well as their ascent to power.

It is also a good idea to look to the natural resources within these countries. For example, oil in Venezuela and sugarcane in Brazil are tremendously important to the ways in which those countries function economically. When analyzing these questions at nationals really take a good look into the way that the countries are structured.

I believe that a considerable amount of the questions at nationals under this topic area will address individual national political questions. Approach these questions with a realization that some background built into your points is quite necessary. People who do not study South America often have a skewed idea of what happens in a country that is labeled as “leftist.” Being explicitly clear about what is happening in these countries is very important.

Practice Questions:

1. Is Hugo Chavez losing domestic support?
2. Is Lula De Silva bringing adequate social reform to Brazil?
3. Will the center left coalition be able to retain control in the upcoming Chilean election?
4. Can Kirchner salvage her image?
5. Is Colombia headed towards autocracy?

8. India, Pakistan, and SE Asia

So if this topic area is correct there will be no questions on Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, or Nepal (to name a few). I hope that this isn't the case. I would like to assume that the Indian subcontinent is included within this topic area. This is a ridiculously titled topic area and I think it would be very unfair to ask a question specifically about any of the aforementioned countries because they are not encompassed within this round- or in any round throughout this tournament. As you can see, I am very displeased with the way that this topic area is titled. Unfortunately,

nationals isn't always fair so be sure to prepare for those types of questions. Look to *The Times of India* and the Pakistani newspaper *Dawn*.

I believe that there will be quite a few questions on Pakistan (and potentially Afghanistan). Pakistan's stability is rapidly deteriorating. Waziristan, Baluchistan and Swat are all regions to be particularly attentive to when addressing the security problems in Pakistan. On top of security concerns, the current Pakistani government is weakening by the day. In preparation for this round of nationals really look to learn about the plethora of problems facing this troubled country. For Afghanistan, what will likely be questioned is the usual blend of terrorism, poor governance, and drugs.

Questions on India will likely be economic and political in nature. Look for regional sources to explain domestic problems in more depth. Despite its powerful technology sector, India is still very much an underdeveloped country- with problems ranging from sanitation to the remnants of the caste system. Be sure to recognize this in your analysis of India. Assuming that Nepal is going to be in question under this area, I would look to research a bit on what kind of political problems are occurring with the Maoists. Even though the topic area doesn't make any mention of a region including Nepal, I still think that it is wise to cover the country's political problem.

The term Southeast Asia is flexible, however, by all definitions I have read there is no mention of Sri Lanka-which is a bit problematic to me given the government's recent defeat of the Tamil Tigers. Again, I think that Sri Lanka will be testable. Other than that, my recommendation when looking towards Southeast Asia is to be attentive to political and humanitarian problems. Don't try to overextend yourself here. Obviously all the Southeast Asian countries have many problems, but for the most part just look towards the political and humanitarian ones.

Practice Questions:

1. How can the Pakistani government better control the violence in the Swat region?
2. Will Thailand sink back into political conflict?
3. Is the Malaysian government becoming more progressive?
4. What does the recent parliamentary victory of the Indian congress party mean for India?
5. Is East Timor progressing towards stability?

9. The Problem of International Terrorism

Though terrorism is so 2004, it is a very interesting new topic area for the NFL national tournament. I think that this is going to make for a very competitive round. As a result, I really hope that this round isn't used until late at nationals as I think that it will really bring out the best in extempers fighting for a spot in the final round(s) of the tournament. Nothing even similar to this topic area existed in any of my campaigns through the national tournament, so my ideas on what to look for might be a little off.

First of all, make sure that your analysis in this topic area comes from major think tanks and journals. Terrorism is a global subject (as the title of the round recognizes) and ought to be analyzed by looking towards in depth studies conducted by the top security and political scientist researchers in the world. *The Washington Quarterly*, *the Brookings Institution*, and the *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists* are all very good places to begin research. On a similar note, look towards international affairs journals published by elite universities throughout the US. I know that Harvard, Johns Hopkins, Georgetown, Yale, and Brown all offer very prestigious journals.

To begin with, I would place a lot of focus on looking at specific terrorist organizations. Don't just restrict yourself to Al Qaeda and the like. Terrorism is present in a variety of places by many different organizations. Be sure not to overlook international drug cartels- considered by many to be responsible for a lot of organized terrorism throughout the world. These terrorist groups exist across Europe as well as South America. Many would even consider revolutionary and separatist movements like the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka to be terror organizations. Though I passionately hate this phrase- "think outside the box" when researching international terror organizations.

Another area to focus on is aggressive measures of counterterrorism. The potential transit of nuclear weapons is a tremendous threat to the global community. Preventing terrorist organizations from getting their hands on a nuclear weapon is a very big concern. Along these same lines is the transit of biological and toxic weapons. Try to find thoughtful ways to limit the potential for these weapons to be proliferated. These issues will apply to a whole host of terrorist organizations.

It is also important to bear in mind the way that terrorist organizations are structured in terms of where they recruit and how they retain power. Keeping a running knowledge of this allows for a better means of explaining how to take these organizations down. When giving these speeches explain the specific threat that the terrorist organization you are addressing poses to the world.

Practice Questions:

1. What terrorist organization poses the greatest threat to the world?
2. What can be done to prevent the acquisition of biological and toxic weapons by terrorist organizations?
3. How is Al Qaeda maintaining its power?
4. How can drug related terrorism be decreased in South America?
5. How safe is the world from nuclear terrorism?

10. The World Economy

This is a very necessary topic. Though I am glad that it is used year after year, this is often a round where extempers fumble. Not only does it ask for economic analysis, it asks for international economics- which is more complicated for a speech. Naturally, it is important to look at financial newspapers and reviews for help analyzing pressing economic issues in the world. *The Wall Street Journal, Bloomberg, the Financial Times, the Economist, and the Australian Financial Review* are all great resources for this topic area.

First and foremost, brush up on basic economics before jumping into this topic area. Extempers often face huge hurdles in that it is very difficult for them to clearly explain the economic significance of a policy or an exchange to a judge. Look up the basics on imports and exports as well as the nature of international banking (the Wikipedia pages will do) to gain a solid mental footing on international economics. In fact, if you come across a tough banking article really make sure you are comfortable explaining its content in a way that is understandable to the lay man. I cannot emphasize the importance of doing this enough.

As per the issues themselves, let's just put it this way- there are a lot of things to cover. A good place to start is with the IMF, WTO, and World Bank. These organizations encompass free trade and economic development, so it is natural that there will be questions about them. Questions on how to reform these institutions will certainly be an issue reflected in the questions at nationals. I

would also spend time researching international banks and addressing credit and liquidity issues as they are the largest problem facing the world economy today.

I also expect a good percentage of the questions in this round to be about the externalities of economic policies. Look to groups of countries or people being harmed by international economic policies. Observe why harm is taking place and to what countries are benefitted by the policy employed. The creation of social inequality due to economic policies is a recurring theme in international economics. On a similar note, environmental harms resultant from economic policies is perfect material for a few questions at nationals.

On a final note, try to find ways to think of strategies to make a question about international economics engaging. Every extemper has a different way of doing this; however in a round about economics this is particularly important.

Practice Questions:

1. Is the World Trade Organization losing its relevance?
2. How can the ECB recover?
3. Is the IMF still significant?
4. What impact will Russia's recent economic downturn have on regional economies?
5. What can be done to increase liquidity among Southeast Asian countries?

11. Science, Technology, and the Environment

Oh boy. Last year the topic area was just about the environment. I have no idea why science and technology is included in this round. This is an awful topic area because science and technology are thrown in. I find this topic area to be awful. *The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists* is the only place I know that gives relevant scientific analysis with reference to the international community.

There are a lot of things to cover under the environment. First and foremost, the drafting of a successor treaty to the Kyoto Protocol is something that every extemper must have in their boxes. Be attentive to the countries that are hindrances to the development of international agreement on the reduction of dangerous emissions. Take note of what a future treaty must take into account to avoid the implementation problems of the Kyoto Protocol. Be very meticulous in your study of unifying the world under the mission of reducing emissions. I imagine that a large part of this topic area will have to do with developing a long term sustainable solution to global warming.

The environment is much more than just global warming however. You should take this topic area to include a plethora of issues from pollution and its impact on usable water to harm to animals. I would just suggest that you look through scientific magazines for this type of information. Be very clear on how you explain problems and solutions in your speeches though. It is often very difficult for a judge to swallow bits of scientific analysis when addressing environmental problems.

I doubt that the science and technology portion of this round will be anything particularly invasive. Look to the stuff reflected in the news headlines of *the New York Times*, *the Christian Science Monitor*, and *the Times of London*. From those headlines I would recommend making a list of topics you are unsure about and engaging in more specific research. I would also look to diseases throughout the world as they might be testable under science. Again, this round hasn't existed in any of my trips to the national tournament, so I can't say specifically what I think will be covered.

Practice Question:

1. How can carbon markets make both ecological and economic sense?
2. What is the biggest hindrance to a new global environmental protocol?
3. What can be learned from the Kyoto Protocol?
4. How can AIDS medication be more effectively distributed in Africa?
5. Has the threat of the Swine Flu passed?

12. Canada, Mexico, and the Caribbean

This topic area looks awfully dull. With the exception of Mexico there really hasn't been any level of true excitement in Canada or the Caribbean. Luckily there are a lot of resources to look to for a speech about Canada and Mexico given their proximity to the US (and because Canada is an English speaking country). Every major city in Canada has a reasonably good newspaper to look to. *The Montreal Gazette* and the *Toronto Star* are both really good newspapers.

Mexico is facing a whole host of large problems. First and foremost is the burgeoning drug trade in the region. On top of the drug trade is violence that is undermining the security structure of the country as a whole. Rampant corruption is also a result of drug cartels. All of these problems stem out of the drug trade. Make sure to spend a good chunk of time researching and understanding the nature of the drug trade and all of the problems that it creates for the country. Being able to critically analyze drug cartels is an enormous asset going into the national tournament. Felipe Calderon is facing strong opposition because- among other factors- his inability to deal with drug cartels. Also bear in mind that Zapatista groups are calling for autonomy in the southernmost province of Mexico, Chiapas.

I believe that the questions on Canada will be about the political and economic situation. Be attentive to the fact that Canada is doing quite well economically, in spite of what is happening throughout the rest of the world. Moreover, Canadian politics should be approached in a way similar to the way that an extemper would approach American politics. For the most part the same concerns over crime, welfare, and the shifting role of the government are atop the concerns for the country of Canada.

Haiti and Cuba will be big issues when referring to the Caribbean. Haiti faces perpetual problems because of riots and organized crime. Cuba is nearing a major transition period, so I am sure that there will be a question or two about it at nationals. For the rest of the Caribbean, just look to major political issues as it is unrealistic to go any deeper than that.

Practice Questions:

1. How can drug violence in Mexico be reduced?
2. Should Chiapas be granted autonomy?
3. How can Canada reduce organized crime?
4. Will a post-Castro Cuba be a legitimate democracy?
5. Is Haiti becoming a more stable country?

13. The Middle East

The Middle East is my favorite topic area at the national tournament. Extempers always seem to be well versed on the pressing issues within this very exciting topic area. It really needs no introduction. There are a lot of great sources to look into. Look towards the *Middle East Times*,

the Tehran Times, the Middle Eastern Review of International Affairs, the Jerusalem Post, and Haaretz for information.

Obama's recent speech to the Muslim world has some significance to the Middle East in relation to the United States. I mean this in terms of Middle Eastern governments' responsiveness to diplomatic efforts by the west. Look to the views of individual countries' governments, and see if they are more likely to be open to dialogue and problem resolution as a result of Obama taking office. Though you might not get a question specifically on this, it will be helpful for your analysis.

It is also very important to look towards Israel. Israeli sentiment towards the United States doesn't appear to be very positive. Similarly with the election of Netanyahu, look to the more defensive measures employed by Israel and the impact that will have on relations with regional actors- namely Palestine, Syria, and Lebanon. Analyzing the aforementioned countries with relation to Israel will be beneficial for a number of questions.

Naturally, brush up on your Iraq file. Many extempers have a ton of information on Iraq. I would strongly recommend that you get rid of redundant information as well as information from weaker sources. Find solid journal and think tank articles to fill your Iraq file. It is a country that demands nuanced analysis that simply isn't accessible from a *USA Today* article from April. Iran is another country to be wary about. Be very precise about what kind of sources you have in your boxes on this topic. Make sure that you don't have a bundle of useless sources to slow down your preparation.

Social justice is another concern to be aware of when addressing the Middle East. The plight of women and religious minorities is a problem in quite a few Middle Eastern countries. These are issues that often go unaddressed in extemp boxes amid all the other political problems. However, an awareness of social injustice allows for analysis to be more attentive to the realities of many Middle Eastern countries.

Practice Questions:

1. Will the opposition succeed in Iran's presidential election?
2. What does Netanyahu mean for Israeli-Syrian relations?
3. Is Hezbollah still the dominant military presence in Lebanon?
4. Is Saudi Arabia taking legitimate steps in guaranteeing women's rights?
5. Can the UAE economy survive the current economic crisis?

2009 NFL Nationals

United States Extemp Topic Area Analysis

By Colin West & Logan Scisco

EDITOR'S NOTE: Due to some topic areas being reused on a yearly basis by the National Forensic League, some of Colin's analysis that appeared on Extemp Central's website last year was pieced into this topic area analysis.

As was done for the Catholic Forensic League (CFL) national tournament, Extemp Central provides you with this topic area analysis for the United States extemp portion of next week's NFL national tournament in Birmingham, Alabama. While it appears this year that there will be a stronger overall pool of talent in International extemp, conforming to the normal pattern of the last decade that does not mean that International extemp is the harder tournament to navigate.

When people ask me which area of extemp I think is harder to win at NFL, I always answer United States extemp. My decision could be biased, as I did United States extemp all four years (although I regret never dabbling in International extemp), but I do believe that United States extemp has more variables tied into achieving a high level of performance than International extemp for two reasons.

First, it is very difficult to write thirteen rounds of questions about the United States. Yes, we are a great country and many of the things that take place here establish policy that significantly alters the globe. However, trying to come up with nearly thirty questions per round about issues only in the United States is very difficult. This is compounded by a problem all extempers are familiar with at some local tournaments: a lack of quality questions. I remember senior year the first question I drew was "*Why does the right hate public education?*" I also have encountered questions about whether prisoners should have to work, questions about timber companies, and questions about water problems in Utah. All of these questions show that there is a depth to U.S. extemp that can get very nit picky and there might come a time in the tournament when an extemper is going to be forced to talk about an issue they may never have heard of or not have a lot of substantial material to support a speech in their file boxes.

Second, most judges are more familiar with topics found in U.S. extemp rounds than International extemp rounds. If an informal poll was conducted at the national tournament, I would be willing to bet that there are more judges who know about the current Supreme Court nominee than about Britain's expenses scandal. This presents U.S. extempers with two issues. The first issue is that judges are going to be somewhat aware of what you are talking about so it is harder for those extempers to "b.s." their way through rounds (although that may work to many educated competitors advantage). Another issue is that for some topics, such as abortion, affirmative action, etc. that are quite controversial, judges have biases that are tough to shake. I remember drawing abortion, Title IX, and slave reparations in round ten of NFL my junior year and I am convinced that the bad topic draw I achieved in that round and the biases my judges were bound to have, was part of the reason why my cumulative score took a hit.

To assist extempers to navigating the tournament, this topic area analysis hopes to serve as a preview of what extempers can expect to see in each round and provide some practice questions so they can be ready for next week's event. Keep in mind, these are only predictions and opinions of the writers based on our prior experiences at the tournament. We can be wrong, but I

would like to say that most of our predictions about last year's topics (and my prediction about the Health topic being the CFL semi-final or final topic area) were right.

Topic Area #1: Education and Issues of Youth

When preparing for this topic area, it is easy to become fixated on the first half of the title and neglect the ambiguous words following the ampersand. Clearly, education is an important issue, and if past precedent continues, at least 60% of the questions in this round will focus on educational issues. To prepare for these topics, try to go beyond the staples of No Child Left Behind, Charter Schools and College Aid. Look at graduation and retention rates, inner city schools, the effects of Teach For America, and American Student's standing in the world. Also, be aware that it is quite popular to critique America's current educational practices, as there are many metrics showing that our students are underperforming. To stand out in an education round, consider (if it is appropriate to the question) offering new ideas or solutions instead of simply bemoaning the status quo. Finally, remember that of the issues covered in National Extemp, education is perhaps one of the most impacted by local politics. Instead of focusing your speech and your proposed solutions on National initiatives, discuss the impact that city governments and school boards can have. Compare the policies of various state governments to see which have been more effective. And remember, many of the judges at the National Tournament are either debate coaches, former debate coaches, or assistant coaches, all of whom are likely to have spent time teaching at a public or private high school. Education issues may resonate with them quite strongly, particularly ones which pertain to teacher's pay and benefits or governmental curriculum oversight.

It is also notable here for extempers to think about how the current state of the economy could impact the education system. Across the country, teachers are losing their jobs and afterschool programs are being cut as school districts budgets are collapsing due to poorly performing state economic structures. Looking at state budget pictures, and discovering case studies of how these budget cuts are impacting the education structure will provide some unique and insightful analysis into the problems confronting American education and some solutions we might want to implement to keep educational funding intact.

As for the "Issues of Youth" component, ask yourself what national policy issues have impacted you and your peers. Use your personal experience to your advantage in brainstorming potential topics. This topic area commonly includes questions about drug use, drug prevention, and teen pregnancy. It is also a reasonable place to expect questions about gangs, school violence, and anti-bully initiatives. California's recent efforts to curb youth spending on violent video games might appear in this topic area as well if it does not arise as an epic constitutional question. But this is just the surface. Unlike an education topic where you may find yourself speaking to relative experts (teachers), when you speak on a "youth issues" topic, you are speaking as one who may have recently experienced these things. Do not be afraid to describe other issues that you think might be at play, as long as they are relevant to the topic. The judge will be impressed at your unique insight. But as always, try to balance these personal analytics with expert opinion and reported data. A good way to supplement your usual articles for this area is to cut and highlight some evidence from peer-reviewed studies of adolescent and child psychology, or on youth social behavior.

Practice Questions

1. Should No Child Left Behind be modified?
2. Have efforts nationwide to stop bullying been effective?

3. How can the U.S. do a better job at stopping teen drug use?
4. Should the federal government put tuition caps on public universities?
5. How can U.S. schools better compete with their international counterparts?

Topic Area #2: America: Challenges and Opportunities

Did someone just say finals topic? If so, then your right. This **IS** going to be the finals topic, no and's, if's, or but's about it. How can I tell this? Because the topic is so broad. However, at least the topic area this year tries to sound engaging. Extempers who are aware of last year's topic area analysis remember Colin and I bemoaning "America" and "the World." Typically, the finals topics for U.S. extemp cover a wide range of issues, from trade and economic policy to hard hitting social topics such as poverty, illegal immigration, and Social Security. When PER/ASPA was the U.S. extemp sponsor, there were a lot of questions about public policy, but that seems to have evaporated with their sponsorship the last several years.

In preparing for this round, I would recommend that extempers try to identify some of the domestic situations that will cause the Americans to make tough choices in the coming years. Such situations could be entitlement reform, troubling social questions such as gay marriage or how to contain extremist groups (a topic ever more present after the Tiller abortion killing), whether to reform the Electoral College, how America can successfully win the war on terrorism, and how racial relations could be improved. Think broad for this topic area because the questions will most likely be broad and force you to identify or break down policies and the motivations behind those policies.

Also, since these questions will ask you to assess both the current and future direction of America, you may find it useful to get a generic CIA factbook profile of the United States for your boxes and a profile from the *Index of Economic Freedom* for your boxes as well. These can provide some statistics that can be quickly referenced in case you would like to use those statistics to advocate the chances of a particular policy succeeding or failing.

If you are skilled and/or lucky enough to hit this topic area, then I wish you Godspeed and hearty congratulations on joining the elite club of NFL finalists.

Practice Questions

1. What is the American dream?
2. Have affirmative action policies been beneficial for America?
3. Should America welcome or fear the rise of China?
4. How can the polarization that exists in American politics end?
5. Is it time for America to get serious about entitlement reform?

Topic Area #3: The American War on International Terrorism

While the Obama administration would probably not want us to use the term "war on terrorism" anymore, the NFL has retained it for this topic area. What makes the wording of this topic area interesting is that it assumes that the war on international terrorism is a U.S.-led effort. Similarly, it is going to be interesting how the NFL question writers differentiate which topics to use in this round and then in the National Defense and Homeland Security round.

Because of its absence from the topic areas this year, I see this as the major foreign policy round in U.S. extemp. The questions that emerge in this round will probably be how America can work

with its allies overseas such as Saudi Arabia, Great Britain, and Pakistan to resolve international terrorism. Questions dealing with America's use of international bodies such as the United Nations or initiatives such as the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) may also come into play here.

While the biased assumption to make about this topic area is that it will only be focused on the Middle East, extempers should not forget that there is a major conflict against terrorism occurring in South Asia. I would go as far as to suggest that questions about insurgent actions in Afghanistan, the Taliban's actions in Pakistan, and the defeat of the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka are this year's equivalent to the Hezbollah, Hamas, and al-Qaeda topics of yesteryear. Also, if there is a round where U.S. extempers could talk about Somali piracy it might be this round.

Although North Korea or Iran could pop up in this round I do not expect them to. The only chance of that happening is if extempers were dealt a question about the propensity of either government to give nuclear arms to terrorist groups. However, due to these countries having a more an implication for U.S. defensive policies in the Middle East and East Asia, I do not anticipate seeing those countries pop up here. I also anticipate that any questions extempers get about Iraq and Afghanistan will be directly about their role in fighting terrorism. Extempers should not forget that. It is an instinctive reaction to see those questions and immediately want to discuss your favorite issue relating to Iraq or Afghanistan, but you must stay focused on the terrorism aspect. If you do not discuss how the stability of either country's government relates to the issue of terrorism and simply want to discuss why their governments are bad or imploding then you are not answering the question at hand.

Topic areas like these are why domestic extempers should still clip news sources from other countries. For example, cutting Al Jazeera may have some more local analysis about al Qaeda elements. Cutting newspapers from the AllAfrica database will provide some regional insights into the stability of the Somali government and the impact piracy has had on the region. After all, if you give a speech about foreign issues and only have American news references, how do you know your really getting the full perspective on an issue?

Practice Questions

1. How important is it that the U.S. know where Pakistan's nuclear arsenal is located?
2. Has the U.S. fought the war on terrorism too unilaterally?
3. How can the U.S. improve its public relations deficit with the world's Muslims?
4. Should the U.S. be willing to talk directly with Hamas?
5. Should the U.S. do more to help Somalia?

Topic Area #4: Science, Technology, and the Environment

Like the Education category, it is easy to misread this phrase as simply "The Environment." Preparing for the scientific topics is every bit as important. Expect questions which ask about public policy implication of recent scientific developments, as well as questions about the state of scientific research and education in America. Some time reading and printing journals like Nature or Scientific American will help you in this area, even if you are not a science person, as these and other publications generally contain articles summarizing recent developments in science and technology before delving into the complicated details. Naturally, you do not want to find yourself discussing much scientific theory in an extemp speech, but if you can cite a scientific journal as part of your evidence for the efficacy or economic benefits of some new technology, you will sound much more convincing than someone still pulling citations from Newsweek.

Do not, of course, neglect the environment; after all there is considerable overlap between the two fields. Many questions about the environment leave room for a good discussion of the various alternative energy sources being explored, or the environmental impacts of new technologies. A speech about nuclear power, for example, could greatly benefit from a scientific explanation of why nuclear waste is a problem. Just don't go over your judge's head!

I would wager that "the Environment" part of this topic area will be where most of the questions come from. This is due to the Copenhagen summit on climate change in December 2009 being seen as a milestone in the world's efforts to come up with an international climate agreement to replace the Kyoto protocol and efforts by the Obama administration to begin reducing America's greenhouse gas emissions through increased fuel mileage policies. Also, questions about how America can reduce global warming, especially the recent push for a cap and trade system will emerge in this round.

It may also be prudent for extempers to look at Lisa Jackson, Steven Chu, and Ken Salazar, who are the heads of the Environmental Protection Agency, the Department of Energy, and the Department of Interior. Questions about their management of agencies, which impact the topics listed above, are likely to emerge here if not in the "New President" round.

Outside of the realm of the scientific, environmental questions will likely focus on policy questions, such as regulatory methods, funding sources, and impacts on the economy. You may also see more obscure issues like industrial waste management or overfishing. For all of these issues, be sure to consider not only researching America's policies, but those of other countries. In many cases there are European or even South American nations which have taken different approaches to solving the environmental problems we face here. Comparing and contrasting these methods can add insightful and memorable analysis to your speech.

Practice Questions

1. Would a cap and trade system kill the U.S. economy?
2. Are electric cars feasible?
3. Can the U.S. still reach the moon now that the space shuttle program is retired?
4. Are the benefits of stem cell research oversold?
5. Is Lisa Jackson too extreme to run the EPA?

Topic Area #5: American Politics

To many Extempers who specialize in US extemp, this category is the most comfortable. Many of us are drawn to speech and debate initially from our interest in political argument and our strong feelings about one side or particular candidates.

That makes this topic area both exciting and dangerous. If you attempt to be too partisan, you risk offending the judge. On the other hand, if you are too bland, you risk appearing uninspired in a round full of extempers who are speaking at their most passionate. My advice is simply to approach the issues the way you read about them in the foreign press. When you see a BBC article on the US presidential race, or on massive confrontation in the senate, the tone of the article somehow manages to convey a sense of impartiality without sounding detached. Treat the scenario as though you were on the outside looking in, and speak as though you were saying "from this outside perspective, I can see that both sides have their moments of absurdity, and both have some valid points. Nevertheless, it is clear that X is the correct decision which should be

made.” Under no circumstances should you finish a speech without taking a side; just try to make it clear your conclusions are drawn from facts, not partisanship and ideology.

Since this season had a presidential election, expect to see a few “reflective” election questions sprinkled into the mix. These will ask you to assess how John McCain might have won the election, why he lost the election, why Obama won the election, why the Republicans were defeated so handily, and possibly ask you if McCain made a poor choice in selecting Sarah Palin as a running mate.

Domestic politics questions also ask you to assess future prospects, especially in terms of elections. The 2010 Congressional elections loom large, especially for the Republican Party. I can bet you with near 100 percent certainty that a generic “Who will win the 2010 Congressional elections?” question will emerge in this round. I would suggest that extempers get a sheet of information about the senators who are up for re-election in 2010 and start assessing the prospects of further Republican gains or losses. Remember when arguing about the 2010 elections that if you do not have specific races to mention that your speech will be seen as a generic, “run of the mill” elections speech. However, if you have names, races, and local information about those races (which helps if you live in some projected battleground areas such as Kentucky, Pennsylvania, and Connecticut), it will enhance your speech.

With elections in mind, you will face many questions about the state of the Republican Party and the effectiveness of its chairman, Michael Steele. Steele has made it a large point of his strategy to win the governorship of Virginia back and some Republicans are looking to take down John Corzine in New Jersey as well. As with the 2010 elections questions, sizing up the Republicans chances of those seats can assist in any speech discussing whether the Republicans can ever emerge as a strong party again. Analyzing future presidential prospects for the Republicans will also factor into this round as extempers will get to talk about Mitt Romney, Sarah Palin, and Bobby Jindal. However, when facing these questions it is just as important that you communicate how they can **unite** a fractured Republican Party as opposed to simply winning a general election. Remember, to win a general election the Republican nominee in 2012 will have to fight through a bruising and polarizing primary. Emphasizing how a nominee could win the primary and bring the party together quickly is critical to any speech of this type. A final type of question for the Republicans concerns former vice-president Dick Cheney. No one has hit harder against the Obama administration. A question could be about Cheney’s emergence as a face of the Republican Party and whether that is helpful or hurtful to the party’s image.

However, politics questions are not purely aimed at elections or Republicans. Nancy Pelosi has gotten herself in hot water over her allegations of lying by the CIA and what she did or did not know about waterboarding, causing some to question her leadership of the Democrats in the House. Also, Democrats overreaching has been a concern all year and potential efforts to push through climate change legislation and healthcare legislation by reconciliation as opposed to full floor debate has strengthened concern that the Democrats could be setting themselves up for their own downfall. Therefore, there could be questions emerging about the chances of Democratic overreach or how the Democrats should manage their majorities in the Senate and the House.

And of course, I would be amiss to say that there will probably be a question about the Minnesota Senate race which is still to be decided.

Practice Questions

1. Currently speaking, is Dick Cheney a benefit or detriment to the Republican Party?

2. Will Democrats continue to gain seats in Congress in 2010?
3. Should Sarah Palin be the Republican nominee in 2012?
4. Will a push for universal healthcare reform doom Democrats in 2010?
5. Why has the GOP lost the Northeast?

Topic Area #6: Business and the Economy

As I mentioned during the CFL brief, there is no topic area this year that has gotten more attention than this one, especially since the fall. With oil prices back on the rise, concerns about the federal government's fiscal stability, the fall of much of the U.S. automotive sector into bankruptcy, the collapse of the housing market, and with economists still forecasting pain in terms of job losses throughout the rest of the year, the economy is the first and foremost concern of many Americans. It is highly probable that your judges will have some experience with the economy, whether they have experienced pay cuts, job layoffs, or know someone that has and they will have a bias about the federal intervention that has taken place to put the economy right again (with bailouts, stimulus packages, etc.). As such, it will be very important for an extemper to bring these concerns of ordinary Americans to life in any speech you give about the economy, whether it deals with trade policy, CEO pay, or how to fix certain economic sectors. *Newsweek* used to be a master at these personal pieces and incorporating examples of how economic policies affect ordinary Americans can make a speech seem less formulaic and more down to earth, a style many "lay" judges will appreciate.

Also, the economy round is another that most extempers will either instinctively hate or enjoy. If economics is your thing, go for it, but be warned that, as with science and technology, you run the risk of either boring your judge or going way over their head. It is not valuable to drop a great deal of economic jargon if you do not adequately explain its meaning. You are trying present a convincing argument for your position, not simply impress the judge with your vocabulary. On the flip side, if you feel you do not have a strong grasp on economics, don't panic, and let the experts do the talking for you. Citing top economists and Business leaders can allow you to bring in a great deal of evidence on a topic without your having to take a summer class in Supply Side theory.

Be careful in this round of also spewing lots of statistics and thinking the judge can make sense of the numbers. Economics does have a lot to do with statistics, but it also has to do with people's behaviors in response to certain economic situations. As such, if you are going to use statistics, impact them to your question. Do not discuss GDP figures unless you explain what they mean and why they are important when assessing the country's political and economic future.

Aside from the bailouts, stimulus, and ethics of federal intervention questions you might see in this round, America's relationship to other countries and how the economic crisis could hurt our economic relationships with those countries is a topic extempers should be made aware of. Already, China is starting to show concerns about how America is spending too much money and there have been global disagreements between the Obama administration and Mexico over NAFTA. A generic question about protectionism will come up in this round, so be aware of it here.

I always suggest in preparing for this topic area that an extemper separate their economics files accordingly. If an extemper just has a big file that says "economy" they are going to be hurting in this round. I remember in my files we had subdivisions for pensions, CEO pay, banking, hedge funds, housing, etc. This makes it easy when you are hit with questions about a particular sector of the economy, which will happen to you in this round.

Finally, know that it is a cardinal offense to confuse things like the national debt and the trade deficit.

Practice Questions

1. Will the government's rescue of GM ultimately fail?
2. Is it a good idea to let the Bush tax cuts expire?
3. How can the U.S. assure China that its dollar assets are safe?
4. If card check is instituted, will it prolong the economic recession?
5. Is inflation or deflation a bigger threat to the U.S. economy?

Topic Area #7: U.S. Immigration Policy

It is interesting to see this as a topic area, due to this topic falling out of the political mainstream over the last two seasons. However, immigration policy has been a staple of U.S. extemp for as long as I can remember and my final round speech in 2003 was about immigration policy. Extempers should remember that the topic does not read "Illegal Immigration Policy." Instead, it reads "Immigration Policy." It is a gut instinct to read the word immigration and start assuming the worst about America's immigration problems. However, it is entirely possible that you will face questions in this round about how the U.S. can adjust its current immigration policy to accommodate economic needs, especially in math, science, and technology. There have been reports for years that the U.S. needs to do more to get skilled immigrants into the U.S., so policy questions pertaining to that need could arise here.

However, many of the questions you may encounter in this round will be about illegal immigration and its impacts on America's political, social, and economic environment. Extempers will face questions about whether America's current drive for a more technologically sound border can work, if the U.S. should consider an amnesty for illegal immigrants into the U.S., whether we should withdraw social services from illegal immigrants, and if English should become America's national language. There will also be questions about illegal immigrants impact on U.S. workers and minority communities, a topic that is made even more urgent by the economic crisis.

There is also a foreign element involved in this question that extempers need to consider. All experts agree that if the U.S. is to establish a stable policy for handling immigrants that we need closer and more positive relations with the countries these immigrants are coming from. Since the illegal immigration problem deals disproportionately with Mexico, an extemper will want to discuss Mexico's political and economic turmoil. Also, the Obama administration's overtures to Cuba have an impact on this topic area as we are trying to stabilize migration flows.

It would be wise for U.S. extempers to look back at waves of immigration that have affected this country before and use those historical parallels in speeches. As a history buff, I appreciate when extempers use historical examples because some of the answers to the problems we face today can be found when we examine what was done in the past. Reading about the waves of Irish, southeastern European, and Chinese migration flows would help a speech, especially in looking at immigration legislation passed during those migration flows, such as the Chinese Exclusion Act in the late 1800s.

Finally, for this topic area keep in mind that immigration is a very hot social topic. Accepting different peoples into a national culture is not an easy process and the prospect of accepting

scores of new groups into the United States makes many people feel uneasy. However, lumping all immigrants, legal or illegal, together is the wrong approach and will show your ignorance on this issue. Similarly, it will help if you try to tell both sides of the story. Explain the factors that are causing people to want to leave their homelands for the United States and balance it with the current needs of the American government to its citizens. It is through this balanced approach that you can best sell your answer and you will make yourself appear more educated as a result.

Practice Questions

1. Are current U.S. immigration policies depriving the country of the skilled labor force it needs?
2. Does the federal government need to do a better job targeting companies who employ illegal immigrants?
3. Should English be made the official language of the U.S.?
4. Can a high tech border solve America's illegal immigration woes?
5. Does the U.S. need to do a better job assimilating immigrants?

Topic Area #8: Crime & Punishment

Typically, the NFL has designated this round as "Crime and Justice." It appeared in semi-finals my junior year and has usually made an appearance in the elimination round portion of the tournament. These questions often asked you to analyze judicial rulings and how America could stop crime or win battles against criminal trends. This year, with the topic area being changed to "Crime and Punishment", there may be some small changes to the questions you will see, but I honestly believe the "justice" component will still matter. Of course, we could all be wrong and the NFL could torture U.S. extempers with questions from Froydor Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, but I find that unlikely (although I did like the book).

For this topic area, be familiar with recent, landmark court decisions, particularly the rulings of the Supreme Court. Know what it means to argue that something is Constitutional or Unconstitutional, rather than simply "right" or "wrong." This category also frequently contains topics about the justice system itself, so you will want to know a bit about the judicial process and recent events surrounding the US Department of Justice. Legal issues are complicated, and sometimes require specific knowledge, so don't expect questions that require you to make the judgments that only an attorney could sort out. But do expect a meta-analysis of these judgments, their implications in American lives, and the precedents they set for the future. This round is also where I would expect to see the bulk of the questions about torture and gun control. As usual, be sure you have an understanding of the issue that allows you to answer more questions than simply "Should torture be permissible?" or "Do we need more gun control?" Research the specific legal and political debates and consider what laws might likely be passed in the future.

For the crime component of this topic, be prepared in particular to discuss crime prevention techniques and also the causes of crime in various parts of the country. It can't hurt to familiarize yourself with some of the more famous efforts to combat crime which have gone on across the country. New York touts its new police methods as having cleaned up the city dramatically during the last decade, and Los Angeles has recently begun using new approaches as well. Also, a look into police tactics, whether it be racial profiling, DNA collection, or the use of tasers (good for a "Don't taser me bro!" joke) can be expected here.

For the punishment component, look at how the American judicial system handles criminals. Questions about prison reform will be here and examples of those questions pertain to how we can curb sexual violence in prison, whether we need to have drug offenders in prison, and if

America should abolish the death penalty. For each of these topics, statistics from the Department of Justice or studies that detail recidivism rates and economic benefits might be good to have. There have been many economic studies done over the last few years on whether it would help state economies to abolish the death penalty, an argument many opponents of capital punishment are currently making. You may also encounter a “blended” type question that asks you to evaluate whether a certain punishment is constitutional or unconstitutional based on a certain amendment. This happened in 2003 with a question pertaining to whether capital punishment should be considered cruel and unusual punishment.

If the NFL does not decide to place questions about Sonia Sotomayor’s appointment to the Supreme Court in the American Politics round, which I am about 50-50 on since they changed the wording of this topic area, they will be here. Extempers should have a file about Sotomayor’s past judicial rulings, the most notable of which is the *Ricci v. DeStefano* case currently before the Court that discusses firefighters in New Haven, Connecticut having their promotional exam scores thrown out because African-American firefighters did not qualify for a promotion through the exam. Extempers will confront questions about Sotomayor’s qualifications to be on the bench, whether Republicans should filibuster her nomination, her judicial philosophy, and how she could change the Supreme Court. Keep in mind that she is replacing David Souter, a liberal judge, so the chance to alter the balance of the court is slim, unless she turns out to be a conservative in sheep’s clothing (which is highly unlikely).

Lastly, do not forget to consider white-collar crime when doing your research. While perhaps not as high-profile as it was two or three years ago, it is certainly still an issue lurking just off the mainstream media radar. This is made even more important by the Obama administration’s decision to crack down on corporations receiving federal bailout funds and to stop people cheating on their federal taxes (although this could emerge in the Business & the Economy topic area).

Practice Questions

1. How can America reduce its recidivism rates?
2. Should marijuana be legalized?
3. Are strip searches of students a violation of their Fourth amendment rights?
4. Will the GOP vote against Sotomayor?
5. Are police taser policies too lax?

Topic Area #9: States & Cities

I remember when I competed in Kentucky people always asked me why I kept files for major cities such as New York and Washington D.C. and why I had files for “City Issues”, “City Economics”, “State Economies”, and “State Issues.” The answer: this round. While analyzing specific state issues or trends is unfamiliar ground to many extempers, this is nothing new at the national tournament. Between 2001-2004, the states and cities topic area appeared in elimination rounds at least three times and I have seen many a good extemper ruined by this round. However, with adequate preparation that should not happen to you.

Many questions in this round do not deal with specific areas of the country (i.e. New York City) as much as they deal with overall trends. My guess for why this topic area is coming back after being absent last year is the downturn in the economy has killed state budgets and is causing massive headaches on the state level. Also, extempers who do not have a file on California might

be shooting themselves in the foot as that state has a lot of issues to confront, especially in regards to its fiscal situation.

States, especially those who did not vote for Barack Obama, have also shown a willingness to confront his administration in regards to the stimulus bill and federal intervention in the economy. The “tea parties” that took place throughout the country earlier this year, in conjunction with state sovereignty bills, have demonstrated that the belief in federalism still has an appeal. State actions against federal legislation such as No Child Left Behind also show that states are not willing to allow the federal government to make all the policies for the country.

While it is not important to an extemper to have command over the issues impacting each of the fifty states, it is important for them to identify regional trends. The Southwestern part of the United States typically worries about illegal immigration more than the rest of the country and they are also fighting off forest fires and drought conditions. The South has conservative leanings and does not favor strong federal intervention in their lives or the economy. States like Florida and Mississippi often worry about disaster preparedness thanks to hurricanes. Furthermore, the Northeast is more open to social change and as gay marriage illustrates, is more willing to adopt controversial policies in the hopes that they may be later adopted on a national stage. Understanding these trends can be useful for speeches, especially if a question is more regional in focus.

Do not freak yourself out about this round if you know very little about the states. One strategy you can employ is that if you hit a question that has a general theme, such as crime, your files most likely have articles that pertain to that state. Sometimes *The Economist* will have articles about specific states, but they will discuss themes such as corruption or the drug war, etc. So while you may not have a file on “Mississippi” you may have articles concerning that state already in your files.

Practice Questions

1. Should California get a new constitution?
2. How can Western states deal with water shortages?
3. Will state sovereignty resolutions significantly alter the balance of power in federal-state relations?
4. What is the state of the state’s economies?
5. Should gay marriage remain a state issue?

Topic Area #10: American: Sports, Media, and Pop Culture

One word for this topic: yuck. Years ago the NFL extemp committee supposedly eliminated this topic area altogether. However, it is back with a vengeance and many extempers are probably hoping this pops up in prelims. After all, if a national semi-final round is featuring this topic area I find that to be shameful and ridiculous to such a degree that I may never look at U.S. extemp the same way again.

That said, this topic area will reflect on things extempers usually do not speak on (at least for the “sports” and “pop culture” topic areas). Cutting publications such as *People* and *Sports Illustrated* is not wholly unjustified here as many of those publications reflect on some of the issues you may have to discuss here such as Michael Vick, the stupidity of the BCS bowl system for college football, academic cheating scandals at major universities such as Memphis, steroids in baseball, music trends such as rap (and the epic question *Is rap crap?*), and questions about

new blockbuster movies such as Terminator: Salvation. A question about violence in movies or video games is not out of the question here either.

The media part of this question is the most substantive part of the topic area and with the economic crisis the world of print media has started to really fall apart. Questions about how print media can adapt to the needs of the 21st century and whether media is too politically biased will emerge. A question about the so-called Fairness Doctrine could also come up, especially because it has several charged political elements behind it. There is even the controversial idea of the government stepping in to bailout print media that could take shape in this round, although I see that as more economic in nature.

What makes this round tricky is the scarcity of mainstream media articles actively analyzing the media behavior. If you want to be able to speak with authority (and plentiful citations) about the decline of print media, the impact of blogs, and the biases of various news sources, you must turn to think-tanks and organizations which specialize in media meta-analysis. There are many groups (notably the Annenberg foundation) which attempt to act as media “watchdogs,” tracking perceived partiality and also recording which issues get the most play in traditional media outlets. Using studies from these groups will allow you to take a unique look at the media in this round, but will also allow you to comment on the validity of your sources when you are speaking on other topic areas as well. But be careful; many of these self-described watchdog groups are actually quite biased themselves.

It is also important to prepare by printing articles on recent cultural phenomena in America, and try to understand both the source of these fads and also their impact on Americans’ daily lives. Therefore, things such as Facebook, Myspace, and Twitter are fair game.

Many of even the most talented and experienced extempers simply dread this round or view it as beneath their intellectual capacity. Take advantage of this as an opportunity to make yourself stand out as someone who can speak confidently and intelligently by illuminating the hidden significance to these seemingly trivial issues. I recommend watching a well-known interview like Bill Moyers or Charlie Rose talk with “celebrity” guests like Chris Martin or Charlie Sheen. Try to mimic their ability to connect issues in culture and entertainment to larger more serious concepts.

Practice Questions

1. Should the NBA change its age limit rule?
2. How can print media succeed in a digital age?
3. Should college football have a playoff system?
4. Can Twitter and Facebook bring people closer to their government?
5. Has baseball done enough to stop steroid abuse?

Topic Area #11: The New President

This is a generic topic area that usually comes to the forefront at the beginning of a new presidential administration. As one can infer from the topic area, questions in this round will be about the Obama administration and its actions thus far. There will be many questions in this round that will ask you to evaluate Obama’s handling of the war on terrorism, his handling of American foreign policy, and the way the administration has dealt with the economic crisis. Using the resources available on the White House website can greatly assist you in this regard as

they lay out specific presidential policies and copies of the President's radio addresses to the country can be useful for quotations in your speeches.

I would recommend that extempers go to each cabinet department and print out bios for each of the cabinet secretaries. I ask that you do this because it is not unusual to see this topic area ask a question about whether certain presidential appointments were wise or what the new president could gain from those appointments.

The reason I did not mention President Bush in the American politics topic area analysis is because there could be comparison questions between the Bush White House and the Obama White House in this topic area. There have already been significant differences in how the Obama administration has preferred to handle enhanced interrogation techniques and policy in the Middle East (especially with the Israeli-Palestinian question), but there have also been similarities in regards to detaining some terror suspects without trial and in continuing with No Child Left Behind. Having a grasp on old Bush era policies and attitudes can prepare you for this round and if you do not know about them, do some independent research and have some articles on hand to discuss the Bush legacy. You may even be asked what Obama can learn from some of the Bush administration's mistakes.

You may also get questions asking you to evaluate if Obama has fulfilled campaign pledges. On some pledges, such as not taxing lower class Americans, Obama has shown a willingness to back up with a move to raise cigarette taxes. He has also not been able to forge the bipartisan attitude on Capitol Hill that he promised to do on the campaign trail so expect to be asked why that has not occurred.

Finally, a different type of question you could be asked in this round is about presidential priorities. With Obama enjoying a healthy Democratic majority in Congress he has supporters who are arguing that he push through mass social reforms dealing with immigration, the environment, and health care. However, Obama only has a certain amount of political capital so you may be asked what he should spend that capital on.

For all of these questions, make sure you have a command of Obama's background, how he has dealt with Congressional opposition to some of his plans, and the strategies he has used to engage leaders so far. Analogies from the campaign trail may not be bad either or the beginnings of past presidential administrations. Keep in mind, your judges probably either voted for or against Obama so they will either like him or not (and opinion polls do show that he is a very polarizing figure). Thus, when approaching this topic be sure to show the motivations behind Obama's policy actions and why or why he will not achieve what he wants.

Practice Questions

1. Is Obama's Middle East foreign policy putting Israel at risk?
2. How well has Obama handled the economic crisis?
3. Was it a wise move for Obama to put Hillary Clinton in charge as Secretary of State?
4. What job performance grade does Obama deserve so far?
5. Has Obama changed Washington or has he let Washington change him?

Topic Area #12: Health and Welfare

After being split apart last year, the good ol' "Health and Welfare" topic makes its return to the NFL national tournament. This round is an old staple of U.S. extemp and has typically dealt with government programs and social services designed to assist Americans with their well-being.

For the health side of the topic area, expect to have to do a great deal of talking about the U.S. healthcare system. Do not expect to get by simply by preparing talking points about the flaws in America's healthcare system. Certainly it is good to have access to general research about America's current healthcare spending, and her standing compared to other nations. But most topics will probably require deeper exploration.

Be prepared to discuss the specific problems which *lead to* the inadequacies in our healthcare system. Also, be sure to look at some of the healthcare reforms which are currently being proposed. Don't limit yourself to those laid out by major presidential candidates. Many other senators, think tanks, or federal commissions have put forward recommendations. You may want to identify the ones you think most highly of and be prepared to argue for them. And don't use the words "Medicare" and "Medicaid" as though they were interchangeable. Your judge is older than you and will probably notice.

Healthcare issues outside of the entitlement programs will certainly arise as well. Be prepared to speak on recent medical advances, as well as controversial programs such as stem cell research or sex education as a means of preventing the spread of HIV. Many medical organizations publish quarterly or monthly journals with excellent articles on the most recent controversies in the medical field, but be aware that some (particularly the AMA) have frequently been accused of bias.

Be warned that sometimes the NFL tournament interprets "Welfare" to mean not simply the entitlement program known as the Welfares System, but any and all government programs which promote the general welfare. This would include other anti-poverty programs, educational assistance, and disaster relief, to name a few. Therefore, government programs such as Head Start or federal efforts to still assist in New Orleans could arise.

Due to reports this year that entitlement programs such as Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security are running out of money, there will be questions about the long-term sustainability of these programs. As an extemper speaking in this round, one of your first goals must be to convince your judge of the urgency of reform measures. While significance statements are always important in extemp, I think this round lends itself to the practice most strongly. Before you finish your introduction, you should have explained to the judge why he or she should need to know the answer to your question. To this end, be sure you are familiar with the statistics projecting the future of the Social security system and the dangers it faces, as well as figures about the high annual costs of welfare programs.

There is little special preparation you can do other than to familiarize yourself with the various reforms that have been suggested for these programs recently, and to understand the arguments for and against a few of them. As with the economics round, do your best to use meaningful statistics and clearly explain the issue, but know that after hearing 6 speeches on social security your judge may be borderline comatose if you do not throw in some interesting, illustrative facts and perhaps a clever quip or two.

Practice Questions

1. Have plans for privatizing Social Security been permanently shelved?

2. Should soda be taxed?
3. Can the federal government afford a universal healthcare system?
4. Would deregulation of the health insurance market significantly reduce the cost of health insurance?
5. How can Medicare remain solvent?

Topic Area #13: National Defense and Homeland Security

Many of the questions in this round will likely address either the sufficiency, the efficacy, or the ethics and legality of America's most recent counterterrorism measures. To stand out among your competitors, be sure to familiarize yourself with the history of homeland security issues dating back to September 11th. The websites of the NSA and the department of Homeland security may contain some interesting internal documents that you should consider printing for your boxes, but you should focus on independently prepared documents. For example, while it may not be necessary to have the entire 9/11 commission report in your box, highlighted excerpts or an article summarizing its findings may still be useful. Although this information may seem out-of-date, many current homeland security controversies still revolve around its recommendations. Also, Obama's efforts towards ensuring cybersecurity warrant a mention here.

Many of the topics may also ask you to assess the success of various new homeland security initiatives. To do this, consider not only the history of these programs, but also the programs they replaced, if applicable. And most certainly, do not be afraid to let your answers in this round overlap into the realm of economics, or foreign policy, or even science and technology. Security issues can almost always be linked to a wide variety of other topics. As long as you stay on topic, this can be a good way to demonstrate your big-picture understanding.

There could also be questions about how the U.S. can handle Iran, North Korea, Afghanistan, and Iraq. Understanding the implications of attacks on Iran and North Korea for their work at nuclear facilities, especially in terms of a regional and international focus, is imperative for a successful speech. Extempers may also be asked whether U.S. defenses in those areas are sufficient for catastrophic scenarios. Also, questions about military strategy in Afghanistan and Iraq, moreso for Afghanistan as Obama wants to have a new "surge" there, are likely to appear here because they do not fit in the terrorism parameters set for topic area number three.

Practice Questions

1. Should the U.S. recognize North Korea as a member of the world's nuclear club?
2. Do Obama's efforts on cybersecurity go far enough?
3. Has America forgotten the lessons of 9/11?
4. Why is public support for the war in Afghanistan falling?
5. Would it be wise for the U.S. to attack Iran's nuclear facilities?

Extemp Central National Points Race

by Logan Scisco

The first year of the Extemp Central National Points Race has nearly concluded, with the International and United States extemp tournaments at the NFL National tournament in Birmingham, Alabama being the last tournament that has to be entered. This year has featured a collection of various winners from the extemp community, with **Stacey Chen** of North Allegheny Senior High School emerging as the dominant #1 in the rankings, holding that position for much of the year.

Since the last edition of *The Ex Files*, there has been a small shakeup in the top of the standings. The Extemp Tournament of Champions at Northwestern University featured many extempers in the national points race and added some clarity to the standings. The Catholic Forensic League (CFL) national tournament in Albany, New York had less “star power”, but did boost the fortunes of many trying to shore up a good finish for the end of the season.

As the last tournament of the year, the NFL national tournament is essentially “glory’s last shot” for extempers looking to finish their careers with either a national championship or a national finalist finish. It is the culmination of a year’s worth of hard work and preparation. Yet only two extempers will leave Birmingham with the opportunity to call themselves a national champion and only one extemper at the end of the tournament will be able to proclaim themselves as the winner of the first ever Extemp Central National Points Race.

Individual Standings

Here are the updating individual points standings as of May 29, 2009. The top fifteen in the rankings, including ties, are listed below:

RANK	NAME	SCHOOL	POINTS
1	Stacey Chen	North Allegheny Senior HS (Wexford, PA)	340
2	Dillon Huff	Carroll HS (Southlake, TX)	263
3	Matt Arons	Millburn HS (Wyckoff, NJ)	250
4	Alex Draime	Howland HS (Warren, OH)	150
5	Phil Gillen	Regis HS (New York, NY)	136
T6	Nick Cugini	Cypress Ridge HS (Houston, TX)	135
T6	Evan Larson	Bellarmino College Prep (San Jose, CA)	135
8	John Lisman	E.L. Meyers HS (Wilkes-Barre, PA)	125
9	Jovalin Dedaj	Fordham Preparatory (Bronx, NY)	76
T10	Jane Kessner	Walt Whitman HS (Bethesda, MD)	75
T10	John Mern	J.P. Talaverra HS (Coral Springs, FL)	75
12	Brennan Morris	Randolph-Macon Academy (Front Royal, VA)	70
13	Amanda Johnson	Eagan HS (Eagan, MN)	67
14	Audrey Denis	Berkeley Carroll School (Brooklyn, NY)	65
15	Aaron Lutkowitz	Montgomery Bell Academy (Nashville, TN)	62

The biggest impact made on the rankings is by **Alex Draime** of Howland High School in Ohio. His victory at the CFL national tournament, his third career national final appearance, gave him 150 points in the standings and put him in fourth place.

Stacey Chen's victory at the Extemp Tournament of Champions, whose top three also featured the top three in the national points race, enlarged her lead by twenty-three points. Chen, who has victories this year at Glenbrooks, Harvard, and now the TOC, is well positioned to emerge as the first national points race winner. **Matt Arons** of Millburn High School in New Jersey was leaptfrogged by **Dillon Huff** of Southlake Carroll High School after Huff beat Arons by judges preference for second place at the TOC. Arons chances of winning the national points race are finished since he is not attending NFL, yet he ends the year with two notable victories at Yale and the Montgomery Bell Extemp Round Robin.

Of all the top 15, only Huff has the opportunity to catch Chen at NFL. Huff's only national circuit victory has occurred at the International Extemp portion of the St. Mark's Heart of Texas Invitation. Yet he also has a victory in the Exhibition Round at the MBA Extemp Round Robin, where he defeated Chen, Arons, **Nick Cugini**, and **Evan Larson**. Huff also has a runner-up finish at the Barkley Forum and the TOC, which has allowed him to prevent Chen from clinching the points race prior to NFL.

The simplified clinching scenario for NFL is as follows: If Chen finishes fourth or better in International Extemp, then she clinches the national points race. If Huff wins International Extemp and Chen finishes less than fourth (assuming they both make the final round) then Huff would be the national points winner. If Huff fails to make the final round, Chen wins the national points race. If Chen fails to make the final round, Huff needs to place third or better to win it. Since there are twenty-five bonus points allotted to the final round winner, if Chen fails to make the final round, Huff can overcome her if he finishes fifth or better **and** wins the final round.

Other movers in the standings lately include **Phil Gillen** of Regis High School, a finalist earlier in the year at the Barkley Forum, who placed third at the CFL national tournament. **John Lisman**, who finished behind Draime at the CFL national tournament, enters the standings in eighth place. **Jane Kessner** of Walt Whitman High School moves from thirteenth to tenth following a semi-final finish at CFL and **Amanda Johnson** of Eagan High School cracks the top fifteen for the first time this season after a fourth place finish at the Extemp TOC. **John Mern** of J.P. Talavera High School and **Audrey Denis** of the Berkeley Carroll School also enter the top fifteen following their fourth and fifth place finishes, respectively, at CFL.

Team Standings:

Here are the updated team points race standings as of May 29, 2009. The top ten in the standings, including ties, are listed below:

1	North Allegheny Senior HS (Wexford, PA)	340	6
2	Carroll HS (Southlake, TX)	279	6
3	Millburn HS (Wyckoff, NJ)	250	4
4	Howland HS (Warren, OH)	205	2
5	Regis HS (New York, NY)	152	4
6	Nova HS (Davie, FL)	140	4
T7	Cypress Ridge HS (Houston, TX)	135	3

T7	Bellarmine College Prep (San Jose, CA)	135	2
9	E.L. Meyers HS (Wilkes-Barre, PA)	125	1
10	Newton South HS (Newton, MA)	115	3

Propelled by Stacey Chen’s success this season, **North Allegheny Senior High School** continues to hold the national team points race lead. **Carroll High School** and **Millburn High School** have tried to catch up for much of the season, led by Dillon Huff and Matt Arons, but have been unable to overtake her so far. Carroll High School has had a wider range of contributions from other individuals than North Allegheny and Millburn, but has been unable to overtake the lead in the second semester.

Howland High School, who had two finalists at CFL, Alex Draime and Manish Mehta (who placed sixth), has vaulted into the fourth place spot. With a performance similar to their showing at NFL, it is possible that Howland could end up the winner of the national team points race, although there is no shot of Draime or Mehta of winning it on the individual side.

Regis High School moves back into the top ten in the standings after Phil Gillen placed third at CFL and **E.L. Myers High School** debuts in the top ten following John Lisman’s runner-up finish at CFL. **Newton South High School** is able to retain their position in the top ten after Luckmini Liyanage semi-finaled at CFL, earning the team twenty-five points.

Due to a lack of data concerning team entries at the NFL tournament, it is hard to provide as definitive a prediction of how the national team points race could turn out. However, a victory by Chen at NFL do a lot to put the national team points race championship in North Allegheny’s pocket.

Tournament Overview

Here is an overview of the tournaments that will count for this year’s competitive calendar towards the Extemp Central National Points Race, how many points each tournament will be worth, and who the big winners have been so far.

TOURNAMENT	DATE	LOCATION	WINNER'S POINTS (TIER)	WINNER
Wake Forest National Early Bird	9/12-9/14/2008	Winston Salem, North Carolina	50 (3rd Tier)	Alon Elhanan (Bronx HS of Science, NY)
Yale University Invitational Tournament	9/26-9/28/2008	New Haven, Connecticut	50 (3rd Tier)	Matt Arons (Milburn HS, NJ)
St. Mark's Heart of Texas Invitational (IX)	10/16-10/19/2008	Dallas, Texas	50 (3rd Tier)	Dillon Huff (Carroll HS, TX)
St. Mark's Heart of Texas Invitational (USX)	10/16-10/19/2008	Dallas, Texas	50 (3rd Tier)	Nick Cugini (Cypress Ridge HS, TX)
University of Pennsylvania Liberty Bell	10/18-10/19/2008	Philadelphia, Pennsylvania	50 (3rd Tier)	Brennan Morris (Randolph Macon Academy, VA)

Classic				
The Glenbrooks	11/22-11/24/2008	Northbrook, Illinois	50 (3rd Tier)	Stacey Chen (North Allegheny Senior HS, PA)
George Mason University Patriot Games	12/5-12/8/2008	Fairfax, Virginia	50 (3rd Tier)	Aaron Lutkowitz (Montgomery Bell Academy, TN)
Montgomery Bell Academy Extemp Round Robin	1/9-1/11/2009	Nashville, Tennessee	100 (2nd Tier)	Matt Arons (Millburn HS, New Jersey)
Barkley Forum for High Schools	1/23-1/25/2009	Atlanta, Georgia	50 (3rd Tier)	Jason Bernstein (Nova HS, Florida)
Harvard National High School Invitational Tournament	2/14-2/16/2009	Cambridge, Massachusetts	50 (3rd Tier)	Stacey Chen (North Allegheny Senior HS, Pennsylvania)
2009 California Invitational Forensic Tournament	2/14-2/16/2009	Berkley, California	50 (3rd Tier)	Evan Larson (Bellarmine College Prep, California)
Extemp Tournament of Champions (TOC)	5/8-5/10/2009	Chicago, Illinois	100 (2nd Tier)	Stacey Chen (North Allegheny Senior HS, Pennsylvania)
2009 CFL National Tournament	5/23-5/24/2009	Albany, New York	150 (1st Tier)	Alex Draime (Howland HS, Ohio)
2009 NFL National Tournament (IX)	6/15-6/19/2009	Birmingham, Alabama	150 (1st Tier)	
2009 NFL National Tournament (USX)	6/15-6/19/2009	Birmingham, Alabama	150 (1st Tier)	
2009 NFL Final Round (IX)	6/19/2009	Birmingham, Alabama	25 bonus pts. (1st tier)	
2009 NFL Final Round (USX)	6/19/2009	Birmingham, Alabama	25 bonus pts. (1st tier)	

Extemporaneous Speaking at NFL Nationals

By Mark Royce²

The National Forensic League annual tournament is the largest, most prestigious, and most competitive high school speech and debate contest, as well as one of the greatest exhibitions of oratorical talent in the English-speaking world. About two hundred competitors from across the country enter in one of the nine main events, and an epic sequence of elimination rounds over the course of an entire week determines the chosen few who shall perform in front of a sizable audience. No other forensics tournament, the gilded podiums of the national circuit included, attracts the same measure of talent or bestows the same glory on its victors. This year's tournament will be held June 14-19 in Birmingham, Alabama.

Nationals is the hardest tournament, and this article is concerned specifically with the hardest event, Extemporaneous Speaking. I write on the assumption that the reader is familiar with the format and terminology of extemp, and therefore we may concentrate our attention upon what is unique to the Nationals experience. Categorization being prominent among the skills of extempers, past or present, I shall divide my composition into two main parts, the first providing a chronological guide to the ins and outs of the tournament, and the second disclosing a somewhat secret formula for constructing speeches based on the Nationals topic areas.

Part 1: The Story of Extemp at Nationals

Unlike even the grand tournaments of the national circuit, NFL Nationals, in the manner of the Olympics, is not geographically fixed, which helps discourage the ascendancy of any particular group. The policy also showcases the size and diversity of the NFL. But for our purposes, it necessitates the ability to adapt to changing circumstances, especially given that local staff are often unprepared for the logistical challenges of so large a pool. I would note that in the current case, it could be frightfully hot in Birmingham, as it was for me in Oklahoma City, and I shall therefore supplement the parental admonition to avoid the heat and to imbibe sufficient fluids.

Yet the schedule is fixed even if the geography is not, and therein lies our principal concern. Nationals will officially begin on **Sunday**, June 14. In addition to some inane entertainments, they will hold some sort of orientation, and it will be imperative to collect several items either from the source or from your coach. Most important of all is the ribbon that shall designate you as a competitor and the code that shall be as one in particular. Be sure also to grab a campus map, as they do not distribute any copies in the prep room. The second task may prove impossible, given access issues, but it would be highly advantageous to, map in hand, scope out the locale on Sunday before competition begins, as there shall be no opportunity the following day. I would

² Mark Royce was the runner-up in International Extemp in 2002. He then coached the event at Montgomery Bell Academy for several years and ran draw at its annual Round Robin. He earned his B.A. in European Studies from Vanderbilt University, his M.A. in International Affairs from American University, and this fall will enroll at George Mason University for his Ph.D. in Political Science.

identify the prep room, your first three speaking rooms, and a clean restroom. The six preliminary rounds in both extemps will take place at Oak Mountain High School,³ and both versions of extemp follow precisely the same schedule.

It shall be imperative to retire early that evening. At the time of this writing, the schedules were not publicly available, but competition generally runs upon a morning and an afternoon shift, with extemp held in the morning. The first speaker traditionally begins *speaking* at eight o'clock, which means that draw commences at a grueling half past seven. Tracking back the time generally required to dress professionally, to eat a complete breakfast, to commute, and to scan the morning's paper prior to draw would necessitate a wake-up of about half past five in the morning. Given that optimal performance, both physical and mental, is said to depend upon at least nine hours of sleep, we compute an extemp bedtime of eight in the evening, an unusually early hour which you might attempt two or three days in advance, in order to allow your body to adjust.

Thus competition shall begin bright and early **Monday** morning, and I can guarantee that many of your opponents shall be deprived of half the rest they require. The tournament may or may not have permitted the extempers to position their tubs on Sunday; but regardless, you are certain to see a very large number of your colleagues scurrying about. There are short of two hundred extempers in each of the two categories; and if one prep room contains them both, as it sometimes does, there will be nearly four hundred people in the room.

But our concern lies less with the size of the competition pool as with the singular rigor of the draw procedures. Nationals is the strictest tournament with regard to enforcement of the official rules, and even the most seasoned competitors are susceptible to disqualification. No electronic devices of any form may be consulted during draw. No competitor may enter or leave the room during draw. Unnecessary conversation is prohibited.⁴ Random searches of files are a common occurrence, and the prep room officers have an exceptional nose for illegal material. Food and drink are permitted though, as usual. Nationals also employs an exit procedure entirely its own. Extempers cannot report to their speaking rooms until they have formed an orderly line inside the door and have registered their codes and questions with the exit officer. He will also require them, if they have not already done so, to dispose of their prep notes in the wastebasket by which he stands, as no notes may leave the prep room.

This severity can also apply to judging. There are two judges in the preliminary rounds, but the geographical diversity of the pool demands that competitors abandon any assumptions about judge behavior on which they may have come to rely; and two strike me as paramount. First, speakers should not take *any* grace period for granted. Although you might hail from a district that allows speeches to run fifteen or thirty seconds

³ See index 1 for a schematic of the dates, locations, and elimination rounds of competition.

⁴ If the reader suspects the viability of such a rule, he is invited to consider that a chattering colleague of mine in International Extemp, during the preliminary period, was sternly warned that further babble would result in disqualification. He placed second overall.

overtime, you must not assume that either of the judges does; and therefore it is absolutely essential to not exceed seven minutes. Second, it is more important than usual to establish how time signals will be issued. My favorite phrase was, “How will time signals be given?” Putting it this way assumes that they will be, but allows the judges, whom one of course is seeking to satisfy, to establish the parameters.

One final note, concerning the questions at Nationals, should be added at this point. I will address the topic areas in the second half of this essay, but the questions themselves may appear somewhat different from what many competitors, especially those who frequent the national circuit, are accustomed to. They tend to be rather general. International extempers might encounter the following: “What can the West do to help Africa?” Domestic extempers might face something like this: “Will Obama significantly improve education?” This generic aspect partially results from the questions NOT being particularly time sensitive. They are composed by a single tournament individual in March, and therefore do not take into account the most recent developments. It is of some use to know that the questions one will be answering were written three months previously.

There will be three rounds both Monday and **Tuesday**, for a total of six preliminary bouts. The first breaks shall be announced Tuesday evening. Some prominent location on campus shall be selected for the purpose, and large flipcharts, dramatically unrolled, shall list the codes of the sixty extempers, in each category, who shall advance to elimination rounds seven and eight. Therefore in order to make the first cut, an extemper must place in roughly the top third of the pile. Yet the scores are erased at this point: all those who advance to round seven begin again at zero, and thenceforward the records are cumulative, with each ballot counting equally.

Wednesday shall be in some respects the longest. The remaining competitors shall be guaranteed rounds seven and eight, in which the number of judges increases to three. Then shortly after noon, I should think, they will announce, in the same flipchart fashion, the thirty domestic extempers and the thirty international extempers who shall advance to the quarterfinal rounds, nine and ten. These will be held at Spain Park High School several miles away; and although the event planners have their reasons for relocating extemp draw *in the middle* of the day, it can seem absurd from a competitor’s viewpoint. Round nine will take place that afternoon at Spain Park but round ten will be reserved for the next morning, the only point in the tournament at which a break is distributed over more than one day.

Thursday is the day when Nationals is really won or lost. Round ten will occur that morning, and after a longer pause than usual they will announce the top fourteen extempers, in each division, who will advance to the two semifinal rounds. There will be seven speakers per panel, and semifinalists should expect a full room in attendance. Victory, we all recognize, does not generally depend upon a perverse mastery of tournament procedures; but I will record one important fact about semifinals: the number of ballots. Semifinal rounds have five judges, and the total of ten ballots acquired from the two rounds is three more than the seven from the Final on Friday. Thus extempers who perform exceptionally well in the semis but only moderately so in the Final—and I belonged to this category—may still expect to retain their overall position.

Friday ushers in the Final Round, the dramatic and unique conclusion to the week’s contests. Stretched across the entire day are the Finals of most events, along with

the unforgettable awards ceremony that evening. Speech and debate competitors are accustomed to the unexpected: carefully laid plans often go awry or encounter unforeseen obstacles. But Finals takes this law to the extreme. Those who prevail to the round should be prepared for anything, given that speaking in an auditorium containing hundreds of people is fundamentally unlike anything else. I recall that one year, dazzled by the spotlights, I could not read the time cards, nor did I know where to proceed after delivering my speech. I hence wandered aimlessly around backstage. Thus I warn the chosen few who break to the Final Round to be prepared, more than ever before, to adapt to changing circumstances; and I shall now proceed to discuss what *can* be known with certainty about Finals.

First, there will be six competitors, and each receives a handsome trophy for his efforts. Modest scholarship money is also in play. The round will be open to the public in a large auditorium with an intimate prep room backstage. Those who script the event are familiar with the block format of extemp speeches, and hence position at least two microphones on stage to allow the competitors to walk between main points. Seated front and center should be the timekeeper, who will employ cards rather than the usual fingers. The nine judges should also be seated nearby, and one must not forget to speak to them more than to the huge audience. They each provide a single ballot, with the high and the low ranks dropped prior to the final tally.

But the most unique feature of Finals is cross-examination, and we should pause to consider the implications of this custom. Extemp is the only NFL event which substantially alters its procedure for the Final Round, and a finalist is naturally anxious about an aspect of competition which he could not have practiced, in an official capacity, more than a handful of times. After an extemper concludes his speech, the previous panelist reappears onstage and is allowed to question him for two minutes.⁵ Despite the apparent drama and intensity of allowing two extempers to cross swords, there is a general consensus, among almost all who have been through it, that cross-examination contributes little to the overall outcome, that it seldom serves as a means of either victory or defeat. Its effect upon most competitors seems marginal. But there can be no doubt that it does provide an opportunity to take an opponent down a notch, if not to cripple him entirely, and therefore I might provide some general advice to the questioner and to the speaker.

It appears to me that the objective of the questioner should be to uncover, gently but firmly, a flaw in the speaker's analysis, something he has failed to consider or has conceived inappropriately. *Inside Washington* or other TV programs in which panelists spar about politics might be taken as a model. Thus one should listen to the speaker's argument carefully, and as it unfolds consider not so much the details as the overall framework. During Finals my junior year, the young lady whom I had to question was making an argument about how Iran, Iraq, and North Korea constitute an Axis of Evil; yet while she clearly established their malevolence and general antipathy to the West, she said little to nothing about any *united* criminality, and I called her on it. Occasionally, one might discover not merely a chink in the armor but a gaping hole. I recall an MBA Round Robin in which one poor fool had expounded upon what we should do *if* OPEC

⁵ The first speaker is questioned by the sixth speaker, who then returns to the prep room.

were to reduce oil prices. His questioner, armed with up to the minute information, then rose and observed that OPEC did in fact lower oil prices.

The speaker's task is obviously to defend, and I conceive three general ways of doing so. First, in answer to a challenge, one might allude to the speech just given, reinforcing concepts already presented. This tactic conveys the impression that you already considered the questioner's point, whatever it may be. Second, one can present new material. If your speech was principally about NATO, yet your opponent introduces European defense or current debates at the Pentagon, you can meet him on his own turf and demonstrate your knowledge of these issues as well. Finally, one might resort to the science of fielding questions that has been perfected by politicians. These rhetorical twists take the sting out of questions and restate them in a more flattering light. For instance, if someone posits, "Why would you ever support Dick Cheney's position on water-boarding? That's wrong and totally un-American.", you might respond by saying, smoothly and elegantly, "Interrogation methods occupy an important place in contemporary homeland security, and therefore..." Skills in fielding questions are utilized particularly when polarizing issues are on the table.

I will introduce one last remark about NFL Extemp Finals. We all affirm the dishonesty of plagiarism, and are in agreement that it violates the spirit, if not the letter, of extemp to make up sources; but nevertheless we have all been forced to improvise somewhat when a date or particular newspaper citation slips the mind. I am uncertain whether or not they check sources during Finals: they certainly don't for any of the other rounds. I have heard testimony both ways. But it is abundantly clear that no trophy will be withheld because of one or two flubbed sources. My advice therefore is to not dwell upon the matter either way. Finalists should simply do their best, take what comes, and display their proven skills.

Part 2: Victory in Extemp at Nationals

We thus conclude our chronological discussion of extemp at Nationals, and the second half of our task is to address what is obviously the heart of competition: the speeches. The reader is acquainted with the elements of a successful speech: fluency, intelligence, reasonableness, humor, and charm. These qualities are universal and we may step over them. But there is truly a secret, a key, a magic wand to delivering winning speeches at Nationals. Concealed in broad daylight, it is ignored by almost everyone; yet recognition of the fact can make an indescribable difference in the level at which one performs. This pillar of cloud which shall lead you home, this flaming sword which shall drive your opponents from the field, is that the NFL publicly announces, weeks before the tournament, all of the extemp topic areas.

Extempers generally give little thought to the topic areas of a particular round. In most cases, tournaments simply alternate between domestic and international. Large circuit tournaments do have themes for particular rounds, but extempers never know them *in advance*: the announcement is usually made right before draw begins. But the NFL publishes, in the *Rostrum* and online, all its topic areas weeks prior to Nationals,⁶ and a tremendous amount of strategy can be built upon this knowledge. Specifically, one may construct, in advance of the tournament, speech skeletons or outlines that correspond

⁶ See index 2.

to each of the topic areas, outlines broad enough to pertain to any particular question within one, but narrow enough to exclude any question outside it.

The reader is aware of the attention-getters, jokes, and philosophic quotations artistically distributed throughout a winning speech, and I propose to do two things to this raw material. First, all of it shall become germane to a particular topic area. Second, I propose to arrange these elements in an outline before the first shot is fired at Nationals, allowing an extemper, *upon selecting the question*, to have nearly one-third of the speech prepared and practiced in advance.

Let us take for example the first topic area on the list for international, “Western and Eastern Europe.” I know from my long study of the continent that these two halves of Europe generally confront a different set of challenges, and I shall therefore decide to compose one speech skeleton for Western and another for Eastern Europe. My Western European outline shall be able to accommodate a question about any country west of Vienna or about the European Union as a whole. As we are all aware, a great speech begins with a great introduction.

The introduction, like all the artistic elements I shall present, must be topic-specific,⁷ must be entirely of my own composition, and should preferably not have been used before. The introduction, or more precisely the attention-getter portion thereof, will also set the artistic foundation for the entire speech. Jane Austen’s novels have recently been made into several motion pictures and are enjoying a surge in popularity; therefore I will select one of her stories and compose something like this:

In Jane Austen’s romance novel *Persuasion*, the humble Anne Elliot yields to social convention and breaks off her engagement to the penniless Frederick Wentworth. Anne never stopped loving the naval officer, but in the meantime her cousin William Elliot offers her his hand. He is handsome, wealthy, and has nice manners; but behind the scenes he is scheming to inherit the family title and take a friend of Sir Elliot for his mistress. Like William Elliot, Western Europe as a whole has long been characterized as having a glittering veneer but a decaying inside, and we see this principle in...

We note the usual features of a good introduction, such as brevity, succinctness, and relevance; but, as we shall see, this one will establish a unified artistic foundation for the remainder of the performance. Note that the last clause transitions into whatever the topic, at all related to Western Europe, may be.

Extempers of intermediate skill are generally able to execute a topic-specific introduction, but in order to improve one must learn to integrate artistic material into the two or three main points of the speech, and to do so in a relaxed, natural way. Following my model, we shall compose original, topic-specific jokes, quotations, and references to

⁷ This means, more or less, that the artistic material chosen derives from the region of the world or the culture under consideration. Allow instinct to serve as your guide in this matter. In the example chosen, Jane Austen is directly associated with Western Europe. Domestic extempers, for their part, may not deal in particular regions, but they are well-versed in their topics and can usually discern their natural extent.

the introduction and distribute them beforehand in a speech outline,⁸ which shall then serve as guidepost for the analysis. Focusing on composition first, I need at least one, but preferably two, innocent bits of humor about Western Europeans. Perhaps the following shall suffice: “Yet in the European world of...actions are often involuntary. One visiting dignitary recalled that King Edward VII, at a royal banquet, let forth a quote ‘colonic trumpet involuntary’. That’s King’s English for ‘fart.’ But one issue that should be trumpeted is...” Note how the line, as ridiculous as it may be, includes an entrance, a climax, and a transition to the next point. We shall employ the same formula for a philosophic quotation, and any name from Western Europe is fair game. The following is an example: “But with regard to...issue, the Europeans are best off teaching themselves, for as Victorian novelist William Thackeray stated, ‘What instruction is more effectual than self-instruction?’ It shall also be effectual to consider...” The reader begins to discern how total immersion in the topic area creates a unified artistic effect. Finally, the speaker should allude to the introduction at least once in the body of the speech. The following would work: “Miss Austen’s novels have long been criticized for ignoring the dangers and complexities of life, and it is certainly true that...is not to be found in them.”

Finally, of course, we have the conclusion. This is the easiest part of the speech to execute because it is the most formulaic. First, one recites the topic question and the main points. Second, one returns to the attention-getter. This allusion to the beginning may be quite brief, and I was always fond of attaching a topic-specific quote at the *very* end in order to finish on a particularly strong note. The combined devices look like this: “We can only wish that the Europeans involved will approach this issue with Austenian discretion, for as Samuel Richardson wrote in *Pamela*, ‘Things that we wish, are apt to gain a too ready credence with us.’”

I have thus explained how these artistic devices are composed, but have yet to speak of their arrangement. For my last Nationals competition as a senior, I composed twenty-three separate skeletons for the IX topic areas and placed the devices in the same position for each one. At the end of my first main point, for instance, I would let loose a topic-specific joke, and would then allude to my attention-getter at the beginning of my second main point. Thus upon drawing a question, I had not only about two of the seven minutes of my speech entirely memorized, but also I knew the exact positions of my artistic devices, and could easily fit the standard analysis around them. Most extempers wrap their jokes and quotes around their analysis, but I contend that one should do the reverse given that the former can be prepared in advance. It becomes much easier to prep winning speeches with a foundation or scaffolding already in place.

As I conclude this presentation of my particular methods, there are bound to be readers who see in them an unethical, if not perhaps an unsophisticated, attempt to “can” speeches. There have always been extempers who maintain that pre-written, pre-practiced artistic material should not find its way into tournament speeches. Having a few ideas for intros or even a few favorite quotations in one’s head is one thing, goes this argument, but memorizing any amount of material beforehand violates the spirit of extemp. The prime motive behind the anti-canning position, to insist upon fresh,

⁸ See index 3 for a sample speech employing the artistic devices here presented.

original, topic-centered speeches, is commendable; but the argument that composition and memorization *per se* endanger these qualities is a fatalistic delusion. In the first place, I have instructed extempers to compose material that shall be *entirely* their own. All of the two dozen introductions I wrote for my senior year at Nationals derived solely from my personal pen: not a word of them came from a briefing book or a debate camp. I was the sole author of all my speech outlines. Second, everything I used was genuinely topic-specific. It did not merely *appear* to be; it actually was. When speaking about Africa, I would tell a joke about *The Lion King*. When analyzing social problems in Russia, I would quote Tolstoy. For my introduction about the Middle East, I used an anecdote about Abraham smashing some pagan idols. Had I attached an intro about *Star Wars* to tensions between India and Pakistan, I would have certainly crossed the canning threshold. But all my material remained as grounded in the topic area as anything one could conceive during prep time. Third, some consideration should be given to the *extent* of memorization for which I argue. An extemper following my methods shall probably be forced to compose at least twenty outlines that each contains about two minutes of artistic material. He is thus going to memorize between forty and forty-five minutes of introductions, conclusions, jokes, quotations, and references to the introduction. That is not “canning,” rather it is committing to memory, in an entirely honorable fashion, a huge repository of knowledge which shall enhance the quality of the speeches. Against this amount of preparation, an extemper who insists that nothing should be memorized prior to the tournament almost appears lazy by comparison. Memorization and prior practice may go against the spirit of improvisational, but not of extemporaneous speaking; and in the midst of a war in which the fortress is the mind, I merely teach how to ensure that it remains well provisioned.

We close this discussion of Extemporaneous Speaking at NFL Nationals. I have described how the frantic, exhausting, but marvelous week shall unfold, and have disclosed the formula I employed to great effect, narrowly missing the national championship my senior year. I congratulate all this year’s qualifiers, and encourage those who narrowly missed to attempt again next year so singular an odyssey of the mind. I think I sway not too far to the fantastic when I say that in standing shoulder to shoulder with the greatest minds of your generation, in taking the stage of Extemporaneous Speaking, the hardest speech and debate event of the most powerful nation on Earth, you will be drawn to a vague and distant sense of the divine, your affections transported to regions of no common air.

INDEX 1

Extemp Schedule:

Monday, 15 June, Oak Mountain HS

Round 1

Round 2

Round 3

Tuesday, 16 June, Oak Mountain HS

Round 4

Round 5

Round 6

BREAK, to the top 60

Wednesday, 17 June, Oak Mountain HS

Round 7

Round 8

BREAK, to the top 30

Round 9, Spain Park HS

Thursday, 18 June, Spain Park HS

Round 10

BREAK, to the top 14

Round 11

Round 12

BREAK, to the top 6

Friday, 19 June, Birmingham-Jefferson Civic Center

Finals

INDEX 2

Nationals Extemp Topic Areas, 2009

(They may even use them *in this order*; it was so done so in 2001, my junior year.)

USX

1. Education and Issues of Youth
2. America: Challenges and Opportunities
3. The American War on International Terrorism
4. Science, Technology, and the Environment
5. American Politics
6. Business and the Economy
7. U.S. Immigration Policy
8. Crime and Punishment
9. Issues Facing States and Cities
10. America: Sports, Media, and Pop Culture
11. The New President
12. Health and Welfare
13. National Defense and Homeland Security

IX

1. Western and Eastern Europe
2. Russia
3. Africa
4. The World: Challenges and Opportunities
5. China, Taiwan, Japan, and the Koreas
6. U.S. Foreign Policy: The Foreign Perspective
7. Central and South America
8. India, Pakistan, and SE Asia
9. The Problem of International Terrorism
10. The World Economy
11. Science, Technology, and the Environment
12. Canada, Mexico, and the Caribbean
13. The Middle East

INDEX 3

Sample Speech According to My Formula

(The bold type represents the outline, composed, arranged, and memorized prior to the tournament. Below I expand my Western Europe skeleton examined above.)

Has Sarkozy been an effective French President?

In Jane Austen's romance novel *Persuasion*, the humble Anne Elliot yields to social convention and breaks off her engagement to the penniless Frederick Wentworth. Anne never stopped loving the naval officer, but in the meantime her cousin William Elliot offers her his hand. He is handsome, wealthy, and has nice manners; but behind the scenes he is scheming to inherit the family title and take a friend of Sir Elliot for his mistress. Like William Elliot, Western Europe as a whole has long been characterized as having a glittering veneer but a decaying inside, and we see this principle in contemporary French politics. The *New York Times* reported an historic change on May 26 of this year, in that France, under President Nicolas Sarkozy, has rejoined NATO, ending four decades of animosity toward the U.S. This event is of immense importance for American national security, and we should therefore pose the question, "Has Sarkozy been an effective French President?" The answer is that after two years in office the record is a mixed one, first because his foreign policy has achieved geostrategic successes; but second, his domestic record is like Louis XVI—there's good and bad; but finally because his personal leadership has lost all power to persuade.

Let us first turn to the most immediate consideration, where we'll see that President Sarkozy, elected in 2007, has achieved geostrategic successes in foreign policy. As Tony Judt notes in *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945*, France attempted to play both sides during the Cold War, pretentiously serving as a "balance" between the United States and the Soviet Union. Yet Sarkozy, though a conservative, is not a Gaullist, and under his leadership American and French bilateral relations have never been better. Yet he has won victories closer to home as well. President De Gaulle, though a leading power in Western Europe, was also something of a bully, but Sarkozy has managed to position the Fifth Republic at the forefront of the European renaissance. The April 2009 edition of the *Journal of Democracy* notes someone's 60th birthday. That someone is the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and Sarkozy has sent troops to Afghanistan to help fight the Taliban and to the Persian Gulf in order to protect oil shipping routes, with other European nations such as Germany following suit. During the Eisenhower administration, France and Britain were humiliated in the Suez Crisis, but the *Washington Post* reported on May 26 of this year that Sarkozy attended the opening ceremony of a French military base in Abu Dhabi, the first base to be constructed outside French soil since decolonization. Clearly the French President has inherited a little of Napoleon's talent for foreign relations, but hopefully not Edward VII's for bad manners. **One visiting dignitary recalls that, during a royal banquet, the king let loose a "colonic trumpet involuntary." That's King English for "fart."**

But we should also trumpet my second area of analysis, that Sarkozy's domestic record is like Louis XVI—there's the good and the bad. **As a novelist, Jane Austen has long been accused of painting too rosy a picture of life**, and therefore she might not be the best writer to depict the progress of the Sarkozy domestic agenda. As the *Economist* magazine of Great Britain notes on May 28 of this year, his ideology roughly corresponds to that of our Republican Party: low taxes, less benefits, bust up the unions, and hard work. *Laissez-faire*, as the saying goes. Yet his Hooverization of Paris has predictably rubbed some the wrong way. The leading French newspaper *Le Monde*, for instance, reported on January 23, 2009 that Sarkozy is determined to restructure the university system along the for-profit lines of the United States, an idea fiercely contested by the political left. As Interior Minister in 2006, he had crushed a student uprising at the Sorbonne. Another controversial agenda item are his tough, one might even say ruthless or jingoistic, policies on crime, which are geared toward illegal immigrants of North African descent residing in disadvantaged communities. Statistical analysis is welcome in extemp, so consider this. The *International Herald Tribune* reported on January 2 of this year that 1,147 French cars were burned on New Year's Eve, a 30% spike over the 879 torched the previous year. Sarkozy is a practicing Catholic and has insinuated that Muslims are not welcome in France. Yet the French are a savvy people, capable of **instructing** themselves on how best to handle their President, **for as Victorian novelist William Thackeray stated, "What instruction is more effectual than self-instruction?"**

It shall be effectual to consider our final point, that President Sarkozy's personal leadership has lost the power to persuade. His ideology may gravitate toward the right, but his personal morality is closer to Woodstock 1968. William Hitchcock writes in *The Struggle for Europe* that French leaders have traditionally enjoyed wide latitude in private matters. Socialist President François Mitterand, for instance, secretly kept a mistress in Paris for years. In other words, having a little fun on the side is hardly an impeachable offense. But as the *Times* of London explained on May 8, 2009, Sarkozy has filled the Left Bank with lurid tales of his personal life. Thrice married, his current wife, Carla Bruni, is a former model and musician known to all Paris as a master intriguer of considerable sexual talents. Think Cleopatra meets Lady Macbeth. Sarkozy pulled a Rudy Giuliani: engaging in a messy divorce while in office. One need not necessarily see these issues like Billy Graham, except that they have proved an immense political distraction, preoccupying and embarrassing the nation as a whole. The *Financial Times* noted on May 31 of this year that the President's approval rating, at the time of the writing of that article, stood at a meager 32%; and we Americans might note that George Bush left office with similar numbers. The Socialist Party habitually lampoons everything about Sarkozy, from his intimidating bodyguards to his penchant for Rolex watches. In short, he has allowed his personal quirks to compromise his presidency. **Maybe the President should take a cue from perhaps the most famous European of the 21st century: Mr. Bean, who, in war or peace, is fond of saying nothing at all.**

Therefore we return to the original question, "Has Sarkozy been an effective French President?" The record is clearly a mixed one, given that foreign relations have been right on the dot, the domestic agenda so-so, but personal leadership has passed the way of Napoleon after Waterloo. **We can only wish that President Sarkozy will**

discharge his duties with Austenian discretion, for as Samuel Richardson wrote in *Pamela*, “Things that we wish, are apt to gain a too ready credence with us.”

North Korean Aggression

By Logan Scisco

Early last month, North Korea angered the international community over its launch of a long range missile (Taepodong-2). This launch went against UN Security Council resolutions that ban North Korea from conducting ballistic missile tests, although North Korea's government saw it as an attempted satellite launch, arguing that it had the right to explore space. This launch was determined to be a failure, with the second and third stages of the rocket failing to separate as planned. Despite this failure, North Korea appears to have gained international attention yet again, by conducting its second nuclear test.

Although scientists and intelligence communities of the United States, Japan, and South Korea are trying to determine if what North Korea detonated was a nuclear weapon or simply a mock nuclear explosion, which could be done with large quantities of explosives, it appears that North Korea has taken a much more aggressive stance with the international community over its nuclear program. It seemed near the end of the Bush administration that North Korea would follow the path of Libya and give up its nuclear weapons program in return for international aid and more diplomatic recognition. However, despite attempts by the Obama administration to extend an olive branch to the North Korean government of Kim Jong-Il, the North Korean government has dug in its heels and has now withdrawn from the 1953 armistice that stopped the fighting in the Korean War.

With North Korea's aggression being a test of the Obama administration's resolve on U.S. security and non-proliferation goals, and with it having the potential to ignite a dangerous arms race in East Asia, it is important that extempers read up and understand this issue for the NFL national tournament. It does not matter if you do U.S. or International extemp, because each type will have rounds that will require extempers to analyze security trends and U.S. foreign policy. As such, this brief will explain some of the motivations behind North Korea's latest test, the response of the North Korea's neighbors about the test, and what steps the U.S. can take (or lack thereof) to force North Korea's hand.

Motivations

This is not the first time North Korea has conducted an underground nuclear test. The first time North Korea conducted a test, in 2006, it received a barrage of international criticism, which led to the United Nations imposing sanctions. However, these sanctions have been circumvented by many in East Asia, Russia and China in particular, and that has heavily weakened how the international community has responded to the North Korean problem.

There is wide agreement in intelligence circles that the latest belligerent actions taking place by North Korea are happening because of Kim Jong-Il's health. Extempers must understand that North Korea is the only communist state in the world that has had a successful dynastic succession. Kim Jong-Il took power after his father, Kim Il-Sung, passed away in July 1994. To continue this succession process, there are reports that Kim Jong-Il wants to facilitate the handover of power to his third son, Kim Jong-un, who currently sits on the National Defense Commission (NDC). This post is important because the NDC is part of the North Korean military apparatus and Kim Jong-Il's position as chairman in the NDC is what makes him the leader of the country.

However, to make sure that the succession from Kim Jong-Il to Kim Jong-un is successful, Kim Jong-Il must win the backing of the North Korean military, who has received most of the scraps that remain of the North Korea economy that has been destroyed since the mid-1990s. The North Korean military is said to be staffed with very conservative and militaristic generals, and to win their approval for an eventual succession, Kim Jong-Il may be throwing caution to the wind and ordering the nuclear test, in addition to short range missile launches to appease them.

The other theory, as revealed by the Council on Foreign Relations last week, is that Kim Jong-Il may be trying to re-assert his own authority in the government. Since his supposed stroke in September 2008, Kim has kept out of the public eye and when he has appeared has looked gaunt and weak. Although it is hard to get much reliable information out of North Korea, there are reports that when Kim Jong-Il had his stroke, the military temporarily took over the government. Therefore, to regain some of this lost authority, or to show that he still has the wits and ability to run the government, Kim Jong-Il may be making these moves.

Finally, a reason for North Korean action might be that they want a civilian distraction from economic woes. As North Korea's economic situation grows more desperate, the regime of Kim Jong-Il must try to create an international crisis so that the Korean people do not turn against the government. This is similar to the "boogeyman" strategy often employed by Hugo Chavez in Venezuela, who denounces Western governments and continues to insist that his country is at the risk of an invasion by the United States.

Regional Response

If one country should be mad about North Korea's latest show of bravado it is China. The People's Republic of China is the one who kept North Korea from being overrun by US-led forces in the Korean conflict and currently supplies much of the political and economic aid that keeps the country afloat. China often worries that a collapse of the North Korean regime would lead to a massive influx of refugees, leading to social instability within China. Therefore, China currently fears the collapse of the North Korean government more so than a belligerent North Korea.

However, sentiment in China is changing. There are indications that China, as well as Russia, are now willing to impose sanctions on North Korea for its latest test, albeit they have not voiced how strongly they want these sanctions to be imposed. There is even debate within Chinese society about whether or not it serves China's international interest to be so closely tied to an agent of instability in East Asia. After all, if China is trying to become a world power then it needs to exercise diplomatic responsibility because it is hard to believe China's pledge to desire a nuclear free Korean Peninsula.

South Koreans are also worried about the latest show of force by North Korea, especially with the North warning of a possible military confrontation. South Korea and North Korea have had two deadly engagements in the waters to the west of the peninsula since 1990, and such an engagement this time could raise tensions to an irreversible level. The South Korean government of Lee Myung-bak is being blamed for antagonizing North Korea by cutting off economic and food aid to the country because of North Korea's refusal to fully disclose details about its nuclear program. However, these accusations leveled against the president by the opposition has not stopped Mr. Lee from taking South Korea into the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI), a creation from the days of the Bush administration, which has the goal of intercepting ships that are carrying weapons of mass destruction or the technology that allows for their use. North Korea had said before that if South Korea joined the PSI (it was just an observer before), it would

consider it tantamount to a declaration of war. However, South Korea figured the risk was worth it and joined, believing that it needs to make a stronger stand against North Korea after the “Sunshine Policy” of the 1990s and early 2000s failed to pay a large security dividend.

Japan has also grown worried about North Korea’s aims. The Japanese considered a nuclear program in the 1990s, but abandoned the idea because they are under the U.S. nuclear umbrella. However, now there are Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) members arguing that Japan might want to pursue a nuclear arsenal so that it can counter the North Korean threat. Such a step would prove costly for regional stability, as China would most likely increase its nuclear arsenal if Japan decided to pursue a nuclear program. This would also blow the top off the world’s non-proliferation regime.

Steps for the U.S.

One troubling sign from the Obama administration about these signs of aggression is that, according to Defense Secretary Robert Gates, the administration does not see this as a crisis. Many regional leaders disagree and worry that the Obama administration’s focus on Afghanistan and the Israeli-Palestinian dispute will lead to a loosening of U.S. obligations to the region. Gates has also said that the U.S. has no plans to increase its troop numbers in South Korea, which total over 28,000, and that it does not plan any naval actions such as a blockade out of the fear that the North Korean government could take them for signs of aggression and destabilize the situation further. The U.S. government has also ruled out a pre-emptive military strike, but the Defense Department has recently asked Congress for hundreds of millions of dollars to increase the military capabilities of South Korea’s armed forces.

The most likely outcome of this situation is for the U.S. to impose more sanctions upon North Korea. However, as the Council on Foreign Relations pointed out, it is very hard for these sanctions to have an impact because we have to worry about other people circumventing the sanctions and we also have very little economic activity with North Korea in the first place. This is also true of South Korea and Japan. It is tough to exercise leverage when you have nothing to exercise leverage with.

Finally, another approach would be for the U.S. to start backchannel diplomacy with North Korea, potentially in a bilateral arena. Although critics would scoff that this would be bad because we could alienate regional allies such as South Korea and Japan who want a seat at the table and that we would be rewarding North Korea for bad behavior, we have to face the fact that if bilateral negotiations will keep North Korea from acquiring a nuclear weapon that can be put onto an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM), then it will be worth it. Since North Korea might be plagued by a succession question, the U.S. might want to use such a bilateral arena to provide a security guarantee for the country after Kim Jong-Il dies. Assuring the North Korean government that the U.S. will not support an invasion of the country, nor try to take advantage of its predicament, may help to tone down tensions to the point that the risk of war being reignited on the Korean peninsula remains minimal and provide the Obama administration with a successful example of its pledge to use diplomacy over force.

