

THE EX FILES

**End of 2009 Regular Season
Edition
Volume 1, Issue No. 5**

From the Publisher

After a bit of a delay, the next edition of *The Ex Files* is here. The national invitational portion of the 2008-2009 season is finished and many competitors are currently preparing for national tournaments, national qualifiers, and/or state championship competitions. The staff of *The Ex Files* wishes competitors doing each of these the best of luck. For those who have had their season ended, *The Ex Files* hopes that you will still read this, and future editions, to learn more about extemporaneous speaking and can better hone your performance for the 2009-2010 season.

This issue provides a recap of that national invitational season, with a heavy focus on the new Extemp Central National Points Race standings, which have included four national circuit tournaments: the Montgomery Bell Extemp Round Robin, the Barkley Forum, the Harvard Invitational, and the California Invitational Forensic Tournament.

Also contained in this issue is an interview with Matt Arons, the champion of the 2009 MBA Extemp Round Robin. Arons breaks down his experience at the Round Robin and how he emerged victorious against tough competition in Nashville.

Rounding out this issue are three topic briefs, an extra one provided this month for extempers still competing at national qualifiers or state competitions. The first is by Sarah Anand who discusses the concept of leftism in Latin America, a topic that extempers might find more questions on in the upcoming months due to the election in El Salvador. The second concerns the ICC arrest warrant for Omar al-Bashir of Sudan. Then, for a change of pace, there is a small topic brief concerning space junk.

The next issue of *The Ex Files* will be a Extemp TOC and CFL Nationals preview, which will feature some strategy articles and most importantly, a topic area analysis, with accompanying practice questions that can help extempers prepare for these two important tournaments. Also, an interview with Michael Garson, the co-tournament director of the Extemp TOC will be included.

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

-Logan Scisco



Volume 1, No. 5

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Leftism in Latin America

By Sarah Anand¹

The term *leftism* itself has been used quite frequently (especially in relation to Latin American politics) to characterize the state of a country's affairs. However, there is a tendency to ascribe the particular adjective without fully understanding its entire meaning. For the past couple of years, specific countries in Latin America have started making shifts to becoming more "leftist." The world has taken notice of these changes, whether through the antics of Hugo Chavez, the comeback of Daniel Ortega, or the improbability of Evo Morales as president. But, what exactly is leftism, and how does it relate to what is happening in Latin America?

An Umbrella Term

Instead of having a solid definition, which is applicable to every case study, leftism can be viewed as more of an encompassing word, which acts as a general way to refer to recent changes in Latin America. The actual degree to how socialist or communist a country is has been disputed. Marta Lagos, executive director of Latinobarómetro explains: "The 'leftist' label confuses the public, because it's a concept that comes from the Cold War...and is associated with revolutionary movements like those of Che Guevara, the government of Salvador Allende in Chile, and the Cuban revolution itself" (Osava). If what happened during the Cold War is considered the true leftist revolutionary movements, then today's trend is definitely different. For each country, the move from the center has been distinct from one another, with "leftist" practices manifested differently. Jorge G. Castenada, author of *Utopia Unarmed: The Latin American Left After the Cold War* and contributor to *Foreign Affairs* attempts to describe what being "left" is in today's times: "...current of thought, politics, and policy that stresses social improvements over macroeconomic orthodoxy, egalitarian distribution of wealth over its creation, sovereignty over international cooperation, democracy over governmental effectiveness" (Castenada).

How did the shift start?

One of the obvious reasons for a shift towards leftism has to do with the politics during and immediately after the Cold War. The United States was consistently suspicious of any socialist or communist leader in Latin America, linking them to the Soviet Union. However, once the U.S.S.R. collapsed, Latin American countries could embrace their leftism more fully, shirking off any ties the U.S. could make. As time went on, leftism became more of a necessity than just a reaction to American intervention.

Latin America has/had one of the highest income inequality gaps in the entire world. In fact, Thierry Lemareshquier, a member of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals team remarked in 2005 that "The inequality affects the rate at which poverty is reduced. It also affects growth, so then we have a vicious circle" (United Nations). The problems concerning inequality that Latin America as a whole faces are ones that started decades ago, around the same time as

¹ Sarah Anand competed for Desert Vista High School in Phoenix, Arizona, and was coached by Mr. Victor Silva. She was a two time qualifier to the National Forensic League (NFL) Nationals in International extemporaneous speaking, finishing as a quarterfinalist and octo-finalist respectively in 2007 and 2008. She was a double finalist in USX and ISX at the 2007 St. Marks tournament, semi-finalist and finalist in 2007 and 2008 respectively at the Glenbrooks tournament, invitee to the 2008 Montgomery Bell Extemp Round Robin, quarterfinalist at the 2008 Harvard tournament, and attained the level of Premier Distinction in the NFL. She attends the University of Arizona in Tucson, Arizona, studying business and political science.

the communist influence of the Cold War era. Leaders across the continent decided to explore the options that a leftist government could provide, specifically because trends have shown, the more unequal a country is in terms of wealth, the more leftist they tend to be (Castenada). Logically thinking about it, those who are less fortunate will make decisions (especially in terms of politics) based on what they truly believe will make them better off.

Another reason that is accountable for the shift towards leftism is the acclamation toward democratic rule. As democracy became more commonplace, it allowed leftist leaders to gain inroads with the voting population (especially with those less off), ushering in an era of politics colored by leftist tendencies. The climate for change was perfect, especially because, as mentioned before, demographically speaking, leftist politicians had massive amounts of support from citizens.

Two Lefts?

As the policies of the left began to pan out over the years, it became apparent that Latin America would not follow a singular brand of leftism. In the decades that followed, *two* particular thought process have come to govern various countries.

The first type of leftism is reminiscent of the Communist revolution in Cuba and the Bolshevik revolution in Russia. While in the beginning it was more authoritarian (and more severe) than the people cared for, since it's embracement, it has become much more mellow. One of the reasons this is true is because leaders who chose to utilize the kinds of philosophies similar to those revolutions realized that the changing times needed to be reflected in changing governmental policies. Castenada explains: "The communist, socialist, and Castroist left, with a few exceptions, has been able to reconstruct itself, thanks largely to an acknowledgment of its failures and those of its erstwhile models" (Castenada).

The second type of leftism has its roots in a type of policy that is well known in today's political sphere (especially in Latin America): populism. Populism is defined as "urban-based, multiclass coalitional, hierarchical, co-optive, ad hoc, and nonrevolutionary, led by ebullient (if not charismatic) figures who promised to redress popular grievances and to build social solidarity" (Becker). Anyone who has been paying attention to the news knows that Hugo Chavez, president of Venezuela, champions this type of policy as a way to bring prosperity to the country. While this form of leftism started out less severe than the other one, it has become, as some critics point out, extremist as time has gone on. Following the trend of Chavez, leaders like Evo Morales of Bolivia and Rafael Correa of Ecuador have been sworn into office. A central theme among these leaders is their aversion to being included in the United State's sphere of influence.

Oftentimes, both forms have been hard to coordinate around (and through) especially for countries trying to engage diplomatically with Latin America. In modern times, Brazil and Venezuela are good representations of the first and second types of leftism's (respectively).

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Omar Al-Bashir Arrest Warrant

By: Logan Scisco

The International Criminal Court (ICC) issued its largest arrest warrant to date when they targeted Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir on charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity for actions that have taken place in Sudan's Darfur region from 2003-2008. Bashir is alleged to have provided support and ordered the violence in that region of the country which has left over 300,000 people dead and displaced up to 2.5 million people. Due to the actions of Sudan's Arab population in killing blacks farmers in Darfur, there has also been charges of genocide leveled against Bashir's regime, although the ICC decided not to issue an arrest warrant with that charge attached.

The arrest warrant against Bashir marks the first time that a sitting head of state has been charged with crimes against humanity and war crimes in world history. Supporters of the ICC hail this as a milestone in international justice, as it shows world leaders that they are not immune from prosecution for their acts against civilians or enemies in combat zones. Opponents of the ICC say that the arrest warrant will only further inflame disputes in Sudan and that Bashir will never be tried before the court.

This brief will break down a brief history of the ICC, so that extempers can best understand the circumstances behind the arrest warrant, explain why the arrest warrant was issued, and look into some implications for what the arrest warrant may mean for Sudan's tenuous political situation and for future world leaders who could be targeted by the court.

ICC: A Background

The ICC came into being in 2002, when 60 nations ratified a document known as the Rome Statute. The ICC was created to handle serious charges leveled against world leaders and individuals who had committed crimes against humanity, war crimes, and genocide. The difference between the ICC and the International Court of Justice (ICJ) that had existed before is that the ICC has the jurisdiction to prosecute individuals who have committed crimes within their nation's borders (although there are limits to this prosecution which will be discussed shortly), while the ICJ only dealt with disputes that existed across national boundaries. As another sidenote, the ICC gets its funding from the United Nations, ironically funded by countries that are not currently members (notably the United States, India, and China). Its current budget stands at \$127 million.

Prior to the ICC, the United Nations had established tribunals in conflict areas such as Sierra Leone, Cambodia, and the ex-Yugoslavia to try individuals who had committed war crimes. However, these tribunals often moved slowly and were restricted over a small period of time when they did start. Critics alleged that while these tribunals had some successes, their slow movement allowed those under prosecution time to destroy evidence and intimidate witnesses (or remove them altogether) and that some criminals simply played out the clock and avoided prosecution when the time frame of the tribunal ran out. Creating a permanent court with the ICC was meant to solve these problems by having a more efficient and long running system of prosecutions that would be more reliable and set a higher standard of justice for the international community.

While the ICC is meant to go after individuals who violate fundamental human rights, its reach is limited by several factors. The ICC only has jurisdiction in cases that involve members of

countries who have signed the Rome Statute, the crime in question was committed in a signatory country, or the UN Security Council asks the ICC to look into a situation. The third step is what got Bashir to this stage in the ICC process.

Another limitation on ICC prosecution is that the ICC can only try a case in its system if the nation in question is incapable or unwilling to prosecute the individual themselves.

Currently, the ICC has been criticized, especially in the developing world, as being a court of “white man’s justice” as the twelve cases the ICC is looking over all involve Africans. However, there have been calls for the ICC to look into the recent Israeli invasion of Gaza, where its jurisdiction is questionable at best since the Palestinians do not have a state of their own to claim where violations could have been committed, and even into George W. Bush’s actions, as well as his officials, in Iraq.

Why We Are Here

Bashir’s arrest warrant has been issued due to the violence that erupted in the Darfur region in 2003. Darfur is located in western Sudan and after decades of drought and overpopulation, Arab Baggara nomads, who travel the land looking for water for their livestock, and black African farmers came into conflict. Believing that the government was favoring the Arabs over the farmers, a rebellion broke out in 2003, with two rebel groups called themselves the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) and the Sudanese Liberation Army (SLA) fighting government troops and winning 34 of 38 engagements. To turn the tide, the Sudanese government began a counter insurgency strategy in the region that involved using its military intelligence wing, its air force, and a force called the Janjaweed, who were armed Baggara herders. While the Sudanese government denies having involvement in the actions of the Janjaweed, there is evidence to suggest that the Sudanese government outfitted the Janjaweed with artillery and communication equipment to make them a dangerous paramilitary force.

Shortly after invoking this strategy, the Sudanese government began to have success against the militants in Darfur. In what is often called “The Toyota War” by local combatants, because that is the vehicle of choice to get troops to battles and back, the Janjaweed began to attack civilians, displacing individuals and forcing them to flee across Sudan’s border with Chad. The Janjaweed also participated in the rape of women so that they would be shamed by their communities and killing children and infants, adding credence to international claims of genocide as these same tactics were used in Yugoslavia’s ethnic conflicts in the 1990s.

Bashir has continued to deny ordering the Janjaweed to attack civilians in the region, but when the government chose to outfit the Janjaweed as a paramilitary force it had historical evidence of what it was about to unleash. This is because in the Second Sudanese Civil War which lasted from 1983-2005, the government equipped a similar force to fight their Christian and Animist opponents in Southern Sudan and war crimes happened in that region as well with many being displaced, killed, raped, or mutilated.

What the Janjaweed have done in Darfur, with the assistance of Sudanese air superiority, has provoked the ire of the international community and leveled blame squarely at Bashir. His complicity is only reinforced by his decisions to continue attacks in the Darfur region despite UN pleas to come to the negotiating table (this was especially prevalent in 2006).

Currently, both sides are still locked in a stalemate over the situation as the Sudanese government is split by a north-south divide and Darfur’s rebel groups have split many times over. Darfur’s

rebels say that they could topple Bashir by force by invading Khartoum if they wish, a charge that the government denies. Darfur's rebels are threatening to try an invasion, though, if they do not get international support for their demands which include establishing a "no fly zone" over Darfur, allow for the same transfer of humanitarian aid from Darfur's neighbors, and a "oil for food" program that would allow some of Sudan's massive oil revenue to be distributed to the civilian population.

Implications of the Arrest Warrant

Most notably, Sudan is not a signatory to the Rome Statute. As such, the ICC cannot go in and have Bashir arrested on the charges they have leveled against him. However, if Bashir were to travel to a country that is a signatory to the Rome Statute then he could be sought after by the ICC and brought to trial. Bashir has joked that the ICC is not going to come and get him and have provoked demonstrations in the streets, indicating to the international community that if they try to invade Sudan to get him that he will fight them to the bitter end.

Critics suggest that the fact that Bashir may never stand trial for the charges due to Sudan not being a signatory show the weakness of the ICC's authority. Others suggest that the ICC only charges Bashir to gain notoriety and provide a basis for future funding.

However, the biggest criticism that has been leveled against the ICC's arrest warrant is that it could destabilize Sudan's gentle political situation. Experts point to the fact that Sudan has expelled 14 aid agencies since the arrest warrant, something that has the potential to make the situation in Darfur even worse (and may cause another war crime charge to be tallied against Bashir), where 4.7 million people are already dependent on aid. The Bashir government seems to be following the road map set out in the Comprehensive Peace Accord it reached in 2005 with Southern Sudan which ended the Second Sudanese Civil War. This accord provides for a 2011 referendum to be held where the South has the right to secede from the central government in Khartoum if they wish. Observers worry that if it becomes clear to Southern Sudan that the Bashir government is on its last legs, they may not follow the CPA. They also worry that the Bashir government, feeling threatened, may decide to stop moving towards the referendum, something that could provoke a third civil war to break out. Bashir may also grow more radical in Darfur, a situation that has been empirically proven when the ICC went after the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in Uganda in 2005. This caused the LRA to withdraw from negotiations with the Ugandan government and go on a murderous killing spree, something it has continued today. However, defenders of the ICC say that what makes the situation in Darfur different is that the Bashir government is already dragging its feet so its hard to imagine this arrest warrant greatly modifying the status quo.

Interestingly enough, the willingness of the ICC to target Bashir, a sitting world leader, may eventually lead to attempted prosecutions against others such as George W. Bush. This is somewhat unlikely as the Obama administration has not supported such actions, at home or abroad, and the fact that the United States is not part of the ICC. It is also unlikely because of the U.S. veto power on the Security Council. However, the fact that ICC has shown that it will not hesitate to target world leaders could open the floodgates to future prosecutions, some of which might target U.S officials.

2009 Montgomery Bell Academy Champion: An Interview with Matt Arons

Interview by Logan Scisco

The Montgomery Bell Extemp Round Robin is one of the most prestigious extemp tournaments in the country. Its unique, select field makes it an honor to be invited. The Ex Files was able to secure an interview with Matt Arons of Millburn High School in New Jersey who won this year's Round Robin against the best extempers the tournament could bring together in early January.

Note: This interview was conducted shortly before the Harvard Invitational.

Logan Scisco: To start I think I should say congratulations on your victory at the Round Robin last month and congratulations on your victory earlier in the season at the Yale University Invitational Tournament. Also, thank you for doing this interview for the extemp community.

Matt Arons: Thanks, and thanks for the opportunity to contribute to the *Ex Files*.

Scisco: What was your reaction to getting an MBA bid? What do you think helped you get it?

Arons: I was extraordinarily excited to receive a bid to MBA. As a freshman, I learned about the tournament, and attending it had always been one of my goals in Extemp. I received an invitation after winning Yale. I believe that my performance there, along with my past track record, was responsible for my bid.

Scisco: Going into the tournament, what was your preparation like?

Arons: I tried to give as many practice speeches as possible in the week or two leading up to the tournament. I either prepped a new speech or delivered an old one to work on my presentation skills. I also videotaped myself; it's really startling to see your presentational quirks firsthand, and it becomes far easier to eliminate them. I filed as much as possible for MBA and read much of what I put in my tubs in order to make sure that I could find the citations I wanted quickly.

Scisco: What round of the tournament made you feel like you belonged in the field/that you had a good chance at winning?

Arons: I got a feel for the tournament after the second round, and by that point I was pretty sure I could hold my own. I thought I had a chance of winning after the last round of the tournament. My competitors in that round were particularly strong, but I was really happy with my speech and thought it left me in a good position.

Scisco: MBA is famous for their graphs which tease competitors about where they are ranked in the tournament. Did you pick your line correctly or did you really care?

Arons: I fell victim to the notorious MBA graph. I was fairly sure that I had figured out my line – of course, I was wrong. Although I tried to guess my position on the chart, I didn't obsess about it too much or let it affect my performance.

Scisco: What was your most memorable experience at the tournament?

Arons: The most memorable part of my tournament experience was meeting some of the extempers on the circuit who I had never gotten to know before. Most of the tournaments my team attends are on the East Coast; it was great to speak to some competitors who I hadn't seen since Nationals and make some new friends. And of course, the Goo Goo Clusters are a memorable part of everyone's MBA experience.

Scisco: What is the best piece of advice you received at the tournament?

Arons: The best piece of advice I heard at the tournament is something that's fundamental to Extemp, yet easy to forget: answer the question. It's easy to beat around the bush with a generic answer or to only answer half of the question. But a good speech is tailored to the question asked. It's something that you have to consciously think about and analyze as you prepare your speech.

Scisco: Any advice to future competitors at the Round Robin who wish to have the success that you did?

Arons: MBA is longer than most tournaments, and it's important to be as alert in round one as you are in round ten. You have to perform well during the entire tournament in order to succeed. Also, it's easy to be misled by the chart, but you can't let it get to your head.

Scisco: Any other national circuit plans until nationals?

Arons: I'll be competing at Harvard this weekend and at TOC in May.

Extemp Question Central National Points Race

by Logan Scisco

The “invitational” portion of the national extemporaneous speaking season has finished for the 2008-2009 season and after the completion of one second tier tournament and three third tier tournaments the standings are still lead by **Stacey Chen** of North Allegheny Senior High School in Wexford, Pennsylvania. In fact, over the last three months, Chen has opened a bigger gap on her competition than she had at the end of December.

The most notable tournament to occur over the last three months was the Montgomery Bell Academy Extemp Round Robin in Nashville, Tennessee. Extemp Central provided live coverage for this event, and as many around the country now know, **Matt Arons** of Millburn High School in New Jersey won the tournament over **Evan Larson** of Bellarmine College Prep in California. Points leader Stacey Chen placed third at the competition. The Round Robin was notable because it is the first time that the fifth place finisher at the event, in this case **Dillon Huff** of Southlake Carroll High School in Texas, won the Exhibition Round at the end of the tournament.

However, the standings below are still subject to much change. The three tournaments that remain on the calendar, the Extemp TOC, CFL Nationals, and NFL Nationals, are worth two to three times the size of invitational tournaments and could do much to change the dynamic. The next edition of *The Ex Files* will be a TOC and CFL Nationals preview and will not include an extensive points race update. However, the NFL Nationals preview edition of *The Ex Files* will provide updated standings after those tournaments finish so that extempers know where they stand heading into the final tournament of the season.

Individual Standings

Here are the updated individual standings as of March 30, 2009. The top fifteen in the rankings, including ties, are included below:

RANK	NAME	SCHOOL	POINTS
1	Stacey Chen	North Allegheny Senior HS (Wexford, PA)	240
2	Matt Arons	Millburn HS (Wyckoff, NJ)	180
3	Dillon Huff	Carroll HS (Southlake, TX)	178
T4	Nick Cugini	Cypress Ridge HS (Houston, TX)	135
T4	Evan Larson	Bellarmino College Prep (San Jose, CA)	135
6	Jovalin Dedaj	Fordham Preparatory (Bronx, NY)	76
7	Brennan Morris	Randolph-Macon Academy (Fort Royal, VA)	70
8	Aaron Lutkowitz	Montgomery Bell Academy (Nashville, TN)	62
T9	Ryan Pereira	Nova HS (Davie, FL)	60
T9	Michael Watson	Desert Vista HS (Phoenix, AZ)	60
T9	Alex Tolkin	Newton South HS (Newton, MA)	60
12	Morgan Booksh	McNeil HS (Austin, TX)	52
T13	Alon Elhanan	Bronx High School of Science (Bronx, NY)	50
T13	Jane Kessner	Walt Whitman HS (Bethesda, MD)	50
T13	Jason Bernstein	Nova HS (Davie, FL)	50

Compared to the December rankings, Stacey Chen has widened her lead in the national points race from twenty to sixty points due to a third place showing at the MBA Extemp Round Robin and yet another major national circuit victory at the Harvard Invitational Tournament. For much of the season Chen has been at the front of the national points race and she does not seem to be relinquishing any of that momentum anytime soon. In second position is Matt Arons, winner of the MBA Extemp Round Robin, and he is holding a narrow edge over Dillon Huff thanks to a third place finish at the Harvard University Invitational tournament. Evan Larson also makes his debut in the standings for the first time this season after placing third in last season's rankings. Larson's fourth place position is owed only to his second place finish at the MBA Extemp Round Robin and victory at the California Invitational Forensic Tournament.

Observant followers of the national points race will note that there is not too much movement in the top ten in the rankings. However, **Jason Bernstein** of Nova High School in Florida makes his debut in the top 15 after his victory at the Barkley Forum over an impressive field of competition that included Huff and teammate **Ryan Pereira**, who sits in a tie for ninth in the current standings after a finalist placing fourth at that tournament.

Jane Kessner of Walt Whitman High School in Maryland also cracks the top 15 after a third place finish at the Barkley Forum. Kessner avoided getting points for the MBA Round Robin due to her sixth place finish at the tournament, although next year's points formula may include points for MBA's sixth place finisher as the tournament is not a conventional format. Joining her in the top 15 is **Michael Watson** of Desert Vista High School in Arizona, who placed fourth at the Harvard Invitational. Finally, **Alex Tolkin** of Newton South High School in Massachusetts cracks the top 15 after a runner-up finish to Chen at the Harvard Invitational.

Team Standings

Here are the updated top ten in the Extemp Question Central National Team Points Race as of March 30, 2009:

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

Propelled solely by Stacey Chen's finishes thus far this season, which include five final round placings, **North Allegheny Senior High School** in Pennsylvania has maintained its lead in the national team points race. In second place, forty-six points behind North Allegheny, is **Carroll High School** of Texas. Carroll has an equal number of final round placings, much of them from

Dillon Huff, and remains within striking distance of overtaking North Allegheny when the season is completed.

Storming up the standings over the last three months is **Millburn High School** in New Jersey, who is lead by Matt Arons. Due to Aron’s victories at Yale and MBA and top three finish at Harvard, Millburn has improved its standing from ninth in the team points race to third, where they hold a forty point lead over **Nova High School** of Florida. Nova moves up one spot in the rankings after having two finalists at the Barkley Forum, which included tournament champion Jason Bernstein.

Cypress Ridge High School in Texas remains in the top five, albeit dropping due to a period of inactivity and **Newton South High School** has entered the top ten thanks to Alex Tolkin’s second place finish at the Harvard Invitational. Newton placed second in last year’s “mock” standings to Scarsdale High School, but one wonders if 150 points is too much of a margin to makeup this late in the season.

Perennial NFL powerhouse **Bellarmino College Prep**, led by Evan Larson, also makes a debut in the national team points race following Larson’s second place finish at MBA and second consecutive victory at the California Invitational Forensic Tournament.

The remaining schools in the top ten, **Fordham Preparatory (NY)**, **Randolph-Macon Academy (VA)** and **Montgomery Bell Academy (TN)** have avoided slipping out of the top ten, but schools like **Desert Vista (AZ)** and **San Marino (CA)** are nipping at their heels.

Tournament Overview

Here is an overview of the tournaments that will count for this year’s competitive calendar towards the Extemp Question 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 Classic	10/18-10/19/2008	Philadelphia, Pennsylvania	50 (3rd Tier)	Brennan Morris (Randolph Macon Academy, VA)

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)	
2009 CFL National Tournament	5/23- 5/24/2009	Albany, New York	150 (1st Tier)	
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)	

Space Junk

Although space issues are a well researched area by extempers, who focus more on domestic politics and international situations such as those involving North Korea, they do arise in the later rounds of tournaments when question writers have exhausted all possible options for questions. The chance of drawing a question concerning space issues also increases at a national qualifying tournament or at national competitions when “science and technology” is an often used topic area, especially at CFL Nationals and as one of the thirteen topic areas for United States extemp at NFL.

Considering that nationals keeps creeping up and recent events surrounding the issue of space junk, such as the collision last month of a U.S. and Russian satellite over Siberia, and how the International Space Station (ISS) was almost struck by a piece of space junk several weeks ago, an issue that is followed by scientists has started to become an issue of public debate. As this debate grows and as “close calls” in space become more reported, extempers have a higher likelihood of getting a question on space junk.

This topic brief will provide some informational facts concerning space junk, the reason it is a concern for space programs, and its implications on future space policies.

FYI on Space Junk

The United States Air Force currently tracks 8,500 pieces of debris that are in Earth’s orbit. This debris is a mixture of dead satellites, pieces of old rocket boosters, and other pieces of old spacecrafts. The U.S. Air Force also tracks an additional 6,300 objects that it considers to be unknown and estimates that there are tens of millions of smaller objects in space that are less than one centimeter in size.

While these objects are small, one has to take into consideration that when they are pulled into Earth’s orbit and establish a pattern, they are orbiting the Earth at 17,500 miles per hour. NASA has argued that an object of one inch or more striking a space shuttle or other critical space objects could have a devastating impact on their performance. Last week, the ISS had to get its crews ready for an evacuation using a Russian Soyuz craft after there was a rising probability that a five inch piece of an old rocket motor, which scientists say helped launch a 1993 U.S. military global positioning satellite, could strike the station. Over the last several years, the ISS has had to be moved eight times to avoid collisions with space junk.

NASA is growing more concerned that space junk is increasingly posing a risk to astronauts, future space missions, and future space exploration and technology. It has estimated that there are 17,000 objects in space that are bigger than a grapefruit. Any of these striking a craft such as the ISS could have devastating consequences and could waste billions of taxpayer dollars that have been funneled into such missions over the years. This threat is exaggerated by the fact that many of the objects that are threatening such things as the ISS could be circling above the Earth for the next 10,000 years.

For an artist rendering of the space junk surrounding the Earth go to the following link:
<http://media.collegepublisher.com/media/paper420/stills/nj43373a.jpg>

Concern for Programs

The satellite collision over Siberia last month between a U.S. and Russian satellite illustrates how crowded space is becoming for objects vital to communication and military strategy. This collision, while attracting much international attention, is supposed to be rare because satellites are launched to go in a similar orbit with other satellites and go in traffic much like an interstate system. The more significant issue with the U.S.-Russian collision was that it created a horrible debris field above the Earth that will linger for thousands of years before all of its parts move into smaller orbits and eventually burn up upon re-entry into the Earth's atmosphere.

NASA has become more worried about space junk since early 2003 when the Columbia space shuttle disaster grounded the U.S. space shuttle program. The Columbia disaster saw foam insulation break off the shuttle, which doomed all seven astronauts on board when they re-entered Earth's atmosphere when their mission was completed. Even the smallest collision in space with a piece of space junk would cause a massive headache for NASA logistical planners on the ground, as they would need to inspect the craft to make sure no significant damage took place, messing with a mission's schedule. A collision that resulted in a loss of life might well doom the space shuttle program for an indefinite period of time and provide more bad press for NASA at a time when it is looking for something positive that will renew funding and support for the organization's endeavors.

Finally, space junk has the potential to complicate the development of successful space programs. NASA has announced that the field of space junk that is in the orbit of the Hubble Telescope is so bad that they may not be able to send a mission to fix it this year. More junk that does not allow this to be replaced will stall some of the discoveries scientists are making about the solar system, limiting the new knowledge that will be available about future galaxies. Therefore, the international community is starting to pay more attention, especially for methods to clear out space junk.

Implications

Of course, the major problem that exists with space junk is that there is not a good way to clear out the junk. All that scientists can currently do is monitor the junk that exists and try to stay out of its way. Proposals have been submitted to use orbital water guns to blast away the junk, but such ideas are not receiving a serious hearing at the current time.

In having to track the junk, there is a major economic implication for news agencies and consumers. If all that can be done with space junk is track it, and the amount of space objects keeps increasing as nations such as China and India want to develop their space programs, there is bound to be more clutter in space. With more clutter, more sophisticated monitoring will be necessary, potentially leading to a higher cost of services to deal with the space minefield created by space junk. This higher cost could lead to an increase for services that have to use satellite technology such as cell phones, weather forecasting, and television.

Overall, the international community has to evaluate what it wants to do concerning space junk. With more clutter emerging in space, the world may have to reconsider how it views space and whether it sees it as the next frontier where pollution from spacecrafts is allowed or whether an environmentally-friendly agenda needs to take hold where space is treated a national park and those who litter are punished with economic sanctions.

