Sullivan and Cornellier 3rd at NDT

SU’s top two-person team, John Sullivan (Rochester, MI) and Erik Cornellier (Traverse City, MI) finished tied for third at the prestigious National Debate Tournament, hosted by the University of Utah, in Salt Lake City.

The National Debate Tournament (NDT) is one of a pair of national championship tournaments held during the last two weekends in March, each year. The other is the Cross Examination Debate Association (CEDA) National Championship. John and Erik also reached the final round of CEDA Nationals, in 1997, held in Wichita, Kansas. With these accomplishments, the pair now has the best aggregate record between these two national championship tournaments—2nd at CEDA Nationals, last year, and 3rd at the NDT, in 1998—of any 2-person debate team in history.

Although Sullivan and Cornellier would like to have concluded their debate careers at MSU by winning the NDT, their overall records as MSU debaters are among the best that have ever been recorded for any debaters anywhere. After a very successful freshmen year (Continued, page 3.)

MSU’s 7th High School Debate Institute nets 210 from 21 States

Beginning seven years ago, MSU has held high school debate institutes in the summer. Beginning in 1992, when MSU attracted 43 students, from Michigan, the Spartan Debate Institute (or “SDI”) has become one of the largest and best known (Continued, page 2.)

Team Achieves Unparalleled Excellence, in Last Five Years

Prof. James E. Roper, the Team’s Director, says the Debate Team’s two National Championships and three second place finishes, in a five year period, may be the finest performance by any major team in the history of MSU.

The Debate Team has seen a tremendous depth of success by any measure. In 1994, a team representing MSU reached the final round of the CEDA National Championship Tournament, placing second. MSU returned to the final round in 1995, only this time they won the National Championship. During the ‘95-’96 season MSU experienced its most successful overall year, winning nine tournaments. This feat earned MSU the CEDA National (Continued, page 2.)

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### Coaching Staff for 1998-99: Experienced and Talented

MSU will have a very talented group of debaters this year (see the accompanying story), but a debate team will not do well in the current competitive environment without an excellent coaching staff. Prof. Roper believes MSU may have the best group of young coaches in the U.S.

Returning for their third year, **Will Repko** and **Jason Trice** bring a wealth of experience and knowledge. Before joining the MSU Debate Team, Will coached East Lansing High School to three State Championships, a Novice State Championship, a John S. Knight Award, and a National Championship. Jason came to MSU as a transfer in 1994. He won the CEDA National Championship, in April of 1995. In his senior year, Jason helped MSU win a second National Championship, this one for the overall Team’s performance. Roper will depend on Will and Jason’s experience to lead the Team this year.

In addition, MSU will also add last year’s top team of **John Sullivan** and **Erik Cornellier** (see article on their accomplishments) to its coaching staff. Sullivan and Cornellier’s familiarity with the Team and its files, and the extraordinary respect they command in the debate community make them ideal choices. In addition, **Jason Russell** has agreed to help MSU this year. Russell’s superb research effort at last year’s National Debate Tournament was a major factor in MSU’s outstanding 3rd place finish at the NDT.

**Five Year Record (con’t)**

Sweepstakes Championship. The points MSU accumulated set a record, that still stands, for the most earned in a single season. In 1997, another team from MSU reached the final round of the CEDA National Championship. The past two years, MSU has finished second in the race for the sweepstakes title.

The Debate Team’s achievements go far beyond these impressive results. For example, over the last five years, no debate team has won more national level tournaments than MSU, averaging more than seven major wins a year. Since the tournaments in which MSU debates attract from 45 to over 200 two-person teams, winning over a third of the twenty or so tournaments MSU regularly enters is an amazing accomplishment, according to Team Director James Roper.

While MSU’s top team is usually the one to win tournaments, leaving it to younger teams to finish as high as possible, last year was remarkable in this respect: Altogether, EIGHT different MSU debaters won major national level tournaments.

**What does all this mean for MSU?** Roper believes MSU has proven itself to be one of the most successful universities in the world in the area of academic debate, an activity requiring broad knowledge, logic, research, organization, and rhetoric—the marks of a fine general education. The honor which the Team has brought to MSU is the result of many people’s contributions—not only the debaters and coaches, but the administration, faculty and staff of Michigan State University who have repeatedly made sacrifices to help this Team grow from a small student club into one of the nation’s top debate organizations.

**SDI (con’t.)**

High school debate institutes in the nation. Actually, MSU runs two institutes during the period from mid July to early August—a two-week and a three-week institute. This is the second summer in a row that the SDI has enrolled over 200 students, from 20 or more states, in the two institutes. The only difference between this summer and last, according to Will Repko, Associate Director of the SDI, is that the three-week SDI was larger and the two-week was a little smaller than last year. Will believes this is a good trend, since MSU’s toughest competition comes from camps that last three or more weeks—such as those at Dartmouth, Michigan, and Northwestern. They do not have two-week camps, so MSU has less opposition in that area. The fact that our three-week numbers are rising means we are making important competitive gains against some formidable and well entrenched high school institutes.

**The SDI is sponsored by the MSU Debate Team** and a number of MSU debaters work at the camp. They make up less than a third of the staff of thirty-six, many of whom are practicing high school and college teachers who coach debate teams. The Team has striven to keep the cost of the SDI low in keeping with MSU’s “land grant” mission of making education available to as wide an audience as possible. Mr. Repko believes that MSU’s success with the SDI derives, first, from the quality of the training students receive here, and, second, from the fact that MSU has kept costs down. The SDI’s success in these areas is due, in no small measure, to the cooperation of MANY individuals and groups on the campus. Their contributions are vital for SDI’s continuing excellence as a debate institute.
‘98–’99 Topic is Title VII of Civil Rights Act of 1964

After debating international topics for a number of years, the debate community will turn its attention to Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. This year’s topic, which will be debated for the whole academic year, will be: Resolved that: The United States should amend Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, through legislation, to create additional protections against race and gender discrimination.

Of course, MSU will not divulge all of its strategies, but some of the affirmative cases under consideration include: (1) Apply Title VII to the military to solve for sexual harassment and racial discrimination in the military. (2) Apply Title VII to federal court employees, who are currently not included under the act. Finally, (3) Amend Title VII to improve due process by streamlining the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and solve for its considerable backlog.

NOTE: If you have ideas about this year’s topic that you would be willing to share with the Team, we would be delighted to have one of our coaches or debaters talk to you. Even if the idea is not used as an affirmative or negative position, it is possible that you may help us know about cases we are likely to encounter, and so be prepared for them. This is especially true for people whose work brings them into contact with Title VII as it functions in the “real world.”

(Sullivan and Cornellier, con’t.)

The two have also won a huge number of “speaker awards” including John’s placing first at the prestigious “Heart of America” Tournament, at the University of Kansas, in the Spring of 1998 and Erik’s first place, last fall, at Wake Forest—the largest (128 2-person teams) NDT tournament in the country. MSU has been very fortunate to have these two excellent debaters, and is also fortunate to have them as coaches this year.

Recruits Strengthen ‘98–’99 Team

As mentioned above, MSU had a total of eight different debaters win major tournaments last year—a wonderful accomplishment. Four of these individuals return for another season including: Steve Donald and Matt Blair, who won the William Jewell Tournament. Aaron Monick and Alison Woidan won the University of Central Oklahoma Tournament. Distinguished Scholars Bill Rand, Tara O’dowd, and Orion Smith all posted late elimination round finishes last year and will return.

In addition to MSU’s returning debaters, the Debate Team has added eight new freshmen debaters. Austin Carson (Grand Rapids) won the 1998 Michigan State Championship. Carson will debate with Joel Aizen, another freshman, when they make their debut this weekend. Several other freshmen are already showing signs of promise including Beth Bailey, Jarrell Braden, Jay Rademacher, and Anjali Vats. According to coach Jason Trice, “This is MSU’s largest class of new debaters ever.” This is important since, with Sullivan and Cornellier no longer eligible to debate, there are some big shoes to fill.

Cornellier (left) & Sullivan (right) and Erik won this event in each of the last two years. Sullivan also won it three years ago and was 2nd in his freshman year—an amazing performance. (Con’t, next column)
Beginning in the mid-eighties, the Debate Team has held a number of exhibition debates, designed to familiarize students, faculty, administrators, staff, alumni, and other interested parties both with intercollegiate debate as a method of approaching issues and with whatever substantive issue was the focus of the particular debate.

The last two of these affairs have been “Presidential Debates”. In 1993, the Team held a debate in honor of then President John DiBiaggio. Two years later, the Team debated in honor of President M. Peter McPherson. The debate this spring will be on the year’s college debate topic: Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. (See the story, on page 3, for the exact statement of the resolution.) We hope to combine this event with a reunion of MSU’s Debate Team alumni, and other interested parties. We are considering weekends from late April to early May. If you have any suggestions for dates, or any other ideas to help make the alumni reunion enjoyable for all, call Prof. Roper, at 517-699-5141.

Trophies on Display at the MSU Library, Debate Office

If you plan to visit the MSU campus this year be sure to let us know. If possible, we would like to show you the Debate Team’s offices. We would appreciate a call so we can be sure someone is there to greet you. (Continued next column.)

MSU Wins Junior Varsity National Championship

MSU’s Emily Owens (Emporia, KS), a resource development major, and Katy Hoffman (East Lansing), a James Madison major, combined their efforts to win the 1997 Junior Varsity National Championship hosted by Johnson County Community College in Kansas. The duo won seven of their eight preliminary debates, then proceeded to sweep all four of their elimination rounds, defeating a team from Arizona State University in the final round.

Their success did not stop there. Hoffman and Owens also won the Southwest Missouri State tournament last fall. The next weekend they reached the semi-finals at Emporia State before having to concede to a higher seeded MSU team.

Last spring, Katy reached the quarter final round of CEDA Nationals debating with Aaron Monick (Iowa City).

(Trophies, continued.)

Some of the Team’s trophies are on display in the debate office, but the best trophies are displayed in two trophy cases in the MSU Library. Just enter the Library through the front door (the Circle Drive entrance) and turn right immediately. Then proceed straight until you see the trophy cases—about 20-25 yards. One of our two National Championship trophies is on display in President McPherson’s Office.

If you have a debate trophy you think should be displayed at the University, let us know. Phone Prof. James Roper, at 517-699-5141.

MSU Debate Benefactors

This special group was created to afford an opportunity for individuals and organizations to provide lasting assistance to the University’s debate program, thus helping this program continue its long tradition of excellence.

Contributions to the MSU Debate Benefactors are deposited in the MSU Debate Team Endowment Fund, a permanent fund administered by the University for the exclusive benefit of the MSU Debate Team.

Your contribution to the MSU Debate Benefactors is a contribution to MSU, thus qualifying you for all applicable tax benefits and participation in any of the University’s donor recognition programs. If you are already participating in one of MSU’s major gift clubs such as the President’s Club or Hannah Society, your donation to the MSU Debate Benefactors can be credited toward your pledge commitment.

If you have any questions, please contact the Debate Director, Prof. James Roper, at 517-699-5141, or David Marvin, MSU ‘72, chairperson of the MSU Debate Benefactors, at 517-377-0830.