MSU Coach Gets Top National Honor

The Head Coach of MSU's top ranked Debate Team, William Repko, was recognized as the nation's Coach of the Year 2000. Since the inception of this annual award in 1967, coaches from Universities such as Harvard, Emory, Wake Forest, and Dartmouth have received this prestigious honor. Will, at age 28, is the youngest coach inducted into this elite group of debate coaches.

The award recognized Will's role as an outstanding educator. Will actively follows the debate careers of the many students he establishes connections with through his recruiting efforts or judging experiences even if they do not to attend MSU. Will is consistently recognized as one of the best judges in intercollegiate debate because of the extensive feedback he provides and was selected as the most enjoyable judge to debate for in the 2000 Debater's Choice Awards.

Although he is a demanding coach that is driven by competitive excellence, Will treats MSU debaters like family. His (see Coach of the Year, p2)

Young Talent Carries Team

After finishing second in the nation at the end of last year, the MSU Debate Team faced a rebuilding year for the 2000-2001 season due to the loss of four seniors who were integral to the Team's success. According Jason Trice, Debate Team Director, "With only three returning debaters, none of which are seniors, this year's Team is very young. This places extra pressure on our younger debaters to step up their performance. Our teams seem to be taking the pressure in stride and in many cases thriving on it."

The team comprised of Austin Carson (junior) and Calum Matheson (sophomore) have clearly established themselves as one of the top ten teams in the nation (see Young Talent, page 3).
relationship with Team members isn’t limited to tournament travel, practice sessions, and topic research. Debaters seek Will’s counsel about other academic and personal issues as well. Will’s dedication extends far beyond office hours, as he actively makes himself available to students day or night, seven days a week. Will gladly makes personal sacrifices for his students because, in a very real way, debate is his life.

The success of MSU’s Debate Team under Will’s coaching was an important factor in his selection for this honor. Will has been an integral component of MSU’s coaching staff for the past four years, and was promoted to the Head Coaching position at MSU at the beginning of this year. Since Will began coaching for MSU, the Team has finished in the top four nationally every year. Will has coached MSU teams to the final round of the National Championship Tournament three times and debaters that won Top Speaker at national caliber tournaments including Wake Forest, Heart of America, and the CEDA National Championship.

This year, the MSU Debate Team is a very young group consisting of more freshman than returning debaters and zero seniors. Will refuses to acknowledge that this year is a rebuilding year. Instead, he focuses on the opportunities that lie ahead for the young talented team. Will encourages the Team not to wait until they are seniors to take their turn and to focusing on being the best they can be in the present. Already, his coaching efforts and attitudes have paid dividends (see Young Talent, pg 1). The strength of this young team bodes well for the future of the MSU Debate Team and is a testament to Will’s coaching ability.

Prior to joining the MSU coaching staff, Will was the Head Coach at East Lansing High School for six years. Will’s teams won the State Varsity Championship three times, the State Novice Championship once, and the Catholic National Championship once. Many debaters coached by Will in high school went on to be outstanding college debaters for MSU, including one that was integral to MSU’s back-to-back National Championships in 1995 and 1996.

Will also helped found both the annual Spartan High School Debate Institute and the annual Spartan Classic High School Tournament held at MSU. These two programs educate students on argument theory and expose them to the significant national policy issues.

Debate remains one of the most rigorous academic competitions available. Debate teaches students communication skills, research and organization techniques, and critical thinking abilities in a setting that actively engages students. Will’s has personally touched the lives of hundreds of students he has either coached or judged over the years and his efforts in association with the Spartan Debate Institute have expanded the benefits of debate to countless others. Will undoubtedly earned the honor of Coach of the Year 2000 through all of his endeavors over the past decade.
Carson and Matheson consistently finished in the top eight at tournaments they attended during the first semester. They were one of only twelve teams in the country to receive an invitation to attend the Las Vegas round robin where they finished third. They were one of only nine teams to get invited to the prestigious Kentucky Round Robin where they finished sixth. They finished in the top eight at tournaments held at Northern Iowa, Kentucky, and Wake Forest. Matheson was recognized as a top ten speaker at three of these tournaments among upwards of 260 competitors from universities across the nation.

The all-freshman team of Greta Stahl and David Strauss has also made their mark on the national debate circuit. Together, they won the Pre-Season Freshman National Championship held at the University of Kentucky establishing themselves as the best all-freshman team in America. This is the second year in a row MSU has won this event and serves as a clear indication of the strength of MSU’s young teams. Stahl and Strauss also finished third in the varsity division at the Capital City Tournament held in Washington D.C. According to Head Coach William Repko, “To have two first year students finish so strongly in the varsity division of a national tournament is a rare and impressive accomplishment.” Several other first year students have also posted strong results. Suzanne Sobotka and Alicia Hunt began the season by reaching the final round in the JV division at Northern Iowa. Amber Watkins and Sean Smith finished in the top thirty-two teams at their first varsity tournament at Northern Iowa. Amber Watkins and Suzanne Sobotka also reached the semi-finals of the all-freshman division at the Wake Forest tournament.

“The strong results posted by this young Team indicate how consistent our Team has become and bodes well for the future,” says Coach Michael Eber. Next year’s recruiting class looks very promising. Three of the top high school debaters in Michigan have already committed to debate for MSU. MSU is also among a short list of schools being considered by two of the nations best high school debaters. With all of this year’s Team returning and a strong recruiting class next year’s team will be the largest in MSU history. According to Head Coach, William Repko, “We will be in a position to make a run at the National Championship that has eluded MSU since the back-to-back Championships in 1995 and 1996.”

**TOURNAMENT SCHEDULE – SPRING 2001**

- January 3-5  University of Missouri (K.C.)
- January 6-8  William Jewell College
- January 13-15  West Georgia University
- February 3-5  Northwestern University
- February 17-19  University of Kansas
- March 3-5  Novice Nationals (Northwestern)
- March 24-27  CEDA Nationals (MTSU)
- March 29 – April 4  NDT Nationals (Baylor)
The MSU Debate Team would like to extend its gratitude to those of you who made generous financial contributions in the past year, including:

- Dr. James Billman
- Dennis & Maureen Lefebvre
- Louis E. Legg, Jr.
- Wayne & Jane Repko
- Thomas R. Roth
- Elizabeth A. Shanahan

These contributions to the Debate Team Endowment help with travel expenses for an ever-growing Team and scholarships to continue attracting top-notch students to the program.

To find out how you can support the Endowment Fund, become a member of the alumni committee, or arrange to meet the Team at a tournament, please contact Cara Boeff, Development Officer, at (517) 355-2326 or Jason Trice, Debate Director at (517) 410-8568. We have included an envelope for those interested in making an annual gift to the Debate Team Efforts.

Dorothy Ross ’28 – “Organization, logic, and speaking experience was used in every aspect of my life.”

Leota Morales ’47 – “I think the experience of debating helped me to be more self-confident and to confront new situations easily.”

Douglas Laycock ’68 – “The travel was exciting! We went to USC and Redlands over Christmas with Coach Ted Jackson and were able to see the Rose Bowl. I flew on a plane and saw palm trees for the first time while on the MSU Debate Team.”