

# Comparison of Tabulation Methods Used by Two 1985 National Forensic Tournaments

ROBERT S. LITTLEFIELD\*

Despite the rapid growth in popularity enjoyed by individual speaking events in competitive forensics, little research has been conducted to explore the justification for methods used to score and rank the contestants. A few speech communication textbooks (Goodnight and Zarefsky, 1980; Faules, Rieke, and Rhodes, 1976) have explained the generally accepted method of adding the ranks and ratings of several judges to provide a way for cumulatively determining the overall scores for the contestants. The students with the lowest number of ranking point totals become the winners. Conversely, when tied at the same rank, the contestants with the highest number of rating points are determined to be the winners. Various other suggestions regarding the breaking of ties have been proposed. However, such decisions have been left up to the discretion of the tournament directors.

In an effort to standardize the method used to determine the winners at the American Forensic Association's National Individual Events Tournament established in 1978, a system for determining which contestants would advance into quarterfinals was codified (Pratt, 1985). Two judges were used in each section of three preliminary rounds to evaluate the contestants. The lowest rank of the six judges, along with the lowest rating of the six (not necessarily on the same ballot), were dropped. When the preliminary rounds were completed, the top 24 contestants emerged and advanced into a quarterfinal round. At this point, the contestants were "seeded" into four sections (McRoberts, 1983), or three sections depending upon the number of contestants qualifying to participate in the event.

Recently the Pi Kappa Delta National Forensic Honorary Fraternity was encouraged to adopt the AFA-NIET procedure of dropping the low rank and low rating to determine the contestants

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ROBERT S. LITTLEFIELD is Chair and Associate Director of Forensics in the Department of Mass Communication, Speech Communication, Theatre Arts at North Dakota State University, Fargo 58105.

*Webmaster's Note: There was a printing error that made Table 3 difficult to follow in the original. It has been changed here to make it easier to follow.*

who would finish in the top 10 percent (receiving Superior Awards) or next 20 percent (receiving Excellent Awards). Currently, Pi Kappa Delta utilizes two judges in each of three preliminary rounds as a basis for ordering the contestants into the two award categories. All six rankings and rating points are included in the final computations for each contestant.

The arguments to support the justification for adopting the AFA policy of dropping low rank and low rating points being proposed by AFA members within the Pi Kappa Delta organization can be grouped into three main areas: (1) The low rank and rating should be dropped because judges from different regions of the country prefer various styles of delivery of presentation. Elimination of the low rank and low rating would be fairer for students who experienced inconsistent or skewed judging in their rounds. (2) Every rank and rating is statistically significant for a contestant. One low rank or low rating might keep a student from advancing and/or placing. (3) The addition of five ranks and ratings is more expeditious than adding six ranks and ratings for those working in the tournament tabulation room.

While not supported empirically, these reasons have provided a basis for the adoption and retention by the AFA-NIET of the drop policy. To find support for these arguments, the present study is designed to test the following hypothesis:

H0: There is no correlation between contestants placing with six ranks/six ratings and those placing with five ranks/five ratings.

H1: There is a correlation between contestants placing with six ranks/six ratings and those placing with five ranks/five ratings.

A high correlation would indicate that dropping the low rank and rating makes little difference in the contestants who eventually place or advance. A low correlation would suggest that dropping the low rank and rating makes a difference, resulting in different people placing or advancing in the contest.

#### *Method of Analysis*

To test the hypothesis, the results of the 1985 AFA-NIET and the 1985 Pi Kappa Delta National Tournament were compiled using the two methods previously described. The top 24 contestants after the preliminary rounds of the AFA-NIET were determined using the five rank/five rating system (5R/5R). The top 24 contestants were then determined using the six rank/six rating system (6R/6R) utilized by the Pi Kappa Delta Tournament. Similarly, the superior award winners after the preliminary rounds of the Pi Kappa Delta Tournament were determined using the 6R/6R system. The top 10

percent of the contestants were also determining using the 5R/5R system advocated by the AFA-NIET. The Spearman's Rank Correlation Test (Daniel, 1978), was used to determine if there were correlations between the top groups of award winners at each of the national tournaments being examined in this study.

### Results

One dimension of the results must address the number of students who moved into or out of the award categories on the basis of using the different computational formats (see Table 1).

TABLE 1  
Movement of Contestants Into and Out of Award Categories  
Using Different Methods of Tabulation

| Event Category          | AFA-NIET<br>5R/5R to 6R/6R |     |    | Pi Kappa Delta<br>6R/6R to 5R/5R |     |    |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|-----|----|----------------------------------|-----|----|
|                         | n*                         | out | in | n**                              | out | in |
| Persuasive Speaking     | 24                         | 1   | 1  | 10                               | 1   | 1  |
| Prose Interpretation    | 24                         | 2   | 2  | 15                               | 1   | 1  |
| Extemp Speaking         | 24                         | 1   | 1  | 11                               | 3   | 3  |
| Informative Speaking    | 24                         | 1   | 1  | 10                               | 1   | 1  |
| Dramatic Interpretation | 24                         | 1   | 1  | 11                               | 3   | 3  |
| Dramatic Duo            | 24                         | 1   | 1  | 8                                | 1   | 1  |
| Poetry Interpretation   | 24                         | 1   | 1  | 14                               | 2   | 2  |
| Communication Analysis  | 24                         | 0   | 0  | 5                                | 1   | 1  |
| After Dinner Speaking   | 24                         | 1   | 1  | 7                                | 0   | 0  |
| Discussion              | not offered as an event    |     |    | 6                                | 1   | 1  |
| Impromptu               | 24                         | 1   | 1  | 13                               | 1   | 1  |

\* Total number of contestants advancing into quarterfinal rounds.

\*\* Total number of contestants in Superior Award category.

At the AFA-NIET, contestants moved into or out of the quarterfinals based upon the different tabulation methods. The Prose Interpretation category experienced the greatest percentage of contestants affected by a change in computational method with two who had originally advanced to quarterfinals being replaced by two who had been excluded. Eight of the events had only one contestant originally advancing to quarterfinals being replaced by

one not advancing. In Communication Analysis, there was no change in the individuals advancing to quarterfinals using both methods of computation. At the Pi Kappa Delta Tournament contestants moved into or out of the Superior Award category. The two categories experiencing the greatest percentage of contestants affected were Extemporaneous Speaking and Dramatic Interpretation. In each of these categories, three contestants who had been recognized as Superior Award winners were replaced by three contestants who had been awarded Excellent ratings. Seven of the categories had only one contestant originally recognized as a Superior speaker be replaced by one who had received an Excellent Award. In After Dinner Speaking, there was no change in award winners using both methods of computation.

The determination of the top contestants in each category was completed using the two methods of computation suggested by the AFA-NIET and Pi Kappa Delta. Based upon the pairs of scores for each contestant, Spearman's Rank Correlation was calculated for the different individual events (see Table 2).

TABLE 2  
Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient

| Event Category          | Pi Kappa Delta<br>6R/6R to 5R/5R | AFA-NIET<br>5R/5R to 6R/6R |
|-------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Persuasive Speaking     | .7363                            | .8976                      |
| Prose Interpretation    | .6735                            | .9514                      |
| Extemp Speaking         | .6615                            | .6615                      |
| Informative Speaking    | .7000                            | .9115                      |
| Dramatic Interpretation | .6395                            | .9169                      |
| Dramatic Duo            | .8166                            | .9515                      |
| Poetry Interpretation   | .8294                            | .9238                      |
| Communication Analysis  | .8285                            | .9817                      |
| After Dinner Speaking   | .8214                            | .9361                      |
| Discussion              | .8928                            | not offered as an event    |
| Impromptu Speaking      | .6395                            | .8646                      |

The correlation coefficients for the events at the AFA-NIET ranged from a low of .6615 (Extemporaneous Speaking) to a high of .9817 (Communication Analysis). For the Pi Kappa Delta Tourna-

ment, the correlation coefficients varied from a low of .6395 (Dramatic Interpretation) to a high of .8928 (Discussion). In general, each of the correlation coefficients was strong enough to suggest that the two methods of computation did not produce groups of award winners who varied dramatically in their placement or advancement in the respective AFA-NIET and Pi Kappa Delta Tournaments.

Another dimension of the results focuses upon the rankings of those contestants who were displaced using the different methods of tabulation and how the shift in placement for those advancing into quarterfinals at the AFA-NIET might have affected the final winners in the events.

The shift in rankings for those moving into or out of the award categories at the AFA-NIET occurred most frequently within the group of contestants who ranked from 20 to 27 using the alternate method of tabulation. At the Pi Kappa Delta tournament, those affected by the alternate method of tabulation varied by event. However, the greatest shifts in rank occurred in Extemporaneous Speaking and Informative Speaking (see Table 3).

These findings suggest that those placing highest in each event would have been unaffected by the use of an alternate method of tabulation and would have retained their status as the top contestants or award winners after the preliminary rounds of competition.

While having little impact upon the actual award recipients, the alternate methods of tabulation would have changed the seeding of the contestants at the AFA-NIET substantially. While no seeding is done at the Pi Kappa Delta tournament, the final placing of contestants would have been altered in each of the events (see Table 4).

The argument that a shift in the quarterfinal seeding at the AFA-NIET would have been detrimental to those students who should have advanced into additional elimination rounds was addressed by McRoberts in his study. He concluded his analysis by utilizing Spearman's Rank-order Correlation Coefficient and suggested that the link between quarterfinal seed and quarterfinal finish was dubious. Similarly, in semifinals and finals, the correlations between seeding and finish were low. He wrote: "Based upon the statistical analysis of the results from the first five years of the [AFA-NIET] tournament, one should not assume that the best among the competition are necessarily advanced to the final round in each event" (p. 50). Human variables, such as the demands of time placed upon contestants and judges at the tournament, the subjective preferences of the judges, speaking order, differences in

TABLE 3  
Shift in Overall Rank for Contestants  
Moving Into or Out of Award Categories

| Event          | AFA-NIET*               |                        | Pi Kappa Delta** |                   |                        |      |
|----------------|-------------------------|------------------------|------------------|-------------------|------------------------|------|
|                | Contestant              | 5R/5R to 6R/6R<br>Rank | Rank             | Contestant        | 6R/6R to 5R/5R<br>Rank | Rank |
| Persuasive     | A                       | 24                     | 27               | A                 | 9+                     | 16   |
| Speaking       | B                       | 26                     | 21               | B                 | 12                     | 7    |
| Prose          | A                       | 23                     | 25               | A                 | 7+                     | 16   |
| Interpretation | B                       | 24                     | 26               | B                 | 18                     | 12   |
|                | C                       | 25                     | 23               |                   |                        |      |
|                | D                       | 26                     | 20               |                   |                        |      |
| Extemp         | A                       | 24                     | 25               | A                 | 8+                     | 15   |
| Speaking       | B                       | 26                     | 22               | B                 | 9+                     | 12   |
|                |                         |                        |                  | C                 | 11+                    | 13   |
|                |                         |                        |                  | D                 | 14                     | 4    |
|                |                         |                        |                  | E                 | 15                     | 10   |
|                |                         |                        |                  | F                 | 19                     | 11   |
| Informative    | A                       | 23                     | 25               | A                 | 8+                     | 11   |
| Speaking       | B                       | 25                     | 22               | B                 | 19                     | 9    |
| Dramatic       | A                       | 22                     | 27               | A                 | 7+                     | 14   |
| Interpretation | B                       | 25                     | 22               | B                 | 10+                    | 12   |
|                |                         |                        |                  | C                 | 11+                    | 13   |
|                |                         |                        |                  | D                 | 12                     | 7    |
|                |                         |                        |                  | E                 | 13                     | 8    |
|                |                         |                        |                  | F                 | 14                     | 9    |
| Dramatic Duo   | A                       | 23                     | 25               | A                 | 8+                     | 11   |
|                | B                       | 25                     | 23               | B                 | 10                     | 5    |
| Poetry         | A                       | 24                     | 25               | A                 | 13+                    | 17   |
| Interpretation | B                       | 27                     | 23               | B                 | 14+                    | 18   |
|                |                         |                        |                  | C                 | 15                     | 14   |
|                |                         |                        |                  | D                 | 16                     | 10   |
| After Dinner   | A                       | 23                     | 25               | no shift occurred |                        |      |
|                | B                       | 25                     | 23               |                   |                        |      |
| Impromptu      | A                       | 24                     | 25               | A                 | 12+                    | 14   |
|                | B                       | 25                     | 24               | B                 | 14                     | 6    |
| Communication  | no shift occurred       |                        |                  | A                 | 4+                     | 6    |
| Analysis       |                         |                        |                  | B                 | 6                      | 5    |
| Discussion     | not offered as an event |                        |                  | A                 | 6+                     | 7    |
|                |                         |                        |                  | B                 | 7                      | 5    |

Contestants ranked 1 through 24 advanced into quarterfinals in all events at the 1985 AFA-NIET.

Contestants marked with a (+) received a superior award at the 1985 Pi Kappa Delta tournament.

TABLE 4  
Percentage of Contestants Experiencing a Change in Ranking Due to  
the Use of an Alternative Tabulation Method

| Event                   | AFA-NIET<br>5R/5R to 6R/6R | Pi Kappa Delta<br>6R/6R to 5R/5R |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Persuasive Speaking     | 20/24 = 83%                | 6/10 = 60%                       |
| Prose Interpretation    | 23/24 = 96%                | 13/15 = 87%                      |
| Extemp Speaking         | 20/24 = 83%                | 10/11 = 91%                      |
| Informative Speaking    | 23/24 = 96%                | 10/10 = 100%                     |
| Dramatic Interpretation | 21/24 = 88%                | 10/11 = 91%                      |
| Dramatic Duo            | 22/24 = 92%                | 3/8 = 38%                        |
| Poetry Interpretation   | 21/24 = 88%                | 11/14 = 79%                      |
| After Dinner Speaking   | 20/24 = 83%                | 4/7 = 57%                        |
| Impromptu Speaking      | 21/24 = 88%                | 10/13 = 77%                      |
| Communication Analysis  | 12/24 = 50%                | 2/5 = 40%                        |
| Discussion              | not offered as an event    | 2/6 = 33%                        |

the events, and the stratification used in the scheduling of preliminary rounds were discussed as factors which may have caused the seeding method being used to not reflect the actual quality or potential success of an individual contestant.

Consequently, despite the large percentages of contestants experiencing shifts in seeding position at the 1985 AFA-NIET, the impact of an alternate tabulation method in this study makes little difference on the overall determination of who the individual winners would be.

### *Conclusions*

This study was designed to test the hypothesis that there is no correlation between those placing with 6 ranks/6 ratings and those placing with 5 ranks/5 ratings. The high correlation coefficients suggest that similar groups of contestants would have emerged without dropping the low rank and low rating at the AFA-NIET. Also, for the most part, similar groups of award winners would have received Superior Ratings even if the low rank and rating would have been dropped at the Pi Kappa Delta Tournament.

These results do not support the rationale suggested by advocates of the 5R/5R rating system of tabulation. While judges from different regions of the country may prefer different styles of

delivery or presentation (Lewis and Larsen, 1981; Mills, 1983), the number of judge scores perhaps serves as a means for countering one score that might not be consistent with the other five. Just as three judge scores may balance out a ranking split of a first place and a fifth place that might be possible if only two judges hear a contestant at a tournament, so may five relatively high ranks counteract the impact of one low rank from one judge. Certainly, one would not discount the argument that each rank and rating is important in the overall determination of a contestant's final placing. However, the results of this study suggest that a relatively small percentage of students were affected by the inclusion of all six judges' ranks and ratings. Finally, the ease and expediency with which one might add five ranks and ratings may be outweighed by the time that it takes to go through all of the results to scratch the low rank and low rating for each contestant after the three rounds and six judges have evaluated the contestant's performance.

One reason to support the 5R/5R method of tabulation not previously advanced is what this author considers to be the "psychological effect" the dropping of a score may have upon the contestant involved. If contestants sense that a particular judge is not fond of their selections or compositions, knowing that the unfavorable ranking will be dropped may reduce the anxiety the students may experience in a round of competition. Also, if a contestant has prior knowledge that a judge consistently uses lower-than-average points for rating contestants, the knowledge that the lowest rating points will be dropped may help the student feel less anxious about performing in a round. Due to the subjective nature of the evaluation process, this psychological dimension for the contestant is one which deserves consideration when determining which framework for tabulation is selected by tournament directors.

Directions for future research in this area might address the nature of the events (manuscript, limited preparation, memorized) to determine if this is a variable in the final groupings of award winners. The self-reported anxiety on the part of the contestants could also be explored when faced with judges perceived to be negatively inclined toward a particular contestant.

To broaden the scope of future studies addressing the tabulation methods used at national tournaments, other constituencies might be considered. The National Forensic Association's National Championships and the DSR-TKA National Tournament could be compared to determine if larger populations reflect more variance in who advances and who does not. In addition, future studies may

examine the variance in the rankings of individuals who may have had one judge who skewed their overall totals to determine if this provides justification for the retention of the 5R/5R system of tabulation.

Tournament management continues to be a somewhat neglected area in the field of forensic research. However, the impact of differing tabulation methods remains as an important dimension for competitors and coaches who are interested in learning more about how winners are determined at national and regional forensic tournaments. This study has suggested that although the methods of tabulation may have differed, the results in these two national tournaments would have remained essentially the same.

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