

Harangue

The Debaters Association of Victoria's Magazine for Students

In this issue...

Manner: knowing thyself

Round 3 review: secrets unveiled

Win fame and fortune: the quiz

... and much more!

Dear students,

Last round, students from A, B, and C grade did very well with their first secret topics for the year. This round, they can only get better! Obviously, there were many different secret topics used at many different regions. We can't talk about all of them, so I've selected some topics that were used in more than one region for this issue's topic review.

As usual, remember to enter the *Harangue* Quiz! It's a little bit different this round, because although there's only one question, you have to explain your answer – see below.

Have fun in your debates!

Michael Ciesielski
Publications editor

Win with the *Harangue* Quiz!

Send your answer to this question to the DAV office by the end of round 3. The best entry will win a \$20 iTunes Music Card!

Send your answer to debater@dav.com.au by June 30th.

Is affirmative action a good idea? Why or why not?

The length of your response is up to you, but please don't write more than 500 words! There is no correct answer – the most important thing is to clearly explain your reasoning.

As well as the exciting prize, the winner will get the glory of having their response published in the next issue of *Harangue*.



Enhancing Your Manner

By **Jonathan Benney**, Vice-President (Adjudication and Training)

This article assumes that you, as the *Harangue* reader, have some knowledge of the basics of manner (which means how you present yourself in a debate). I'm assuming you can:

- speak loudly and clearly enough to be heard by the audience;
- use some body language (like eye contact and gestures) to emphasise your points;
- and not just read your speech off cards or paper.

Of course all of the above things take a lot of practice, but in this article I will tell you how to take your manner to the next level. There are some adjudicators who might not stress manner very much in their marks or oral adjudications, but even though they don't talk about it, they are still subconsciously influenced — they'll prefer to listen to an argument when it's presented well.

Control

I think that the key to good manner is control. As a speaker, you need to seem in control of not just **what** you are saying, but **how** you're saying it. When you speak, you need to control:

- when you look at the audience, and where you look;
- how you gesture to emphasise points;
- when you speed up or slow down your speech, or get softer or louder;
- your tone of voice.

For example, often adjudicators see very humorous or very serious speakers. Which is fine, because many different styles of presentation can be effective in convincing the audience. The problem is the speaker who delivers a joke monotonously, or the speaker who speaks in a jovial tone about terrorism or abortion. A really convincing speaker can change their tone, pace, volume and body language **to match what they're saying**. When people say that you should be confident, they're really saying that you need to be in control.

Watching yourself

How do I achieve this sense of control, you ask? The answer is **practice**. But sometimes practice on its own doesn't always help. One of the best techniques of improving your speaking style is to watch yourself.

A few years ago, we told speakers to deliver practice speeches while looking into a mirror, and that's still a good technique. But now, since most people have

access to some kind of video camera — even if it's in a mobile phone — you can actually record yourself speaking and play it back in a matter of moments. (Note that if you are doing this during a real debate, you should get the permission of the adjudicator and the other team first.)

What do people say when they watch themselves debating? Normally, they are quite surprised:

- "I never knew I kept tossing my hair! I did it twenty times in one speech!"
- "I need to make eye contact with the whole of the audience and not just my best friend!"
- "I kept looking at the other team during rebuttal, and turned my back on the audience."
- "I really stumbled over that point ... I didn't look at all confident. I needed to understand the material better."
- "I took a while to get going ... I needed a more effective introduction."

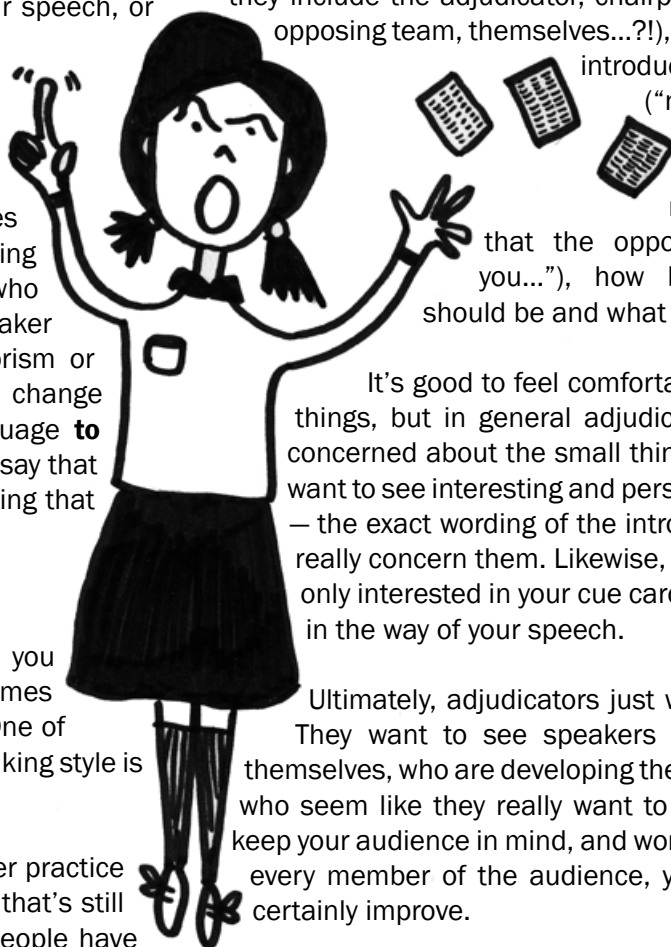
If you look at yourself from the perspective of an audience member, and ask yourself if you're convinced by your own vocal style and body language, you're much closer to being in full control of your presentation.

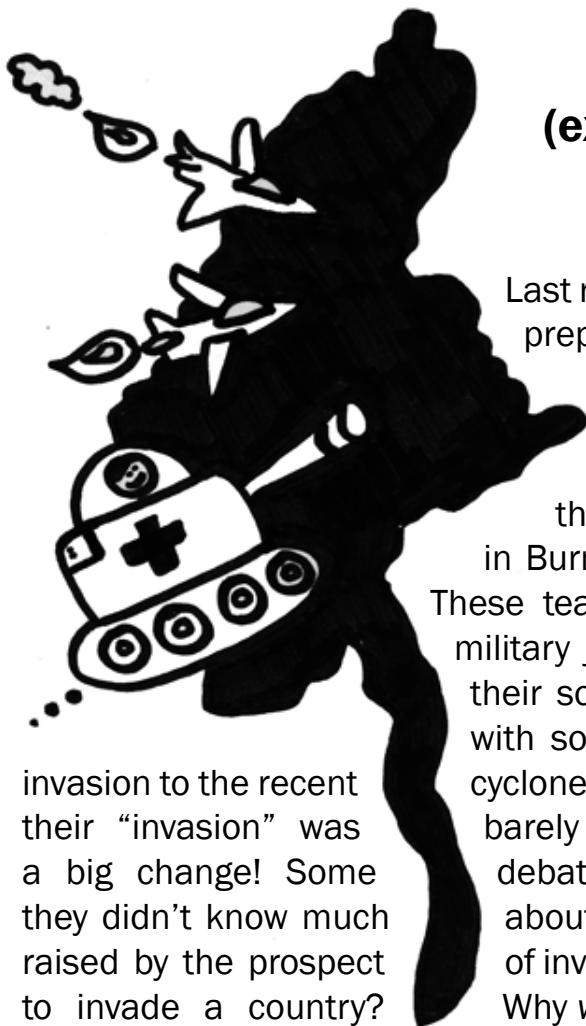
Don't sweat the small stuff

Often debaters get very worried about little things, like exactly how they should introduce their speeches (should they include the adjudicator, chairperson, teachers, opposing team, themselves...?!), how they should introduce their rebuttal ("now I'd like to destroy some misconceptions that the opposition has told you..."), how big their cards should be and what colour, etc.

It's good to feel comfortable about these things, but in general adjudicators aren't too concerned about the small things. Adjudicators want to see interesting and persuasive speakers — the exact wording of the introduction doesn't really concern them. Likewise, adjudicators are only interested in your cue cards when they get in the way of your speech.

Ultimately, adjudicators just want to see **you**. They want to see speakers who sound like themselves, who are developing their own style, and who seem like they really want to be there. If you keep your audience in mind, and work on persuading every member of the audience, your manner will certainly improve.





A Grade: Secret Topic (example: “That the West should invade Burma”)

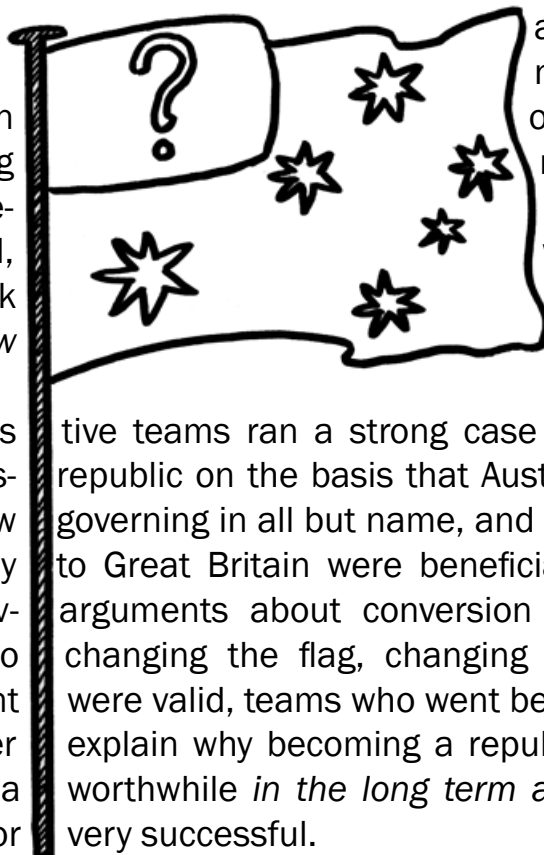
Last round’s topic (violent environmentalists) was excellent preparation for this secret topic: again, affirmative teams performed strongest when they took a “hard line”, or strong position. These teams presented a us with a Western moral imperative to act, presenting the humanitarian and ongoing human rights situation in Burma as a big problem which we are compelled to fix. These teams also spoke about the previous actions of the military junta, and outlined clear reasons why impinging on their sovereignty was necessary. This approach contrasted with some weaker teams, who limited their motivation for cyclone alone, and who presented a model so soft that barely different to present aid. Don’t be afraid to argue for debaters panicked when they were given this topic because about Burma. Don’t panic! Think about the questions of invasion in general terms: why *would* we feel it necessary Why *wouldn’t* it be justified?

invasion to the recent their “invasion” was a big change! Some they didn’t know much raised by the prospect to invade a country?

B Grade: Secret Topic (example: “That Australia should become a republic now”)

The wording of this topic gave affirmative teams a big hint for preparing their case: what are the benefits to Australia **now** in becoming a republic? Although speaking about the philosophical importance of being an independent republic was good, teams who went further than this to talk about actual, tangible benefits to us *now* performed very strongly.

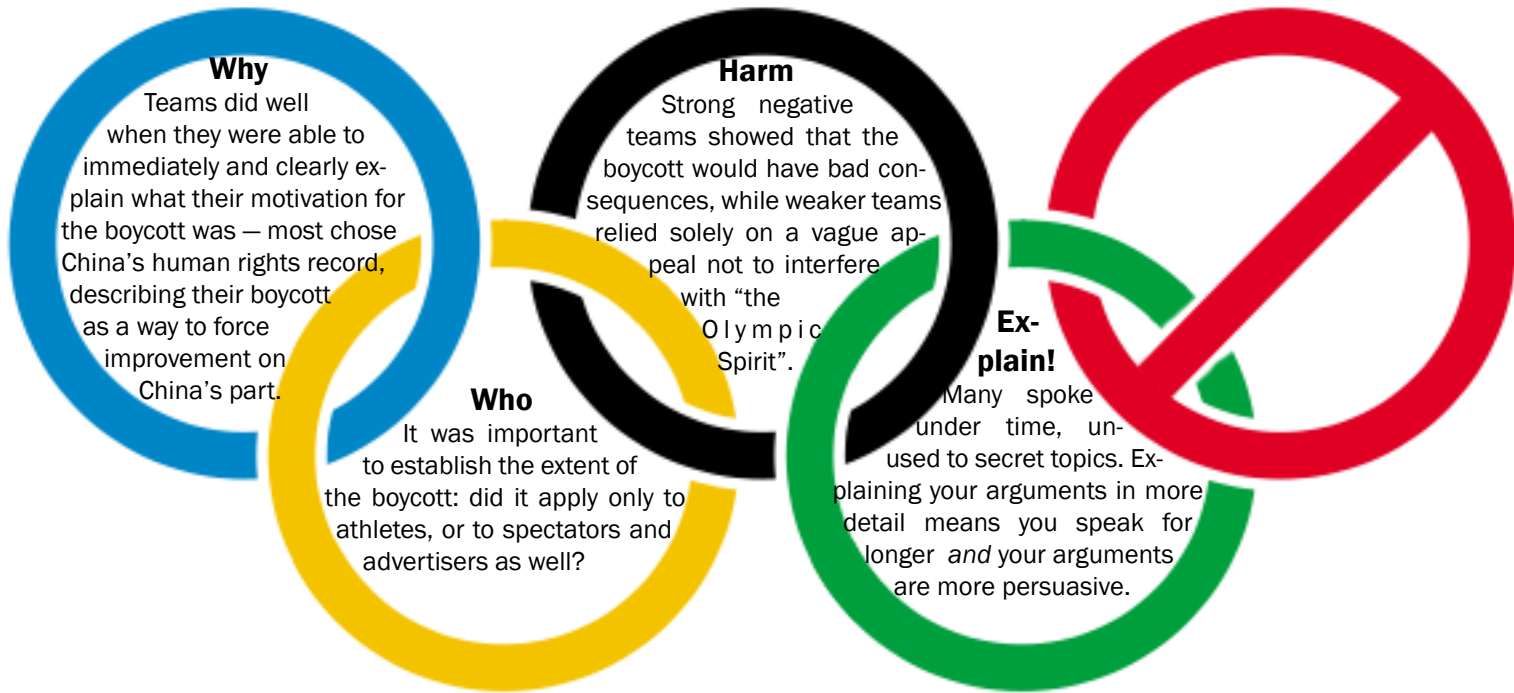
It was also important for affirmative teams to explain the change that they were proposing. Many teams spoke vaguely of “a new system of government” that would magically solve all of Australia’s problems without giving any details. Strong teams were able to paint a clear picture of how the government would run in their model — it didn’t matter whether this was the current system with a President replacing the Governor-General or



a completely new system of government, as long as it was clearly explained.

Most negative teams ran a strong case against the republic on the basis that Australia is self-governing in all but name, and that the ties to Great Britain were beneficial. Although arguments about conversion costs (e.g., changing the flag, changing the money) were valid, teams who went beyond that to explain why becoming a republic was not worthwhile *in the long term as well* were very successful.

C Grade: Advised Topic - “The Olympics” (example: “That we should boycott the Beijing Olympic Games”)



D Grade: “That celebrities have too much influence over teenagers”

Teams who read last round’s *Harangue* did very well in this topic, because they understood the importance of setting up the debate. These teams didn’t waste time defining “celebrities”, “teenagers”, or “influence” (all uncontroversial words), but instead went straight for the contentious term “too much” at the start of the debate. By being clear about how much influence was *too much*, these teams were able to argue clearly and effectively. It was great to see many teams using examples, but it was really important for these examples to be well-explained. Many teams used the example of Corey Worthington, but it wasn’t always clear



what point was being made — they needed explain whether Corey was an example of a teenager who had been influenced too much by celebrities, or a celebrity who was having too much influence over teenagers! Similarly, many negative teams quoted surveys and polls showing that most teens thought that their parents were the biggest influence on them. These teams needed to understand that logically, celebrities could still have too much influence, even if that amount of influence were less than that had by parents, and explain more clearly the idea that they wanted the statistics to prove.

Acknowledgements

Harangue thanks Julianne Hortle, Jonathan Benney, and Christopher Hibbard.

Harangue is published by the **Debaters Association of Victoria**
6/87-89 Flemington Road, North Melbourne
t: 9348 9477 f: 9348 9466 e: debater@dav.com.au