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Liberty Debate leads National Championship chase

January 21, 2009

The [Liberty Debate Team](#) currently sits atop the mid-season rankings reports of the American Debate Association (ADA) and National Debate Tournament (NDT). At the semester break, Liberty held a slim 6-point advantage over the University of Kansas in the NDT rankings and a commanding 220-point lead over Binghamton University in the ADA rankings. The American Debate Association, the only organization to rank teams across each experience level, currently has Liberty ranked first in the varsity, junior varsity and novice divisions. While the Cross Examination Debate Association (CEDA) does not release mid-season rankings, Liberty is in a strong position to win the national championship of all three of intercollegiate debate's governing organizations.

Following the release of the rankings, Liberty attended the James Madison University, University of Mary Washington and George Mason University debate tournaments where they served notice that the Flames would be difficult to catch. At James Madison, the varsity team of Stephanie Dillard and Ross Garrett were the top seed after the preliminary rounds, posting a 5-1 record. Joining them in elimination rounds were the varsity teams of Eddie Fitzgerald and Jeff White (5-1), Amy Boyd and Ben Hagwood (5-1) and Katie Jordan and Sarah Spillar (3-3). Dillard and Garrett advanced to the final round where they faced the second seed from Vanderbilt, narrowly losing a split decision by a three-judge panel. Garnering individual honors were Stephanie Dillard (Top speaker), Ross Garrett (2nd speaker), and Ben Hagwood (10th speaker).

With only one day of rest, the Flames headed to Fredericksburg for the University of Mary Washington Debate Tournament. This time Liberty's varsity debaters earned the top three seeds for elimination rounds, led by Ryan Bass and Jackie Poapst, who finished with a perfect 6-0 record. They were followed by Stephanie Dillard and Ross Garrett (5-1) and Lincoln Garrett and Joshua Turnage (5-1). Also reaching the elimination rounds were the teams of Boyd and Hagwood (4-2), Fitzgerald and White (4-2) and Amanda Atkins and Katie Jordan (4-2). The

bracket held true to form and the top four seeds advanced to the semifinal round, giving Liberty three of the four semifinal teams. In the semifinal round Bass and Poapst lost a 2-1 decision to the University of Mary Washington, setting up a final round debate between Stephanie Dillard and Ross Garrett and the University of Mary Washington. This time Dillard and Garrett would not be denied, defeating Mary Washington on a 2-1 decision to claim their second tournament championship of the season. Ross Garrett was named the tournament's top speaker, while Stephanie Dillard (2nd speaker), Joshua Turnage (6th speaker) and Eddie Fitzgerald (9th speaker) also claimed individual honors.

While Liberty's varsity and junior varsity debaters took the weekend off, Liberty's novice squad began the spring semester at George Mason University. Five of Liberty's seven novice teams advanced to the elimination rounds, led by Joshua Armstrong and Maria Eller who finished with a 6-0 record and claimed the top seed. Joining Armstrong and Eller were Melanie Darling and Beau Troxclair (4-2), Kate Lacaze and Chelsea Thompson (4-2), Hannah Krieg and Tierra Thompson (4-2), and Min Cho and Jake Shelton (4-2). The Flames dominated the elimination rounds, eventually placing three of its teams in the semifinal round. In the semifinals, Armstrong and Eller defeated Clarion University on a 3-0 decision, making Armstrong and Eller tournament champions and teammates Darling and Troxclair runners-up. Liberty fared equally well among the speaker awards, with Joshua Armstrong (Top speaker), Maria Eller (2nd speaker), Beau Troxclair (3rd speaker) and Catherine Hardee (5th speaker), all claiming individual honors.

American Debate Association Mid-Season Rankings

1. Liberty University	445
2. Binghamton University	245
3. Mary Washington University	215
4. Emory University	187
5. George Mason University	182
6. James Madison University	145.5
7. U.S. Military Academy	108
8. John Carroll University	103
8. Wake Forest University	103
10. Clarion University	100

National Debate Tournament Mid-Season Rankings

1. Liberty University	460
2. Kansas (Univ. of)	454
3. Binghamton University	408
4. Kansas State University	373
5. University of California (Berkley)	358
6. University of Oklahoma	357

7. Northwestern University	356
8. Emory University	346
9. U.S. Military Academy	332
10. Baylor University	319