

Original Power-Pairing Proposal considered by the WSDC Tournament Committee in Bali in August 2017

Introduction of power-pairing for a 1-year trial period at WSDC 2018

It is proposed that, for a 1-year trial period at WSDC 2018 in Zagreb, a method of ‘power-pairing’ be used for the WSDC preliminary rounds.

To enable this, it is proposed that the following temporary amendments be made to the WSDC Rules:

- Amendments to 6.2 - 6.4 of the WSDC Rules
- ‘Schedule 3: Procedures for Power-Pairing at the World Schools Debating Championships’ be added to the end of the Rules document

It is further proposed that, if these temporary amendments are introduced for WSDC 2018, then the issue of power-pairing placed on the agenda when the Tournament Committee meets at WSDC 2018 in Zagreb, where the Tournament Committee will be able to consider whether it wishes to adopt power-pairing on a permanent basis at WSDC.

Rationale for this motion:

1. Historically, the preliminary round draw at WSDC has been seeded based on past performance at the Championship (the last 3 years) to pair teams up the first 8 rounds. However, some believe this seeding method can be a poor measure of relative strength in any current year and want to minimise its effect on the draw. Using a seeding system based on past performance assumes that a nation’s strength stays roughly equal from year-to-year. But the composition of a nation’s team can differ substantially in consecutive years. Further, seeding new nations at the bottom of the list makes an unfair assumption about the relative ability of a new nation. Thus we can explore tabulation procedures that lessen the impact of these unfair and sometimes unwarranted assumptions. The proposed power-pairing system limits seeding based on past years’ performance to the pairings for rounds 1 and 2. Broader divisions (A, B, C, D) for this preliminary seeding further lessens the impact of the current seeding system. The goal of power-pairing is to create balanced strength of opposition across the preliminary rounds for teams of equal strength, based on performance at the Championship for the current year rather than past years.

2. A power-pairing system is flexible regardless of how many teams are in the field. A wide variety of grids do not have to be pre-planned or pre-determined. Power-pairing does not require an even number of competing teams to function.

3. Unlike the historic draw based on seeding, nations won't know in advance whom they will be debating in Rounds 3 - 8. This will increase the work involved by requiring preparation of both sides of prepared motions. However, this is consistent with other tournaments throughout the year and could arguably be seen as improving debates as teams would research both sides of a motion.

Points to note about the proposed power-pairing system for WSDC:

1. The proposed system includes 'side-locks' for particular rounds which will ensure that every team has 4 debates in proposition and 4 debates in opposition over the 8 preliminary rounds (2 debates on each side for prepared and impromptu debates). Locking sides in the designated rounds is given a greater priority than preserving the integrity of the bracket.

2. As far as is reasonably possible, no team shall be 'pulled-up' to debate in a higher bracket more than once in preliminary rounds.

3. Teams shall not meet each other more than once in the preliminary rounds.

4. Once the procedure for seeding the first 2 preliminary rounds and the pairing priorities for subsequent rounds is established, a computer tabulation programme will be used to pair teams up for each round and assign judges. The CA's role will be to confirm judge placement and adjust only if absolutely warranted.

The text of the proposed temporary amendments to the WSDC Rules is below.

Amendments to 6.1 - 6.4 of the WSDC Rules:

[Note: Power-pairing will only be used if there are at least 24 competing teams. 6.2 affirms that the present system of a pre-determined draw will be used if there are fewer than 24 teams.]

6.2 11-23 Teams

If the total number of teams at a Championship is more than 10 but less than 24, each team shall debate 8 other teams in the preliminary rounds in a draw conducted before the Championship using a system designed to achieve approximately equal and fair sets of opponents for all teams.

6.3 24 or More Teams

If the total number of teams at a Championship is 24 or more, the draw shall be created using a power-pairing system following the guidelines set out in Schedule 3 (Procedures for Power-Pairing at the World Schools Debating Championships).

6.4 Preliminary Rounds Draw

(a) At least 2 weeks before the first day of debates at the Championship, the Host shall send the participating teams the full preliminary rounds draw if the number teams is less than 24, or the draw for preliminary rounds 1 and 2 if the number of teams is 24 or more.

(b) Once the draw has been released as required by 6.4 (a), amendments can only be made if:

(i) In the judgement of the Chief Adjudicators, the amendments will not significantly affect the fairness and balance of the draw, and

(ii) All teams affected agree to the new draw.

[Note: 6.4 (c) applies only if there are fewer than 24 teams. It does not apply if there is power-pairing.]

(c) In the event that a team withdraws from a tournament involving less than 24 teams and a new draw is not made, all teams who would have debated against the team which has withdrawn are taken to have won the debate by forfeit if they win at least a majority of their other debates but are otherwise taken to have lost the debate by forfeit, and shall be awarded judges' ballots for that debate according to the following formula:

(i) if the average number of judges in the team's favour in its other debates is higher than 2.5, it receives 3 judge's ballots for that debate;

(ii) if the average number of judges in the team's favour in its other debates is higher than 1.5 but less than or equal to 2.5, it receives 2 judge's ballots for that debate.

(iii) if the average number of judges in the team's favour in its other debates is higher than 0.5 but less than or equal to 1.5, it receives 1 judge's ballot for that debate;

(iv) if the average number of judges in the team's favour in its other debates is less than or equal to 0.5, it receives no judge's ballots for that debate.

(d) In the event that a team withdraws from a tournament involving more than 24 teams, the procedures followed shall be those outlined in Schedule 3 (Procedures for Power-Pairing at the World Schools Debating Championships).

Text for 'Schedule 3: Procedures for Power-Pairing at the World Schools Debating Championships':

1. Purpose of this Schedule and responsibility for creating the draw

1.1 This Schedule outlines procedures which shall be followed when creating the draw for the preliminary rounds of the World Schools Debating Championships (WSDC) with the draw created using a 'power-pairing' system at the Championship.

1.2 The procedure for assigning preliminary rounds at the Championship shall be determined by the Chief Adjudicator(s), with the assistance of Chief Adjudicators Panel (CAP) and the appointed Tab Master(s) in accordance with the WSDC Rules and the procedures outlined in this schedule. The first two preliminary rounds will be paired via a computer tabulation programme. Beginning with round 3, a computer tabulation programme operated by the Tab Master(s) acting in accordance with the provisions outlined in this Schedule, will pair the round and assign the judges. The CAs, with the assistance of the CAP, will make final decisions regarding judge placement for each round.

1.3 The Chief Adjudicator(s), CAP and Tab Master(s) shall consult and receive advice from the Convenors of the Championship, the WSDC Ltd Board of Directors, and any relevant WSDC Ltd Working Groups when establishing the computer tabulation programme and the draw procedures.

2. Creating the draw for preliminary rounds 1 and 2 (seeded draw)

2.1 The draw for preliminary rounds 1 and 2 shall be a seeded draw instead of being power-paired.

2.2 For the purposes of determining pre-seeding for preliminary rounds 1 and 2, each team in the Championship shall be placed in groups A, B, C or D.

2.3 The nations will be seeded based on each nation's final ranking at the end of the Championship over the previous 3 Championships.

2.4 Nations which have not entered a team in any of the previous 3 Championships shall be placed at the bottom of the seeding order.

2.5 Once seeded, as far as is reasonably and practically possible the top 25% will be placed in Group A, the second 25% in Group B, the third 25% in Group C, and the bottom 25% in Group D.

2.6 As far as is reasonably and practically possible, each team from Group A and Group D will draw a team from Group B in one of the two 'seeded draw' rounds and will draw a team from Group C in the other, with teams being paired up using a computer tabulation programme or random draw method (thus making each team's pre-set draw, on average, as equal as possible).

2.7 In situations where the total number of teams is not divisible by 4, the Chief Adjudicators shall determine what adjustments need to be made to this system in order to ensure that every team's draw for preliminary rounds 1 and 2 remains as fair and even as possible, keeping the adjustments as minimal as possible.

2.8 Each team shall have 1 debate in proposition and 1 debate in opposition over preliminary rounds 1 and 2.

3. Creating the draw for preliminary rounds 3 to 8 (power-paired draw)

3.1 For preliminary rounds 3 to 8, the draw shall be power-paired using an approved computer tabulation programme, administered by the Tab Master (provisions 3.2 - 3.11 explain the priorities which are to be established within the computer programme).

3.2 At the end of each preliminary round from preliminary round 2 onwards, a league table shall be calculated by the computer tabulation programme for the purpose of preparing the draw for the next round, ranking teams based on the following criteria in this order or priority:

- (i) The number of debates which the team has won, followed by**
- (ii) The total number of judges' ballots in favour of the team, followed by**
- (iii) The average judges' scores awarded to the team.**

3.3 When creating the draw for each preliminary round from round 3 onwards, teams will be divided into brackets made up of teams which have won the same number of debates over the preliminary rounds which have already been completed.

3.4 As far as possible, each team will be drawn to debate against another team from the same bracket as them.

3.5 If it is necessary for a team to be 'pulled-up' to a draw bracket in order to ensure that every team in the bracket has an opponent, the team which is 'pulled-up' shall be taken from the bracket immediately below (or the closest available bracket below in the event that other provisions within these guidelines prevent this).

3.6 If possible, teams shall be 'pulled-up' to a higher bracket no more than once during preliminary rounds 3 - 8, unless having the team be 'pulled-up' more than once is necessary to allow with other provisions within these guidelines to be maintained.

3.7 If possible, the team which is 'pulled-up' to a bracket shall be the team from the bracket immediately below whose opponents from all the preliminary rounds which have already been completed have the lowest average rank in the preliminary round league tables heading into current round (or the available team whose opponents have the lowest average rank on the league table subject to the other provisions within these guidelines).

3.8 Subject to the conditions outlined in within these guidelines, the computer tabulation programme shall pair teams up in a manner which is as close as possible to the following system:

- (a) Highest-ranked team on the league table within the bracket against lowest-ranked team on the league table within the bracket,**

(b) 2nd highest-ranked team on the league table within the bracket against 2nd lowest-ranked team on the league table within the bracket, etc.

3.9 Teams shall not debate against each other more than once during the 8 preliminary rounds, so the computer tabulation programme shall make adjustments to the system outlined in 3.8 to avoid repeat matchups (while nevertheless keeping as closely as possible to the system outlined in 3.8).

3.10 The preliminary rounds shall follow 'side-locks' to ensure that each team has an equal number of debates in proposition and in opposition over the 8 preliminary rounds according to the following formula:

(a) The 1st prepared round and the 2nd prepared round shall be 'side-locked' against each other (i.e. the side which the team debated on in the 1st prepared debate shall be switched for the 2nd prepared debate),

(b) The 1st impromptu round and the 2nd impromptu round shall be 'side-locked' against each other,

(c) Sides for the 3rd prepared round and the 3rd impromptu round shall be assigned at random,

(d) The 4th prepared round shall be 'side-locked' against the 3rd prepared round, and

(e) The 4th impromptu round shall be 'side-locked' against the 3rd impromptu round.

3.11 The computer tabulation programme shall be designed to use 'pull-ups' in a way which assists with the 'side-locking' process (the computer tabulation programme shall be designed to use as many pull-ups as are necessary to enable the 'side-locking' process to work).

4. Procedures regarding walkovers and swing teams

4.1 In the event that the number of competing teams is an odd number, the Host and the Chief Adjudicators shall jointly decide to follow one of the following options:

(i) To implement a system where at each preliminary round 1 team will be awarded a walkover win, or

(ii) To have a 'swing team' debate in the preliminary rounds in order to ensure an even number of teams.

If a system of walkover wins is implemented:

4.2 In preliminary rounds 1 and 2, a team shall be awarded a 3-0 walkover win in each round.

4.3 The Chief Adjudicators shall determine which group(s) the teams awarded walkover wins in preliminary rounds 1 and 2 shall come from, and the teams from the group(s) given the walkover in each round shall be randomly drawn.

4.4 In preliminary rounds 3 - 8, a randomly-selected team from the lowest-bracket in the draw (or the lowest-available bracket if no team in the lowest-bracket is eligible to receive a 3-0 walkover due to other provisions in these guidelines) shall be awarded a walkover win in each round.

4.5 No team shall be awarded a walkover win more than once during the preliminary rounds (with the exception of situations where the team is assigned an opponent in the draw for the round but their opponents withdraw from the round).

4.6 In a situation where a team is assigned to debate against another team in a round but that team then withdraws from the round, the following shall happen:

(a) The team which withdraws shall be awarded a 3-0 walkover defeat for the round, and

(b) The team they were due to debate against shall be awarded a walkover win unless the Chief Adjudicators decide before the draw for the round is released that it is possible to amend the draw in a way which allows that team to have an opponent and this is done in a manner which, in the judgement of the Chief Adjudicators, does not compromise the fairness of the draw for all teams affected.

4.7 Where a team is involved in a walkover, for the purpose of rankings at the end of the preliminary rounds the team shall be given a team score for that round equivalent to their average score for the preliminary rounds in which the team did debate.

If a 'swing team' is used:

4.8 If a 'swing team' is used, the Host shall take responsibility for arranging the swing team.

4.9 The swing team shall be made up of 3 to 5 students who shall meet the age criteria and education status criteria for debaters set out in the WSDC Rules, however the members of the swing team do not necessarily have to come from the same nation.

4.10 Adjudicators shall judge the swing team in the same way as a competing team in the Championship, however the swing team and its members shall not be considered to be an official competing team and thus shall not be eligible to qualify for the break rounds or receive any team or individual speaker awards.

4.11 For a swing team participating in preliminary round 1 and preliminary round 2, the Chief Adjudicators shall determine whether it is more appropriate to place the swing team in Group A, B, C or D based on the background of the debaters in the swing team.

4.12 In the event of a team being unable to participate in a round, the following shall happen:

(i) The team which is unable to participate in the round shall be awarded a 3-0 defeat for the round along with (for the purpose of rankings at the end of the preliminary rounds) a team score which is equivalent to the team's average score for the preliminary rounds in which the team did participate.

(ii) The team's opponents in the draw for that round shall be awarded a 3-0 victory along with along with (for the purpose of rankings at the end of the preliminary rounds) a team score which is equivalent to that team's average score for the preliminary rounds in which the team did participate, unless the Chief Adjudicators decide that it is possible to amend

the draw for the round to ensure that every competing team participating in the round has an appropriate opponent by adding or withdrawing the swing team in a manner which, in the Chief Adjudicators' opinion, does not significantly affect the fairness and integrity of the draw.