Debators win consistently

By ROY FUGITT
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If you want smooth talking, we've got 'em. And they've got the trophies to prove it. The UK debate team won over 80 trophies at invitational tournaments last year, said Dr. J. W. Patterson, assistant professor of speech. But despite its success, the team has received little recognition. Patterson estimates that in his four years as coach the team has won over 100 awards and trophies. Last year's team finished third in one national tournament and in the runner-up position at another. This gives UK the distinction of being the only university in the nation to place in the top three positions of both national tournaments. UK also received an individual award at one of the national competitions, the Delta Sigma Theta Kappa Alpha National Tournament last year. GB Skillman, a seniors, won the individual speaker award at that tournament during the current season. Skillman and his new partner, Jerry Obers, a seniors, took top debate honors at the UK National Round Robin Tournament in October, and at the University of Georgia National Round Robin in November. They also won at the West Invitational Tournament several weeks ago in California. Skillman won last year. Mary Thompson was named by the Wake Forest coach to enroll at that university by what Patterson jokingly calls "the ultimate extreme to get a good debater." Thompson married the coach and is presently debating for Wake Forest.

The other top UK debaters are Guy Campana, a seniors, and David Dunnovan, a seniors, and the teams of David Howard, a seniors, and John McGlew, a seniors. In competition earlier this month, Campana and Dunnovan went undefeated through eight straight rounds to win the Drury College Annual Round Robin Debates in Springfield, Mo. They then proceeded to win second place in the Southwest Missouri University tournament also held in Springfield. The Kentucky pair dropped the final debate to the University of Kansas.

While other UK teams were making their presence known in California and Missouri, Howard and McGlew ventured to Nashville and reached the quarterfinals of the annual Vanderbilt University Tournament before losing to Vanderbilt University in the quarterfinals.

When asked about the team's lack of recognition, Skillman, considered by many to be the top debater in the nation, said he has been accustomed to anonymity. He qualified that by adding that he sometimes resents being unknown when he gets into a discussion with another team in a tournament. "I don't have a chance to explain my ideas," he said. "I have to be ready to answer the other team's arguments.

Skillman's major has an impressive 3.97 grade point average. He has received the Torrence Award for outstanding achievement in debate. His major is geared to a specific audience. "Debating is the intellectual level," he said.

With a strong winning tradition and an impressive 3.97 grade point average, UK maintains his position among the five debating schools in the nation competing against Harvard, Kansas, and Southern California. Patterson and his squad praise the advantages of their debating experience. Patterson said the chief value of the competition is the promotion of "intelligent, effective and responsible advocacy," while allowing the students to become acquainted with some of the best minds in the country.

He said debate teaches students to "analyze and research, which sharpens their skills in reflective thinking."

The students, on the other hand, a argue that "the way to practice debate is an excellent way to develop the ability to communicate and organize ideas. It also sharpens the ability to analyze problems and arguments as well as most effectively." The team always looks for ways to improve their arguments and to develop a more persuasive style of debate.

Skillman optimistic about UK's chances at the national tournaments in March and April. It's his goal for his team to win the individual debater award again.

"We have already won more than at the national tournaments in any recent year," Skillman said.