UK debate team makes final four in nationals

By KIP BOWMAR
Staff Writer

While one final four took place in Seattle this week, the UK debate team of Calvin Rockefeller and T.A. McKinney participated in another.

The collegiate National Debate Tournament took place on the campus of Miami University of Ohio last weekend. UK fielded two teams in the tournament. In addition to Rockefeller and McKinney, William Massie and David Walsh also competed.

The Rockefeller/McKinney duo advanced to the national semifinals before losing to eventual national champion Baylor.

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Calvin Rockefeller, UK Debater

"But they did what they could to help their teammates. When asked for his highlight of the tournament, David Walsh replied, "Helping T.A. and Calvin advance further in the tournament after we were eliminated."

"We think that this is only the fourth time in the history of the national tournament that two sophomores have advanced to the final four," said UK debate coach, J.W. Patterson. "It's not that unusual to have a sophomore and say, a senior. But to have two sophomores is rare."

The season has been a long one for McKinney and Rockefeller. "Outside of tournaments, which run generally from Thursday to Tuesday, we spend about 20 hours a week practicing or researching," Patterson said. "That's about what it takes to be a top team, which they are."

Patterson said that McKinney and Rockefeller participated in about eight to 10 tournaments during the year and had

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T.A. McKinney, left, and Calvin Rockefeller made it to the final four of national debate tournament.

UK debate duo goes to tourney’s final four

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about 25 to 30 rounds under their belt before they advanced to nationals.

Rockefeller wants to build on this year’s experience for next season.

"It wouldn’t be worthwhile if we didn’t do it as well as we did this year. Your reputation and the credibility of your arguments increase if you do well at the end of season," he said.

The team received one of 16 automatic bids. In the preliminary rounds, the team argued eight rounds and compiled a 6-2 record and were the No. 6 seed.

In their octafinal match they defeated Harvard, a team that beat them earlier in the season. UK matched up against No. 3 seed Dartmouth in the quarterfinals, pulling an upset.

The semifinal round matched UK against No. 1 seed Baylor.

"Baylor won but we gave them a run for their money," Patterson said.