

Debate team wins 'Run for the Roses'

Skiermont, Patil place ahead of 8 teams in nation's only round robin competition

By Don Puckett
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UK juniors Paul Skiermont and Jason Patil established themselves as true contenders for the national debate championship last week when they won the 22nd-annual "Run for the Roses," the nation's only debate round robin.

Skiermont edged out Steve Andrews from Harvard University and

Shawn McCaffity from Northwestern University to be named the tournament's top individual speaker.

He was also top speaker at UK's season opener at the University of Northern Iowa.

"It was more exciting than winning the high school nationals just because of the higher level of competition," Skiermont said.

The loudest applause at the awards ceremony came not when

UK won the tournament but when the ballot for UK's first debate was opened.

The debate is held at UK every year.

Although Skiermont had debated in the round robin the past two years, he had never won a debate.

Before this year, his combined record for the round robin was zero wins and 16 losses.

The first ballot revealed that UK had beaten Dartmouth College. After the announcement, the crowd of debaters and coaches erupted in laughter and cheers.

UK finished the tournament with

seven wins and one loss.

The only loss came at the hands of George Mason University.

UK placed ahead of Harvard, which finished 6-2, and Kansas, which finished 5-3.

The nation's top nine debate teams were invited to the tournament, but the top debater from Harvard and the top two debaters from Dartmouth were unable to attend.

Because of their absence, Skiermont said that he and Patil still feel as if they have something to prove.

"The next tournament, at Harvard, will be our biggest test so far," he said.