

UK debate team conquers coast

By JIM McNAIR
Kernel Staff Writer

In a year supposedly for rebuilding, UK's top debate team has made accomplishments that are undebatably astounding. And its members, Gil Skillman and Gerry Oberst, won't argue the fact that a little hard work was involved.

Having taken a first, a second, and a tie for fourth in invitational tournaments on the West Coast, Skillman and Oberst are hardly breathing easy as they face five more tournaments this semester, including the big daddy of them all, the National Debate Tournament, which ends the debating season in April. They debate next at Harvard, Feb. 2-4.

The entire UK debate squad is coached and coordinated by speech professor J. W. Patterson. A second varsity team is composed of Dave Howard and John McClung, whose achievements haven't reached the limelight yet.

Skillman and Oberst, seniors majoring in economics and philosophy respectively, have been debating together for three years at UK.

Skillman, named top speaker at a California State-Fullerton competition, has been active during the five years since he began debating.

Oberst started earlier, seven years ago in high school, but circumstances forced him out of the picture for one of those years. He was the top speaker at Houston in 1975.


Is useful in other ways

Skillman explained the debater's role as it applies to him: "It's more than just a hobby. It has a lot of impact on your future life because it helps you when you apply for graduate school or employment. For instance, I was hired at the Northwestern High School Speech Institute to teach debate."

"It seemed like something I'd enjoy," Oberst reminisced. "I enjoyed the activity, the argumentation, and the attempt to persuade people. One of the long range effects is that you learn to speak and think better."

At the beginning of the debating year, a topic is selected by the country's debate community. (This year's topic is "whether or not the federal government should strengthen consumer product safety guarantees"). When the topic is announcement, debaters immediately begin research, which depends highly on the specialized publications available.

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st-place prize
tournament,

—Steve Schuler