

# Debaters team up again for tourney

By Don Puckett  
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National championships are nothing new to UK's top two debaters.

While debating together for Omaha Westside High School, Jason Patil and Paul Skiermont won the Tournament of Champions, high school debate's most prestigious tournament, which is held each spring at UK.

After two years of debating at separate schools, the duo are together again.

The UK juniors begin their quest for a second national championship, this time at the college level, when they travel with UK's intercollegiate debate team to the University of Northern Iowa this weekend.

Why did Patil, who debated the last two years at Stanford University, transfer to UK?

"To debate with Paul," he said with a sheepish grin.

Patil had to overcome objections from his parents before he could reunite with his high school partner at UK.



SCOTT McKEEL/Kernel Contributor

**Debaters Jason Patil and Paul Skiermont, who debated together in high school, reunited at UK this year.**

"I didn't think it was ever going to happen," Skiermont said. "But he called one night last year and said that he was going to be able to talk his dad into it, and I've been excited ever since."

Patil and Skiermont know that if they want to win UK's first national championship since 1986, they will need to work harder than ever.

"We'll be debating traditional

powers like Harvard and Dartmouth," Skiermont said. "Winning won't be easy. But we were never afraid of a little competition."

Both debaters have been putting more effort into debate research than school during the first few weeks of the semester. Skiermont spends about five hours a day working on debate, while Patil averages about 10 hours a day preparing.

"Jason's biggest strengths are research and his incredible work ethic," Skiermont said.

"He's so self motivated," said J.W. Patterson, UK's head debate coach. "I think he's been a great motivation to other members of the team. His influence is very pervasive, but it's very quiet and non-intentional."

Patil said Skiermont's greatest strength is his ability to persuade judges. At last year's National Debate Tournament, Skiermont was the tournament's fourth best individual speaker.

"Paul's an awesome speaker," Patil said. "He's one of the most rhetorically persuasive speakers in the nation. He's also a great thinker on his feet."

This year's college debate topic deals with the president's commander-in-chief powers during war.

"The war powers debate is a hot topic right now. Bosnia, Somalia, the fact that defense is finally being cut back and intelligence is being reorganized. I think this is a very timely topic," Patterson said.