

Parly Notes 2006-3

Preparing a team for participation in Chapter Meeting CDE—the following is presented based on observation of many teams and is in fact one person's opinion (shaded by comments and observations of others also). (Based on observations in judging in 6 different districts, 2 sections, and state contests.)

Official Dress: the state and national rules both specify rather definitely that CDEs of the nature of the Chapter Meeting CDE are to be in “official dress”. To be honest there is no definitive statement (that I am aware of) stating any penalty for violation or what to do about it. Any penalty for failure to adhere to this rule is beyond me to establish and needs to officially be addressed at the state governance level. But I do know of persons judging who are very concerned and may (officially or unofficially) count this into their scoring. Aside from any economic reasons and common sense reasons ---the rules are stated---thus blue jeans, any shoe other than regular black (closed toe/heel, etc.), slacks on girls, too long or short a skirt, wrong pins, etc. etc. are all not official dress.

Members do present a better appearance when in complete official dress. Some teams use “other members” jackets for those without or even have jackets with no name on them—should not be a concern as this is simply reality. But do check the pin situation.

Some of the following points are rather basic but given that there are major difference observed even little points may be worth mention particularly for the newer advisors working with a team.

Sentinel entering room prior to start of chapter's presentation: There are a variety of things observed as done by various chapters so this is not to give an “official” opinion on what is right and wrong but share some observations:

- shaking hands and introducing self to judges (if do, make sure it is business handshake not a “limp noodle type”.)

- presenting various items to judges that the team will be using: minutes of past meeting, treasurer's report, committee report (some chapters do, some not)

- asking judges if they have any special instructions on set up of the room (maybe including the point that if there are going to be “extra” chairs in the center should they be removed (this seems to be one of those items where some judges differ)).

- setting up room---strongly do recommend that the Sentinel be seated with the group not off “by the door”. Seated either at same area as the Rep/Treas or Sec/Advisor actually seems to work best.

Team Entry: Recommend considering a situation where members enter with a natural gait. The idea of having hands behind the back (or in front) seems to create a very awkward situation. The Sentinel can have informed the group as to the exact set up of the room and order of entry can be established in the hallway for simple movement to positions. Team should stand until a tap of the gavel by the chair.

Chair should ask judges if they have anything to say---of course, they will---generally involves introductions (and maybe a few comments to try to settle the group down and put at ease), distribution of cards, indications as to signal for time reference (example: someone will stand at 12 minutes and again at 15 minutes). Cards may either be passed out by the judges or already be placed out ---either way the judge should give the group a one minute review period.

NOW What: one thing that occurs now has sometimes created concerns---most chapters start off with the official 2 taps and go----but some chapters have a practice of using a situation of 1 tap (get attention) followed by a pause then the 2 taps----strongly recommend using only the two tap situation.

Use of consensus in a meeting: “consensus” referring to a point whereby there is no objection --so proceed. Example: approval of minutes of the previous meeting—Chair: “Are there any additions or corrections to the minutes as presented” pause and look around group—“if not then the minutes stand approved as presented.” The consensus route can be used for a variety of legitimate purposes without violating member rights because if anyone does not agree all they have to do is get recognition and go from there. The use of consensus speeds up meetings and is technically correct. Other Examples include: closing debate---no one is seeking the floor so rather than a motion to close debate (previous question) and the taking of a counted vote to ensure 2/3rds –simply “If there is no further debate (pause) we shall proceed to vote.”

Official Ceremonies: given as “mini speeches” with “feeling” and word perfect for maximum effect and points consideration. Some observations that impress: an officer upon standing faces the VP to whom they are reporting; hands behind or in front ---and they maintain this stance until all officers have reported and VP says “M. President” then all turn toward chair position. Avoids hands in pockets, shifting positions, looking around the room, etc. etc.

Getting Recognition: stand and then say “M. President” not from the seated position—the contest is being run as if a large group---actually in a group of a dozen or so these rules would probably not be important.

Debate: say something convincing---debate should be effective, efficient, and consistent with position member will be taking. Example: a member has a card to “Postpone Indefinitely” which has the intent of “killing the motion” without a direct vote---so it would be assumed that the member is against passage. Two or three well worded sentence beats out 10 minutes of rambling nothing. A concern also: should the opinion of a member influence the membership in their voting----example: a member stands and says “I am in favor of this motion”---should this be expected to sway many votes. Good statements will seek to tie this to chapter objectives, plan of activities, within financial reality, etc. etc..... (For the teams that make it to the National the points on debate will be very important.)

Voting: many votes can be taken via voice vote without a direct count but if a “counted” vote is taken in smaller groups then a show of hands may be acceptable---but if a “division” is called then the vote must be a standing count.

When should the Sentinel take materials from a member ---example: treasurer or committee report to the secretary---of course, this is optional to the team---but a point being that the “clock is running” and if any time is lost while the “meeting” is under the clock then this is time wasted---perhaps might consider waiting until after the final gavel then while the secretary is finishing minutes the Sentinel does these tasks.

Don’t worry too much about the clock: It is far better to go over by a minute or more than to “blow” one or more motions. Some of the top placing teams in the state last year went over time---it did not hurt them much because a two point loss for a minute beats a zero for a blown 15 point motion.

Now how about the secretary getting done---recommendation to judges is this: if the secretary/team takes 2 minutes or so---end it and call for the items because we are now effecting the teams that follow on time to participate.

Will judges make comments to the teams after their presentation: This is choice of the judges—they are told that if they want and there is time it is up to them. Reality: it takes about ½ hour for each team all things considered; teams have been set up as to expected time they will be “going into the contest room”; teams may have traveled great distance (as the judges may have also); it is a school night and a long trip home---every reasonable effort should be made to stay on time so whether there is time to make comments or answer questions in reality may not work out even if judges would like to help teams.

What if team “falls apart”---judges are encouraged to “stop things” if need be and simply allow a calming down and a “teachable moment” since the team at this point is likely no longer in a competitive situation it makes sense to try to salvage the group and move on toward another day.

Judges: Please realize it takes many people to judge all the districts and sections---some judges will be quite experienced at FFA things and this CDE (and judging of it) and some may never have seen a FFA meeting (but know parliamentary procedure). Because of the need for so many people to judge and given that there is not complete agreement among the teacher ranks there will be differences of opinion and these may get reflected in the scoring---there is no way to avoid this—so everyone does the best they can. (In point of fact there is not always agreement between professional parliamentarians.) Advisors: please, please be kind to judges—everyone I have ever had the honor of judging with was seeking to do their very best and were worried that they didn’t handle something right.

Reality check: where competition is close—the little things count big.