

Tournament Directing: Some of the Dharma

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Preface

This is what I did, or in some cases what I wish I did. Your mileage may vary.

Long-Term Planning

Try to set the dates for your tournament during the previous academic year, especially if your facility is in high demand.

Inform team members of tournament dates as soon as they are set, so they can make staffing a priority.

Promotion

Keep a huge list of contacts with e-mail addresses. Spam this list mercilessly starting a couple months before the tournament. At the top of your e-mails, ask lapsed coaches to send you the name of new coaches.

Scour school web sites for the names and e-mails of team sponsors in your area.

Print flyers and announce your tournament at the tournaments you attend.

If you're really hardcore, mail tournament announcements to all the schools in your area via snail mail.

Facilities

As a team representing an educational institution, your tournament is most likely being held in the facilities of that institution. Treat your facility nicely.

If teachers find things disturbed in their classrooms, they will send angry e-mails to your administration, jeopardizing your ability to use the facility in the future. Ensure classrooms are treated nicely during the tournament.

Set up the rooms you will be using the night before the tournament. Draw pictures of the desk arrangement so rooms can be returned to their prior state when the

tournament is done. If teachers are still in the rooms, ask politely if you may muck around with their desks while they work.

Treat janitors and maintenance staff extremely nicely. They are coming in on a day they might otherwise have off to clean up after you. Help them out at the end of the day by cleaning trash out of rooms as you finish with them.

Staff

Never run a tournament for which you have insufficient experienced moderators. An experienced moderator knows all the rules, knows how to handle protests, and can read a round of 20 tossup-bonus questions in under 25 minutes. They should be able to passably pronounce Spanish, French, and German names. Some of them should not need scorekeepers, if you get in a crunch.

Moderators should be the limiting factor on your field size. Don't recruit moderators from amongst the coaches or parents at the tournament; you can't trust them.

Train your moderators thoroughly. Make sure they know the rules and what to do in the case of a protest that matters.

Is it clear yet that you should have good moderators?

Questions

Have your questions available at least a week before the tournament. If you housewrote the questions, edit mercilessly.

If you stay up late every night the week before the tournament, you will develop a psychosomatic cough that will not go away for six months.¹

Make enough copies of the questions so you have a packet for each room and a couple extras each round. If you're selling the questions and you don't want to send electronic copies, make those copies too.

Lock the questions up somewhere until the tournament.

Logistics

Arrive at the building at the same time maintenance or security does and get all the rooms unlocked. If you're on a college campus, have the number for security in case they don't show. I've never known high schools to have unlocking issues.

Walkie-talkies are very helpful.

¹I did, anyway.

Set up a registration table in the most convenient possible location in your facility. Sit some people behind the table. One should have a list of teams coming and what they owe you, along with a stack of invoices/receipts for teams that need them.

Another person at the registration table should have a list of all the rooms that need buzzers. They should assign buzzer systems to rooms as they arrive and dispatch lackeys to go set them up. Extra buzzer systems should go on another list. Don't lose these lists.

Each team should receive a team packet when they register. The following should be contained therein:

- A roster, to be filled out immediately and returned to the registration desk, and dispatched from there to the stat room.
- A schedule, including brackets if your tournament is a bracketed round robin, as most are.
- The official rules for the tournament.
- Scoresheets sufficient for the preliminary rounds.
- Directions to convenient restaurants for lunch.

Conduct a rules meeting prior to the commencement of the first round. Give an overview of the format of each round. Explain your tournament's stance on blitzing, conferring, timing, bouncebacks, and whatever else may be unique to your event.

Statistics

Establish a War Room. Put signs on it, identifying it as such. Put another sign on it requesting that those who would speak with those inside to knock first. Put all the questions in there, stacked up by round.

Install yourself in the War Room with a computer during registration. Lackeys should be bringing you rosters throughout. Type the rosters in to your quiz bowl statistics software of your choice.²

²Your "choice" is probably SQBS, but soon you will be able to send me money to use Taft (see <http://taftqb.com>).

Between rounds, instruct scorekeepers (or moderators, if you have no scorekeepers) to follow this protocol:

1. Tally individual statistics on the scoresheet
2. Transport the scoresheet and the old packet to the War Room
3. Receive a new packet and a new scoresheet

Have lackeys in the War Room to mediate these transactions.

Have a lackey read you the relevant statistics from each game and input them into your statistics software. Staple the scoresheets from each round together. Don't throw them away until the tournament is over.

Print out team and individual standings when it's convenient and have a lackey tape them to a wall.

Playoffs

Herd everyone together after the preliminary rounds. Announce the high scorers and give them nice prizes. Announce the neg champion and give them an embarrassing prize. Thank your staff members. Thank the janitors. Thank your coach/sponsor.

Announce playoff teams.

Have a playoff of some kind. Do what you think is reasonable, given the field, time of day, etc.

Give the champion a big trophy. Give the runner-up a smaller trophy. Give the third-place team or semifinalists the smallest trophy or trophies. Thank everyone.

Cleanup

Empty small room trash cans into large hallway trash cans, if applicable.

Recycle all the paper you have lying around.

Rearrange classrooms to look how they did before you started messing with them. Refer to your drawings if necessary.

Go home. If it is later than 7:30, you have done something horribly wrong.