

## **POWER PAIRING MEMORANDUM**

(Revised 2/16/16)

**What is Power Pairing?** Power Pairing describes the process, adopted by the Steering Committee, by which the Tournament Administrator determines which schools your school will compete against during the preliminary and elimination rounds of the Santa Clara County Mock Trial Tournament. The goal of power pairing is to help ensure that your school competes against schools that have a comparable win-loss record during each of the preliminary rounds. Not only does power pairing serve an educational purpose, it also helps ensure that the eight strongest teams advance to the elimination rounds, and that the two strongest teams advance to the final round. It also minimizes the discretion afforded to the Tournament Director to determine pairings. The twin purposes of this memorandum is to enhance transparency in the administration of the tournament and to educate future Tournament Administrators.

**Preliminary Rounds:** The first preliminary round match-ups will be completely random except that the Tournament Administrator has the discretion to adjust side assignments to facilitate power pairing in subsequent rounds. Beginning in Round Two, schools will face other schools with similar win-loss records and will be divided into separate brackets (e.g., the 1-0 bracket and the 0-1 bracket). All schools with comparable win-loss records will be seeded based upon their cumulative average percentage scores. The top seed in each bracket will face the bottom seed, the second highest seed will face the second lowest seed, etc. If necessary, and subject to side constraints, a bracket may be adjusted to include higher seeded teams in the next lowest bracket with the possible exception of round four. In round four, the 2-1 bracket shall be paired first to ensure that each 2-1 team faces another 2-1 team to the extent possible. An unbalanced 2-1 bracket shall be adjusted with the lowest seeded team(s) from the 3-0 bracket. Top lower bracketed teams may be added to the adjusted 2-1 bracket only if side constraints prohibit 3-0 teams from inclusion. If a bracket is expanded, the higher seeded teams from the lower bracket will become the lower seeded teams in the upper bracket. Normal power pairing principals will then apply.

Teams do not automatically switch sides after each round although each side, prosecution and defense, will perform twice during the preliminary rounds. The Tournament Administrator will do his/her best to make it possible for each side to perform each week. Schools should read their notices very carefully to make sure which side will perform on which night. Schools are discouraged from requesting the Tournament Administrator to assign their school to a particular side on a particular night.

A team which is paired against a team which it had previously competed against will flip sides to maximize the educational opportunities for all students competing.

**Elimination Rounds:** The eight teams with the highest win-loss record from the four preliminary rounds will advance to the quarter final round. The cumulative average percentage

scores will serve as a tie breaker. For example, if there are two 4-0 teams, five 3-1 teams, and six 2-2 teams, then all of 4-0 and 3-1 teams and the 2-2 team with the highest cumulative average percentage score will advance to the quarter final round.

The eight quarter finalist teams will then be seeded based upon the results of the four preliminary rounds. In the example above, the 4-0 team with the highest cumulative average percentage score would be the number one seed. The 2-2 team would be the number eight seed. In the quarter final round, the highest seed will face the lowest seed, the second highest seed will face the second lowest seed, and so forth.

If teams which are paired against each other in any elimination round have previously faced each other in a preliminary round, they will switch sides for the elimination round. If they have not faced each other before, the Tournament Administrator will assign sides. If teams have faced each other twice, sides will be assigned by the Tournament Administrator by coin flip. The Tournament Administrator will attempt to ensure that a school's teams compete roughly the same number of times during the course of the tournament, and flip sides after quarter final round to the extent possible.

Teams are not re-seeded after the quarter final rounds. The highest surviving seed will be paired against the lowest surviving seed. For example, if the number eight seed upsets the number one seed, and the number two seed defeats the number seven seed, then the number two seed and the number eight seed will face each other in semi-finals.

If the two finalist teams have not met before during the course of the tournament, or met each other twice, sides will be determined by stipulation. If no stipulation can be reached, sides will be determined by coin flip.

**Practice Teams:** If there are an uneven number of teams competing in the county tournament, a "practice team" will be chosen and will compete against a lower seeded team in a lower bracket, so that the results of the practice team's round will not skew the results of teams which may still be viable for the elimination rounds. The practice team does not get credit for a win, but a team which loses to the practice team will be assigned a loss. If a practice team is necessary, the Tournament Administrator will afford all participating schools the opportunity to offer a practice team and will select the practice teams based on a random, rotating, and fair basis.

In sum, the Steering Committee believes the power pairing system described above, which loosely mirrors the system used by CRF at states, is the fairest and most effective way to ensure that the best team will be chosen to represent Santa Clara County at states, while maximizing the education opportunities for the students involved. Any perceived errors by the Tournament

Administrator in applying power pairing principles in making assignments should be immediately brought to the attention of the Tournament Administrator so that corrective action before the round can be made if necessary and appropriate.