

BELLAIRE HIGH SCHOOL

Bellaire debate team is ready to defend its national title

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The Bellaire High School debate team has made it to the final four, and that means an all-expense paid trip to New York City to compete in the Bickel & Brewer / New York University National Public Policy Forum debate April 18.

This is not the team's first time to make it to the finals. They won the competition in 2008, came in second in 2007, and came in third in 2006 and 2005.

Andrew Garbarino will be making his second trip to New York City.

The 17-year-old senior has been on Bellaire's debate team for four years, ever since he was a freshman.

"I think it's helped me develop a lot of things," Garbarino said. "Research skills, speaking skills, the ability to analyze information and process everything that's coming at you. You have to be able to sort out lies from truth, and debate helps with that."

As team captain this year, Garbarino has a much larger role in the debate than he did last year, that as orator of the five minute rebuttal speech.

The topic is "Should the United States substantially increase alternative energy incentives?"

The Bellaire team already knows it will be taking the affirmative during the semi-final round against Glenbrook North High School from Chicago.

If Bellaire debaters make it to the final round, they will either affirm again, or have to negate. That's why the team needs to be strong in their knowledge of both sides of the issue.

"In general in debate, it's easier to negate," Garbarino said. "If somebody makes a proposition to you, it's easier to poke holes in their argument."

Spoken like a lawyer, which is actually what Garbarino wants to be some day. He's already been accepted to Harvard this fall.

The odds are in favor of a Texas team winning the Bickel and Brewer NPPF title this year, since three of the four competing teams are from the Lone Star state.

One of them happens to be from Houston. The Deer Park High School debate team is also a semi-finalist this year.

Russell Rach, who has been coaching the Bellaire debate team for more than 12 years, said he knows Deer Park Coach Martin Klein quite well.

"He's a dear friend of mine," Rach said. "And so our (debate) kids know each other. This is just

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business, and no matter what happens, we will all probably hang out afterwards and see New York City together.”

Three from Texas

William A. Brewer III, partner at the Bickel & Brewer law firm in Dallas, and founder of the NPPF, said 180 schools registered for the competition, so to see three Texas teams in the final four is “remarkable.”

The Bellaire team will first be up against the Chicago team, while a team from Plano Senior High School and Deer Park battle it out. The winner of each of those rounds will then face off against each other.

The winning team receives \$10,000 and the coveted Bickel & Brewer cup.

Brewer said Bellaire will most certainly be a team to contend with.

“You can’t overestimate the value of their experience,” Brewer said. “As a finals judge, I have seen Bellaire improve every year in its research capabilities and oral advocacy skills.”

“These are amazing students who are always prepared.”

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