# Special Section Reviews of Tournament Management Programs

# SCOTT JENSEN, WEBSTER UNIVERSITY & EDITOR, THE FORENSIC OF PI KAPPA DELTA

ong ago, in universities not so far away, there were tabrooms equipped with different colored pens, pencils, paper clips, large index cards stacked or clipped in many colors, and a typewriter. Names of schools and debaters were neatly (or not-so neatly) written, by hand, on the tops of cards with numbers, symbols, and words written in carved out spaces, all telling those in the know who won, who lost, how well each debater is doing, and what does the power-matching reveal for the next round. Eventually we moved to the world of spreadsheets and computers began to do some of the math for these tabulation masters. Fast-forward to the new century and we now manage tournaments in a world where we may not even have ballot tables...or even paper ballots.

This special section features a review of three popular tournament management programs. Perhaps the better word is "services," which would reflect the comprehensive functions these programs provide, including but not limited to receiving entries, generating invoices, publishing judging philosophies, scheduling and tabulating the tournament, and generating judge assignments and ballots electronically. The world of tournament management has evolved to electronic, on-line services that benefit both tournament hosts and competing schools. Tournaments can be managed with fewer staff members and in a more efficient manner. Schools attending tournaments can more easily manage their own entries while also knowing schools' entries and judges. On-line services bring a number of important features to the world of forensic tournament management. They afford efficiency and transparency. They are much more environmentally friendly. They also allow for archival of tournaments that is accessible to anyone with an interest.

This section includes reviews of Speechwire, Forensicstournament, and Tabroom—three of the most popular services among both collegiate and high school tournament hosts. These three programs, or services, have all been used by large collegiate national tournaments as well. Each comes with a cost that varies among the three services, as well as within each service, depending on how the tournament host contracts for their tournament. While many tournaments continue to manage tournaments with other electronic or manual sys-

tems, these reviews offer insights by individuals who have used the service they review at large collegiate forensic tournaments. The hope is these reviews will further inform tournament hosts as they consider the best choices for the events they direct.



### A Review of SpeechWire Online Tournament Management

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There are many options available for directors to handle tournament management, but the one I am most familiar with is SpeechWire. SpeechWire (developed by Ben Stewart) is a comprehensive online tournament management program that handles every aspect of your tournament from start to finish. The program is incredibly customizable and housed in one website for ease of use. In addition to wide utilization in high school and college tournaments across the country, we have also used SpeechWire at the National Forensic Association Championship Tournament since 2015. Here, I'll review some of the features of SpeechWire and discuss their strengths and limitations.

Setup and Registration

Use of SpeechWire begins by completing the order form online. From there, Ben Stewart creates your tournament page in the website and emails you two sets of login credentials: one for you as the tournament manager (for setup, fees, entry & judge management, etc.) and one for your tab staff (only provides access to tabbing—helpful if you have multiple people tabbing results but you want to retain administrative capabilities for yourself). Once you receive your login credentials, setting up your tournament is relatively easy. SpeechWire has a setup wizard that will walk you through a series of questions about how you want to run your tournament, and then it creates those procedures right in the website for you—including the specific events offered, any flights or conflict patterns you use, the time blocks for the tournament, and your room list.

As part of tournament setup, you can designate your tournament as an open or invite-only tournament. Open tournaments will appear visible for any team to register; invite-only tournaments are able to restrict registration to teams you invite through SpeechWire. This is a helpful feature if you have a closed tournament (such as a district or state tournament with limited access). Once you complete the setup wizard, you can control when SpeechWire opens your tournament for registration, and teams can enter their entries, judges, and any

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blocks, conflicts, or availability limitations they have. This information all becomes available to you as you schedule and manage the tournament. You can also request Ben Stewart to turn on a special field during the registration process to ask coaches for content warnings from your students' pieces, which—if provided—will appear on schematics and ballot cover sheets to help both students and judges anticipate potentially triggering performance material.

### **Tournament Scheduling**

Once teams have registered for your tournament, SpeechWire makes scheduling a breeze. You are able to see on one page the number of entries in each event, and determine how many sections of each event you need based on those entries. From there, you can have the program automatically assign rooms and judges to all of those sections, which you can manually adjust as needed. With these tools, scheduling your tournament is done in approximately one minute, plus whatever time you spend adjusting room or judge assignments. SpeechWire also allows you to post finalized schematics to your tournament's homepage so teams can view them electronically, and you can easily update those postings when you make changes to the tournament schedule.

Perhaps my favorite feature in SpeechWire is the "detailed judge assigner," which is particularly helpful at large invitational or national tournaments. The detailed judge assigner will allow you to view the judge(s) assigned to a specific section of an event, and it will show you a list of all judges at the tournament with their availability or restrictions displayed. Judges who are available and have no conflicts for the round will appear at the top of this list with the designation "Available," whereas judges with conflicts or availability restrictions will show up beneath these with their specific restrictions identified. This feature makes it incredibly easy for you to identify clean available judges if you need to replace a judge; it also enables easy manual assignment of elimination round judge panels.

SpeechWire also has a comprehensive set of printing options, which will allow you to easily print room use grids, judge use grids, detailed itineraries for students and judges (including time slots, events, rooms, codes, and speaking order), ballot packet cover sheets (master ballots), individual critique sheets, room signs, tournament schematics, tabulation results, and award scripts (with name pronunciation, if the coach provided that information). This information can all be printed easily and quickly, which makes putting together the paper materials for a round (or for the tournament) an expedient process.

In addition to these features, SpeechWire also allows for electronic ballots. These are housed right in the SpeechWire program so they require little setup on your part; all judges at the tournament will need to create individual accounts and provide both a phone number and email address, and then judges receive ballots and messages from the tab staff through those contact avenues. Although I have not used e-ballots myself, the general consensus is the process can streamline tournament management and tabulation.

### **Tabulation & Outround Assignments**

Tabulation is also easy in SpeechWire. As ballots return to the tab room, the tab staff can select events and specific sections to enter results. SpeechWire will also show you the completion percentage for an event or round, so the tab staff can quickly identify which ballots have yet to be returned or tabbed. Upon completion of preliminary rounds, SpeechWire provides an intuitive way to break to elimination rounds. Once all ballots have been tabbed for an event, SpeechWire will automatically seed all competitors entered in that event based on their preliminary round rankings and speaker points, and show you where ties occur to assist you in selecting the number of entries to send to elimination rounds. From there, SpeechWire can automatically assign eligible judges to those elimination rounds, or you can use the detailed judge assigner to easily see judge conflicts and manually place judges into those rounds.

Upon completion of the tournament, you can (as the tournament manager) easily post final results directly to your tournament SpeechWire page though this will only display team sweepstakes results and final round placings for individual events. If you would like to make a full packet of results available, simply email Ben Stewart and he will post the full results (including preliminary round ranks) to your tournament's page.

### Software Support and Troubleshooting

Ben Stewart has created a beautiful machine in SpeechWire. From start to finish, the program is comprehensive and well-suited to both high school and college speech and debate tournaments. Throughout the setup process, SpeechWire's setup wizard is excellent in asking you questions to help you design your tournament, and the website contains abundant documentation to help you during the process.

If you are new to using SpeechWire and/or hosting a tournament, Ben Stewart is also wonderfully responsive through email—and often calls you preemptively to help you address issues he might see behind the scenes as your tournament is underway. If you have questions, concerns, or issues during your tournament, a quick email or message directly through SpeechWire will provide you with an answer. For larger tournaments, Ben has also offered his assistance with on-site troubleshooting. For a nominal fee and travel accommodations, he will join your tournament staff and help you troubleshoot the program from your tab room. We regularly ask Ben to join us at the NFA National Championship tournament, and he has been an invaluable resource during our five-day competition. At the conclusion of your tournament, you will receive an invoice from Ben-and one of the great things about SpeechWire is the scaled pricing system, where your fee for using the program is based on the size of the tournament. This makes it an incredibly accessible program for tournaments of

**Summary & Conclusion** 

SpeechWire is a comprehensive and accessible tournament administration program that can handle everything you need from start to finish. At times, its very comprehensiveness can make it a little difficult to follow or figure out, and you may need some assistance during set up, scheduling, or tabulation. All the hidden features and abilities of SpeechWire, and its customizability, can be a blessing and a curse—but once you use it (and discover where things are hidden), it will make your job as a tournament administrator substantially easier.



## A Review of Forensicstournament.net

### JORDAN COMPTON, SOUTHWEST BAPTIST UNIVERSITY

ince running its first tournament in 2006, forensicstournament.net has been a mainstay in tournament management programs for all levels of In forensic tournament administration. Once paired with everythingtab. com, the tabulation site, these two websites have provided tournament administrators an easy tool to run their tournaments. Beginning in the 2019 academic year, creator and owner, Danny Cantrell has merged the two sites together to offer a one-stop spot for tournament administration. This essay offers a review of forensicstournament.net by walking through the steps taken to utilize the website for tournament administration purposes and offering some strengths and weaknesses of the site. To begin, I'll provide a brief overview of my tabulation background and my experiences with the site.

I have served in numerous tab rooms since I began coaching in 2008, including Pi Kappa Delta national tournaments, the Missouri Association of Forensics Activities (MAFA), the Gorlok Gala at Webster University, the Gateway Swing at Webster University, the Derryberry Memorial Season Opener at Southwest Baptist University, and the Missouri Mule/Carnegie Swing at The University of Central Missouri. We have used forensicstournament.net at all of these tournaments. In my roles in the tab room at these tournaments, I have worked in debate and IEs, so I am familiar with tabbing both aspects of compet-

### **Tournament Creation**

Creating a tournament on forensicstournament.net is a relatively easy process. After clicking on the "Create New Tournament" link, the tournament administrator will be asked to provide basic information, like the name of the tournament, where the tournament will be located, and the tournament dates. The next step is creating the events offered at the tournament. For IEs, tournament administrators will need to place the events in their respective flights and place a limit on the amount of entries a student can have in a given flight. For debate, tournament administrators will need to create the different debate for-

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mats and also identify the divisions (open, junior, novice) for each format. This allows coaches to properly register their students in the appropriate event. Additionally, setting up the fee rules will allow for computations of fees owed by each school depending upon their entry and judge coverage.

Registering for a tournament is also a relatively easy task on forensicstournament.net. Coaches will need to establish a profile and link that profile to their school/university. Then, coaches can establish their team roster, making the registration for tournaments much more streamlined. After establishing a team roster, the coaches can enter individual students into their respective events.

Once the tournament has been created for registration to open, the tournament administrator can begin setting up the tournament schedule and entering rooms on the tournament site. For each round, a schedule will need to be created so the tabulation site can pair rounds. The schedule should always be created first, as that has a direct impact for setting up rooms and adding tournament judges. If, however, you need to add a new round while the tournament is ongoing (eg., a novice debate breakout round), the process is similar to the original schedule creation.

After the tournament schedule has been created, tab staff can begin adding rooms and hired judges to the tournament site. I would strongly recommend adding the rooms that are closest to the tournament hub first, as these are the rooms that are used first if rooms are not earmarked for particular uses. After entering all rooms, I would recommend setting up the room scheduling by clicking on the "Scheduling" link. This will bring up a page listing all rooms and schedule blocks for each of your patterns. Toggle buttons will allow you to have a room be available or not available for scheduling for that round. The site also allows you to target events in particular rooms. This is a feature that I always use if I am in charge of scheduling. For IEs, this allows you to target rooms closest to the extemp draw room as the extemp competition rooms. For debate, this also allows the specific targeting of smaller rooms for LD or IPDA competition rooms instead of trying to fit a Public Forum or NPDA round in those rooms. A new feature that has been added is the ability to import rooms from a tournament administrator's previous tournaments. For tab staff at swing tournaments, this allows rooms from the previous tournament/day to be easily imported for use on the next day. Tab staff will need to adjust the schedules for the rooms, but this new feature has been able to cut back on a great deal of typing for tournaments that require the use of several competition rooms.

The final step to take before the tournament is ready to begin is entering in the hired/tournament judges. This process has also been made easier by the merger of forensicstournament.net and everythingtab.com as tournament judges can be entered in at any time in the registration process. After entering the judge name, tab staff will then need to adjust their schedule based on their availability, in the same manner that rooms are scheduled. Additionally, tab staff can also have judges targeted for specific IE events or specific divisions of debate. For tournament administrators that want to make sure their hired judges are used for every round that they are available, a new feature has been implemented that can assign them as a priority judge, meaning they'll be assigned first before

assigning school judges.

**Pairing Events** 

Upon entering rooms and hired judges, the next step is pairing rounds. For debate, the program can pair randomly, high-high, and high-low. Each time you pair a round, you have the option of selecting one of these three options. Additionally, you can set the number of judges needed for each section and can opt to flight debates. Admittedly, I have never flighted a debate format on forensicstournament.net, so I cannot provide an accurate assessment of this function. For IEs, the same steps are taken, though the options there are step and random. When it is time to pair elimination rounds, tab staff must click on the elim button for each event and then select the appropriate responses to the prompts on display. For IE events, a drop down box will show you the scores for the top participants. This will show if there is a tie for the intended final spot in finals to allow tab staff to know how many spots to break in a blind fashion. As most tab staff have students competing, this provides an unbiased assessment of who earned the right to break to finals.

For debate, I have run into a few issues when the pool is a little smaller. For instance, at this year's Derryberry Memorial Season Opener we had an instance in LD debate of two students who had debated earlier in the tournament set to debate again in a power-matched round. Unfortunately, this was not caught in time to re-pair the round, but the students were on opposite sides. While all involved preferred that each student would have had new competition in all prelim rounds, the high-low pairing strategy that was used was indeed correct. I reported this issue to Danny and was told that this issue would be addressed, though I have not had the opportunity to properly verify that this has been resolved.

Postings are available to be printed out in addition to be able to be viewed online at the tournament site. Online postings will update automatically if room changes or section changes are entered into the system.

**Tabbing** 

Once each round has been paired, each IE section and each debate room is given a ballot code associated with that room. To tab the results, the ballot code must be entered and then the information for that round appears on the screen. For debate results, tab staff can click on the side that won, or click on A for affirmative or N for negative. After entering speaker ranks, simply clicking on save enters the information needed. For IEs, ballot covers can be printed out for each section. These ballot covers provide the order of the speakers and gives a place to record rank and rate. Ballot covers provide an easy way for the ballot table to check the accuracy of the scores based upon individual ballots. This also makes the tabulation of IE results much more expedient as we only have to read from the ballot covers and not individual ballots.

**Posting Results** 

Posting results of each event is as simple as clicking a button for each of the IEs and debate events. The results will appear on the tournament site, conveniently located under the heading 'results'. Tournament staff are also able to upload any other documents, like PDFs for pentathlon, quadrathon, or sweepstakes. One of the major weaknesses of forensicstournament.net was the figuring of sweepstakes. With the tournaments I have helped tab, we have always figured sweepstakes on our own using Excel or Google Sheets. Recently, though, I requested changes to the sweepstakes formula on forensicstournament.net. I have only been able to check the accuracy of sweepstakes at one tournament, but the setup of the sweepstakes formula for the 2019 Missouri Mule/Carnegie Swing was accurate compared to the spreadsheet that we kept. A downside to using forensicstournament.net's sweepstakes setting is not being able to edit or customize for other events that might count towards team sweepstakes. The ability to edit or setup additional rules would make this process much easier.

Support

One of the greatest strengths of using forensicstournament.net as a tournament management program is the support given by Danny Cantrell. I have found that Danny is very quick to fix any issues I have encountered. Additionally, I have found Danny to be very open to feedback. After tabbing the 2019 Derryberry Memorial Season Opener, I had a list of things I would like to see Danny add to the site. He was able to add a majority of the features that I had requested before I tabbed The Missouri Mule two weeks later, making the tabulation of that swing tournament much more efficient.

Transparency

The feature that makes forensicstournament.net standout to other tournament management programs is the forced transparency of schools attending the tournament and the number of entries in each event. When tournament administrators use forensicstournament.net for their tournament tabulation program, the schools that are attending are made public in addition to the competitors and judges who will be attending the tournament. I believe that this feature is extremely important. First, it allows for coaches to double check that their entry is correct. If a student does not appear under an event, that means they are not entered, calling attention to the need to fix that issue. The public nature of the entries also allows students themselves to check to make sure they are registered in their proper events. Second, and probably most important, with the number of Title IX issues found within competitive intercollegiate speech and debate, the ability to notify tab staff of any judge/competitor conflicts is vital. This allows tab staff to be able to constrain a judge from seeing a student if a past issue was present before the pairing of events occurs. This can save a great deal of time for tab staff and allows for potential issues to be nullified before a tournament begins. Finally, knowing who will be attending a tournament is just plain fun.

This brief essay provides a review of forensicstournament.net by going through the steps a tab staff can follow to create and setup a tournament, while

also offering strengths and weaknesses of the program. Personally, I have found forensicstournament.net to be easy to use as the tournament creation is simple, the pairing of events is intuitive, and support is always a quick email/text away. There are certainly other tournament management programs that provide more bells and whistles, but if you are looking for a tournament management program that is easy to use, forensicstournament.net is recommended.



### A Review of Tabroom.com

#### JOEL ANGUIANO

s far as forensic technology is concerned we have come a long way from the days of hand tabbing with index cards, or power matching debate rounds with post it notes. Tournament Directors are constantly trying to find new and innovative ways to make the tournament experience a better one for all. The Pi Kappa Delta National Council took a bold step three years ago by using tabroom.com for the National Comprehensive Touranment (NCT), sponsored by Pi Kappa Delta. It was brave simply because of the sheer size of the NCT and finding tournament software that could be a "one-stop shop" for all our tournament needs. While change is never easy, it is important to remember that we are constantly working on making things better, which led to Pi Kappa Delta experimenting with changes in our tournament management. Tabroom provides PKD and its other users with comprehensive tournament software that not only integrates entries but also works as tabulation software. Because the PKD system is so unique in its tabulation it required a workable and flexible system that could match up with our constitution and by-laws. The biggest factor in understanding what makes Tabroom work is the genius behind its system: Chris Palmer, the unsung hero of our national tournament. He has been available to answer questions, to make changes, and to constantly make improvements and adjustments that accommodate the uniqueness of our tournament. There is no shortage of questions that we have for him and he is always available to answer them, which makes our lives during the National Tournament much easier. The combination of tailoring the program to tournament needs and the comprehensiveness of what the program can do makes Tabroom a good choice for tournament management.

Registration updates and revisions are accessible in the system as much and as little as needed. The access of Tabroom.com is very user friendly and gives tournament managers several options for what is accessible or restricted to users. At times there is a "waitlist" message that helps the Tournament Director ensure there are no issues at registration and give attending schools more peace of mind when finalizing entries and other details. Having students, coaches, and judges create accounts improves the tournament experience for all parties

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involved by giving them unique access and direct lines of communication with the tournament staff and coaches. It is imperative that everyone attending the tournament create an account. Important messages and updates can be sent directly to the accounts of competitors, coaches, and anyone else connected to the tournament through Tabroom.

Perhaps the most beneficial and unique feature of Tabroom.com, particularly at our national tournaments, is the use of the online ballot. This feature gives you the opportunity to never check in at a ballot table and to see in real time where and what you will be judging, regardless of where you are at the tournament. Each of a judge's ballots is accessible on any device—smartphone, laptop, pad, or even mobile phone. The ballot itself is also accessible throughout the duration of the entire tournament, making it possible for a judge to amend, add, or delete comments before the competitor can see them. As a way of increasing the efficiency of the tournament, Tabroom can send out a message for a judge to pick up a pushed ballot or to encourage a judge to start their round. This kind of direct messaging manages ballot distribution and the start-time for rounds while eliminating the need for judges to travel across large campuses to pick up a ballot or to be informed of a change in competitors assigned to their section or round. From the Tabroom side, the round is visible instantly, allowing confirmation of when a round has started. While these features are attractive to many tournament managers and judges, traditional paper ballots are accessible at any time. The program is grounded in the use of technology, but also accommodates individuals who would rather avoid some of Tabroom's features.

Tabroom provides instant ballots once the tournament is over. At any point, the tournament director can release online ballots. Program directors can print ballots for distribution or make them visible to students on their accounts. Tabroom software automatically populates ballots for each student, allowing the coach to makes them visible when they want.

There are too many unique features of Tabroom to list and discuss in this review. The best option for tournament managers interested in learning about the program is look through the website (Tabroom.com), create an account, and experiment with tournament management choices. The Tabroom.com software made PKD's National Comprehensive Tournament experience a unique one as the first national tournament to transition to 100% online management. Pi Kappa Delta had positive results with its first use in 2018, and worked closely with Chris Palmer to adjust Tabroom features to work even better for 2019. The combination of technical support, ease of use, electronic tournament functioning such as ballot distribution, and comprehensive integration of tournament participants makes Tabroom a solid choice for tournament management.



#### Every PKD School Should Have an Alumni Chapter

Pi Kappa Delta's new website has been designed to improve alumni relations at both the local and national chapter level. These features include affinity grouping opportunities, fundraising and development opportunities, a wide variety of electronic messaging tools. Over the next several years, these features will be developed and rolled-out, but to take full advantage of them, local chapters need to create PKD Alumni Chapters. Alumni Chapters do not pay annual dues, but there is a one-time, \$75.00 charge to establish a new PKD Alumni Chapter. To create an Alumni chapter, go to <a href="https://www.pikappadelta.net">www.pikappadelta.net</a>, click on "Join Now," and then select "Alumni Chapter" from the drop-down menu. The whole process should take less than 5 minutes to complete.

None of the old PKD data migrated from our old website, which was managed by the NSDA. Therefore, if your local chapter already had an Alumni Chapter (see the list below), and you have not already entered the chapter data in the new PKD Club Express Website, you do not need to pay, but you DO NEED to go to the website and enter your contact data. At the end of the process, simply click "pay by cash or check" and your chapter will be activated with no further payment required.

Once your chapter is established, please encourage your existing alumni to enter their contact information by joining your alumni chapter on the PKD Website. To join, have them visit <a href="www.pikappadelta.net">www.pikappadelta.net</a>, then select "Join Now" and then "Alumni Member" from the drop-down menu. They can affiliate with your chapter by selecting it from the drop-down menu. Alumni may join for now charge through December 31st, 2019 – after which a nominal charge of \$5.00 will be added to cover the costs of hosting the data electronically.

These changes will vastly improve Pi Kappa Delta's ability to reach alumni at both the local and national chapter level. Moreover, they will open the door to frequent reunions, specialized travel opportunities, invitations to social events at NCA and at PKD National Tournaments, and a generally more active and robust alumni network.

If your school is on the list below, all you need to do is create the Alumni Chapter in the new database. No payment is necessary because your institution already has an active chapter.

Schools with Pi Kappa Delta Alumni Chapter (No Payment Required):

Adams State College Appalachian State University Augustana College (SD) **Bloomsburg University Boise State University Bowling Green State University Bradley University Bridgewater State University Cameron University** Central Missouri State University El Paso Community College Ferris State University Georgetown College **Gustavus Adolphus College** Hillsdale College **Hofstra University** Illinois Wesleyan University **Linfield College** Longwood College Marietta College McNeese State University Montana State University Monmouth University Morgan State University

Muhlenberg College Nassau Community College

New Jersey Institute of Technology North Dakota State University Northwest Nazarene University Ottawa University Otterbein University Seton Hall University South Dakota State University Southeast Missouri State University Tennessee Technological University Texas A & M University - Kingsville **Towson University** University of Arkansas (Monticello) University of Kentucky University of Puget Sound University of Wisconsin -- Whitewater Wartburg College Webster University Wilkes University William Jewel College Winona State University York College

#### Pi Kappa Delta Store Order Form To place an order, please call (651) 492-8449

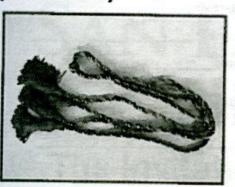
item 1: Pi Kappa Delta Membership Pin (\$6.00 each)



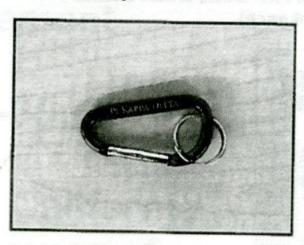
Item 2: Pi Kappa Delta Coffee Mug (\$8.00 each)



Item 3: PKD graduation Tassel (\$15.00 each)



Item 4: PKD Key Chain (\$5.00 each)



item 5: PKD Pint Glass. (\$10.00 each)

