

Mock Trial -Danny Plunkett

After attending each of my mock trials for the past two years my parents have said: “We had fun! The trials are so interesting!”

Either my parents love me too much or they are blatantly lying to me, because mock trial could not be less of a spectator sport. The audience is not allowed to talk, cheer, clap, or encourage, and if anyone watching makes too much noise they receive hateful looks from everyone in the room. Even getting up to go to the bathroom can be too disruptive, and it goes without saying what would happen if a cell-phone rang mid-trial. Additionally, if you are not lucky or dedicated enough to score front seats it is highly unlikely that you will be able hear most of the words spoken at the front of the room. The majority of the students competing are facing away from the audience toward the judge, and they are focusing only on the trial, not the poor acoustics of Saugus’s town hall.

However, as a lawyer or witness there is nothing more riveting than being in a trial. We sit there in our suits, sweat like crazy, and listen to every single word the other team says, praying they will make a mistake. It’s nerve-racking and stressful, but that’s what makes it so great; it’s a mental struggle, a contest of wits.

Some teams only compete in three trials each year, getting knocked out after the preliminary round. Marblehead has had luck in recent years, however, and has made it to the Elite Eight round for four years running, competing in at least six trials in each of these years. And so, once a week for about two months we hop in our yellow van, feeling nauseous and giddy at the same time for the next four hours until the trial is finished, one way or the other.

I was a witness on the team this year, and the feelings of déjà vu were constant. One of my favorite parts of mock trial is its repetitive nature. Facing the same teams and having the same judges year after year can be fun. Seeing your old nemeses and noticing how they have improved is a great part of the competition. We have even started to develop rivalries over the years, which make up the high points of each season.

St. John’s Prep has undeniably become our rivals over the past four years. Both of our teams belong to the same preliminary region, but never face each other in the first three trials. As such, we both go undefeated in those trials and are forced to compete in a tie-breaker round each year to determine who continues on to the state tournament. Every year it is a close match, very close, but we have managed to beat them for four years straight. And they hate it. So this year our trial against St John’s had a special excitement to it. Could we beat them again? We did, fortunately, but it is these trials that make the seasons as good as they are.

The same was true with our trial against Winthrop this year. We faced them in the same building as last year and with the same judge. Going into the trial we were excited. We had beaten them last year and we thought we could do it again. Unfortunately, they had learned from their mistakes and were able to come out with the win, ejecting us from the tournament in a heart wrenching tie breaker decision by the judge. Regardless of the result, however, it is this type of spirited competition that makes mock trial so enjoyable! The watching parents could never understand the thrill of executing a perfect cross examination or the satisfaction of successfully evading the other team’s questions as a witness.

I wish I could return for another year just to be on the team again, but I don't think the school would let me complete senior again just to make another run at the state title. For every member of the team, however, it has been a truly thrilling experience. Hopefully next year's team will continue to have the same success.

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