

Conflict of Interest – When you know a Judge

Have you ever sat in a debate round and realized that you or maybe your opponents actually know a judge? Maybe it is someone's relative, or a good family friend or scout leader or a favorite teacher.

Obviously, it is not fair to you or your opponents to be judged by someone you or they are close to. So, what can you do? SEDA has a very clear policy to handle this type of conflict:

Any participant (debater, judge or coach) who believes there is a conflict of interest or perceived conflict of interest between a judge and a debater must inform the tournament host prior to the start of the debate round so all reasonable effort can be made to reassign judges. *(While tournament hosts do try to avoid conflicts, they are likely not to be aware of every relationship.)* It is the responsibility of the judges to self-identify.

Debaters have the right to register actual or perceived conflict with the tournament hosts after a debate if participants have not self-identified prior to the start of the round. However, this is not a mechanism to reverse a decision they are not happy with.

Any SEDA member present during the debate may become a potential witness and be questioned as to the fairness of the decision.

If this person was the sole judge in the room, a bye will be awarded to both teams if the judge's marks are more than 5 marks different than those awarded by judges to the debaters in question in other rounds at the tournament.

In the case of three or more judges, the marks will be compared and evaluated against those of the other judges in the room, and other scores received throughout the tournament. If necessary, the other judges' scores will be averaged to replace the judge's marks for that round. Decisions will not be reversed.

Depending on the circumstances, any judge who fails or refuses to remove themselves from a situation of actual or potential conflict may be exempted from judging a particular category for a period of time.

Taken from the SEDA Constitution and Policy Manual.

