



For Immediate Release

Contact: Gabe Ross
(916) 643-9145
gabe-ross@scusd.edu

McClatchy duo wins high school debate ‘Super Bowl’

Teens become first ever from a California public high school to win the national Tournament of Champions in Kentucky

May 6, 2013 (Sacramento) – A C.K. McClatchy High School debate team has won the national Tournament of Champions, becoming the first team ever from a California public high school to win the nation’s top high school debate competition.

McClatchy seniors John Spurlock and Keenan Harris took first place in the policy debate division at the University of Kentucky tournament. In the 42-year history of the Tournament of Champions, no team from a California public high school has ever won. (In 2003, a team from College Preparatory School, a private high school in Oakland, took top honors.)

McClatchy Debate Coach Seth Blackmon compares winning the Tournament of Champions to winning the Super Bowl or the NCAA Basketball finals. “The magnitude of this win cannot be overstated,” he says. “I couldn’t be more proud of these young men.”

Policy debate is considered the most difficult form of debate, as students spend a year researching and arguing one subject. By the time the year concludes, policy debaters have amassed the same amount of research as required by a doctoral dissertation.

This year’s topic was “Resolved: The United States federal government should substantially increase its transportation infrastructure investment in the United States.”

Unlike private schools with large budgets set aside for debate, McClatchy’s team operates as an after-school program that relies mostly on parent fundraising. To rise to the challenge of the Tournament of Champions, the students dedicated hours and hours of their spare time to research and practice, Blackmon says.

Spurlock will attend UC Berkeley next fall on a debate scholarship. Harris will attend Wake Forest in North Carolina, also on a debate scholarship.

#