What to Expect at Mock Trial Regional Competitions

The Basics: What is Mock Trial?

A *Mock Trial* is a pretend trial and may involve either civil or criminal cases, just like a real court. The Competition Rules and the Modified Rules of Evidence (both in the Mock Trial competition Handbook) are in place for Mock Trial. In Mock Trial the students present the case and act as the main characters in the courtroom. The purpose of Mock Trial is to learn about courtroom procedures and the people and rights involved with the legal system. It also teaches how to evaluate both sides of an issue and resolve conflicts in a nonviolent manner. A Mock Trial follows the trial procedure of the lower courts.

By incorporating Mock Trial, students learn about the basis of our American judicial system and the mechanics of litigation. In addition, students will be encouraged to learn and understand the meaning of good citizenship in a democracy. Mock Trial is exciting to share in any classroom or club and it easily stimulates participation, critical thinking, speaking skills, and teamwork. Mock Trial is available in many middle and high schools throughout the state. *(Graduating high school Mock Trial students are eligible for High School Mock Trial scholarships when continuing with higher education. Check out the Awards and Scholarship information at the beginning of this Additional Information Section in the Competition Handbook.)*

Registration on the Day of the Competition:

With the wonderful expansion of both Mock Trial programs there is an increased number of teams participating at each of the regional competitions, hence there are many people attempting to register at once to include teachers, students, attorney coaches, proud parents, visitors, and attorney volunteers. To reduce congestion, the sponsoring lead teacher coach is asked to have the school's entire team wait outside while the lead teacher (only) registers the team.

Competition team members, coaches, and attorney volunteers have first priority when going through the security check points. All other observers should stay to the rear of the security lines and allow competition participants through first. Students who arrive individually are asked to wait with their parents, guardian, teacher and/or attorney coach until the remainder of their team arrives, preferably outside of the court house. (If it is too cold or raining, schools will be directed to a welcome area to wait for further instructions.) **Teams will be assigned staggered arrival times to increase efficiency in getting through courthouse security and registration. Teams will be provided their expected arrival time seven days prior to the competition day.**

Once the Mock Trial Coordinator receives the needed information from the lead teacher coach, the talent release forms and the official team rosters (found on the Web site), as well as the lead teacher's cell phone number (cell phones are on vibrate) to contact teachers within the building in case of an emergency, teams will be provided with a registration packet. The red registration bag provided at registration will include an agenda, noteworthy information, extra time sheets, practice scoresheets and completion directions, certificates for teachers and students, teacher evaluations, and name badges for team members and visitors. The red registration bag is to be returned to the Mock Trial Coordinator at the end of the competition as a checkout procedure with the completed evaluations and the students/teacher coded name tags, visitor badges, file folders with any unused papers, and name badges. **Announcements at the awards ceremony will begin after all the red registration bags have been collected.**

Please bring:

- Two (2) copies of Team Roster Form for regional and state competitions.
- Singed Talent Release Forms *(paper clipped – not in a separate envelope),* if not mailed ahead of time.
- A timekeeper with **Two (2) Stopwatches**

Nametags:

There is a ***maximum*** number of 24 visitor badges allotted per team. Note that no one can view any event without the matching visitor badges. All team members and visitors are identified accordingly with their respective team badges. Students will have white pin-on name badges with two coded letters representing their team in an attempt to keep the school anonymous. The students' respective visitors, teacher coaches and attorney coaches will be assigned the same two coded letters, but with their respective titles (visitor, teacher coach, or attorney coach). ***Note that if there are more than 14 students for a high school team or 16 students for a middle school team, the remaining students will wear visitor badges and there are only 24 visitor badges allotted to a team. Visitors may only watch the team that matches their visitor badge. Announcements at the awards ceremony will begin after all name badges for teacher coaches, attorney coaches, students, and visitors have been collected.***

Room Assignments:

Should a team become disqualified or fail to arrive to compete for an unforeseen circumstance; room assignments are subject to change and are announced as soon as possible.

Each trial has the following order of events:

- Teams find courtrooms and have fifteen minutes to prepare
- Teams complete practice scoresheets and distribute accordingly
- Teams find proper seating placement including timekeepers
- Plaintiff / Prosecution's Bailiff meets with presiding judge outside of the courtroom
- Scoring judges serving as the jury enter
- Bailiff announces the presiding judge
- Judge conducts welcome
- Scoring judges introduce themselves
- Both teams introduce themselves and swap rosters
- Opening statements from each side
- Bailiff swears in witnesses
- Direct / Cross Examinations
- 5 minute recess (only visitors can leave the courtroom – not competing students)
- Closing arguments from each side
- Judge asks teams to re-introduce themselves to the scoring judges
- Scoring jury leaves the room
- Any violations are reported at this time to the presiding judge
- Teams nominate and present a most effective attorney and witness from the opposing side
- Trial is officially over
- Once the trial is officially over, the team quietly returns to the place indicated in the morning or remain in hallways very quiet as other trials may still be in progress. (Teams cannot go to their next assigned courtroom until fifteen minutes prior to the trial round for the sake of a trial may still be in process.)

Judging/Scoring:

Each trial has a presiding judge overseeing the trial and a minimum of two and a maximum of three people serving as the jury. Should there only be two judges serving as jury members, the presiding judge also scores the round so that every trial has three scoring judges. The presiding judges are members from the SC Bar who are professional judges and/or attorneys experienced with the Mock Trial program. The jury includes scoring judges that are members from the SC Bar who are professional attorneys, experienced high school Mock Trial teachers, and third year law students. The jury scores the trial using the Mock Trial scoresheet to determine how each team performs their knowledge and understanding of the case itself and the trial process, not guilt or innocence. **Scoresheets are mailed following the competition after they have been verified. Scoresheets will not be picked up in person, faxed, scanned or e-mailed.** The scoring jury also determines the most effective witness and most effective attorney from each round.

Introductions:

Once teams are in their respective courtrooms, students are asked to address the scoring jury and presiding judge providing only their names and roles in the competition (not their school) at the beginning of each round as well as at the end of the round. The re-introduction at the end of each round assists the scoring jury in awarding the most effective witness and the most effective attorney for each round.

Recess:

During the competition, a five minute recess is provided prior to the closing arguments. Competing teams are to remain in front of the bar and are not permitted to leave the courtroom. Competing teams may only have communication with their team members in front of the bar and no communication with anyone behind the bar including teacher coaches, attorney coaches, remaining team members not competing and/or visitors. **The only people permitted to leave the courtroom during the recess are the people behind the bar.** Any communication that takes place over the bar subjects that team to a strong point

deduction or even disqualification for the team found in fault. It is asked that everyone that chooses to remain in the courtroom stay seated quietly to allow the students in front of the bar to regroup for the closing arguments. **This cannot be stressed enough.**

Communication:

Any communication that takes place over the bar subjects that team to a strong point deduction or even disqualification for the team found in fault. Parents, visitors, teacher coaches, and attorney coaches should refrain from all communication with team members unless directed by the presiding judge. Any communication with the state coordinator is to be made solely by the lead teacher coach and/or the lead attorney coach. Any communication not from the lead teacher coach or attorney coach is considered to be in non-compliance and is subject to Rule 3.9 (Communication with Mock Trial Coordinator) and Rule 6.4 (Reporting a Rules Violation - Outside of the Bar). This rule is in place before, during, and after a competition.

Photography/Videography:

Video cameras and non-flash photography may be used during the competition only with the consent of the presiding judge **AND** with the consent of the opposing team. Flash pictures may **NOT** be taken during the competition at any time. Upon approval of video cameras and non-flash photography, persons may take stationary pictures from the seated position. No movement in the courtroom for pictures is permitted.

Number of Rounds:

The length of the competition day will vary by region depending on the number of teams within each regional competition. If there is an **even number of teams** then there are three rounds with all teams competing in all three rounds. The first round is randomly paired. The second and third round will be powermatched, which will require additional time between rounds. With three rounds, a team is guaranteed to play the Plaintiff/Prosecution and Defense side once and one side will perform twice. There is no guarantee in the order of sides performed; however, if one side plays the first two rounds then it is guaranteed that the other side of your team will perform in the third round.

If there are **an odd number of teams** at a regional competition, please consult Rule 5.8 (Effect of Bye / Default). Teams may use this bye round time to prepare for their next competitive round. A round intended for a team to sit out cannot be attached to a lunch period. This mechanism is in place to ensure that all teams have equal treatment. Students found roaming the halls during a round that they are not competing in are subject to penalties, as respect and silence is needed for the other teams competing. Working diligently to keep the hallways as quiet as possible is greatly appreciated.

Lunch / Snacks:

Regions are notified in advance that there will be an undetermined start time for lunch, but that teams need to plan for lunch. In general, there are very few, *if any*, restaurants within walking distance of the competition location. It is strongly suggested that students stay on the competition grounds and parents/guardians either bring prepared food for lunch or go and retrieve lunches for the team. Should a team request delivery, please notify SC Bar staff to help locate your team upon delivery. Remember when planning for this lunch, students need to be seated in their respective courtrooms *15 minutes prior* to each round beginning. The time for the round immediately following lunch is announced prior to being dismissed for lunch. **(There is no eating in classrooms or courtrooms.)**

Closing Assembly:

After competing in the rounds, everyone reports to the assigned location for the closing assembly. During the waiting period that can range from thirty minutes to an hour, staff is working diligently to tally up scoresheets and check scores for accuracy. **During the waiting period, teachers complete their evaluations and collect all name badges as the awards cannot be given out until each school submits their red registration bags with all name badges and teacher evaluations.** *(Certificates are removed from the red registration bags and all other contents including file folders and all badges along with the red registration bag are returned with the teacher evaluations.)*

The first part of the awards presentation has the announcements of the most effective witnesses and most effective attorneys awarded by the scoring judges for each trial in each round. (Nominations made by the students in the courtrooms after each round are not re-announced at this assembly.) The award presentation concludes with the regional coordinator announcing the **"proposed"** teams to represent their region at the state competition. *(The number of teams that advance from the regional competition to the state competition is a reflection of the size of the regional competition and can vary from region to region and from year to year. The goal is to bring a total of twelve teams to the state competition.)*

The regional coordinator announces the "proposed" teams to represent their region at the state competition. Scoresheets will be reconfirmed following the competition day and the official teams will be announced the following Tuesday by 5 p.m. on the SC Bar Web site at www.scbar.org/lre. Until certified by the SC Bar, the advancing teams are not finalized. The SC Bar reserves the right to correct any errors or omissions; therefore, any announcement of a team as advancing to the next level is subject to correction.

Following the announcement of the "proposed" teams to advance to the state competition, pictures are taken of each "proposed" team and the coordinator discusses the state competition and answers any questions from students, teachers, attorneys, and parents.

State Competition:

There is a separate registration fee of $150 for advancing teams to compete in the state competition. Lodging the Friday night of the competition may be needed for some regions as the competition takes place over two days. Registration typically begins around 11am on Friday and again at 8:00am on Saturday. The competition concludes Saturday evening. Should a school not be able to afford the expenditures associated with the state competition and forfeit their slot, the slot is offered to the next team according to ranking statewide. A school cannot forfeit their slot past the drop deadline date provided each year.

Middle School Only

Battle of Carolina Middle School Mock Trial Competition - 2014:

There is a separate registration fee for advancing teams to compete in this elite competition. The advancing teams will be an allotted number of the highest ranking teams from the 2013 State Middle School Mock Trial Competition. Lodging the Friday night of the competition may be needed for some teams as the competition takes place over two days. The 2014 competition dates are **April 4 and 5, 2014,** and it will be held in Conway, South Carolina.

High School Only

National Competition - 2014:

Please note that the 2014 National Competition will be held on Mother's Day Weekend. The 2014 competition dates are **May 8-11, 2014** and it will be held in Madison, Wisconsin.