

# PAGE Georgia Academic Decathlon

## PREPARED SPEECH Coaching Tips

### THE PREPARED SPEECH

Quite often decathletes are more apprehensive about the speaking event than about other decathlon events. Students feel they have more control over mental recall than they do over the stage fright that so often accompanies the speech event.

To help students develop self-confidence:

- **Encourage** them to prepare the speech early; rehearse it thoroughly; and present it to a variety of audiences prior to the competition. Only by repetitive performance do students learn to control nervousness and to channel the energy into a vibrant delivery style. Practice! Practice! Practice!
- **Urge** students to seek feedback from audiences and to be flexible. Often students resist changes suggested by others because of an attachment to the original speech.
- **Advise** students to address any criticism that occurs more than once from different listeners. Several different audiences may have the same observations. Advise students that alterations in content are not bad; minor adjustments can help prevent the speech from becoming stale.

### TOPIC SELECTION

In choosing a speech topic, the student should consider audience analysis. A panel of adult professionals will be judging the speech; therefore, the student is well advised to reject topics that appeal primarily to adolescents. This is not to suggest that the student avoid topics that concern a young person. Certainly, the best speech topics will spring from the student's strong feelings about subjects of interest. The student's ideas should be presented in a manner appropriate to an adult audience.

The topic should be original; or, if it is a universal topic, it should be unique in approach.

### CONTENT

Because organization is an important criterion in the evaluation of the speeches, students are advised to build speeches around outlines.

Each speech should have:

- An **introduction** that captures the attention of the audience and identifies the **purpose** of the speech;

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- A **body** with identifiable **main ideas**, a logical progression of thought and good support material; and
- A **conclusion** that gives the speech a tone of finality.

Language used in the speech should be free of colloquialism and should be precise, interesting and appropriate to an adult audience. All words must be pronounced correctly, and the speech should be grammatically sound.

### REHEARSAL

#### Verbal Effectiveness

Practice sessions should result in improvement in verbal effectiveness.

- **Rate** of speech – make certain the student is not speaking too rapidly and uses adequate pauses for effect and for listener understanding.
- **Volume** – make certain the speech is loud enough to be clearly heard in any size room.
- **Articulation** (*clarity of speech*) – make sure all words and phrases are understandable. Help the student develop variety in pitch, volume and rate— avoid monotone.

#### Nonverbal Effectiveness

- Train the student to move into the room with an air of confidence and directness. **First impressions** matter!
- Encourage the student to establish direct **eye contact** with judges and project facial expressions appropriate to the verbal message being sent.

**Posture** and gesturing should reflect energy, assurance and directness and should appear spontaneous rather than rehearsed.