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WKU forensics team completes national championship sweep

May 2, 2021



Western Kentucky University President Timothy Cab winning national titles.

Clinton Lewis/WKU

The Western Kentucky University forensics team won the National Forensic Association individual events team championship and NFA Lincoln-Douglas

Debate team sweepstakes national championship. The NFA events were hosted virtually April 16-19.

WKU sent 29 competitors with a total of 94 individual event entries and seven debate entries to the tournament. Of the 94 individual event entries, WKU advanced 84 to the octofinal round, 58 advanced to the quarterfinals, 32 advanced to the semifinals and 20 students advanced to the finals.



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WKU had seven debaters in the tournament. Of the total entries, six students advanced to the double octofinal round, five advanced to the top 16 and three advanced into the quarterfinal round. Sophomore Andre Swai of Springfield, Mo., won the final round of Lincoln-Douglas Debate on a 4-3 decision,

becoming the Lincoln-Douglas Debate national champion. He represents WKU's 12th NFA-LD champion. Swai also became the first Black man to win the NFA national championship in debate. In 2015, WKU's Nefertiti Dukes was the first woman of color to win the NFA-LD championship. WKU senior Ben Hanson of Louisville won the tournament's Top Speaker Award in Lincoln-Douglas Debate.



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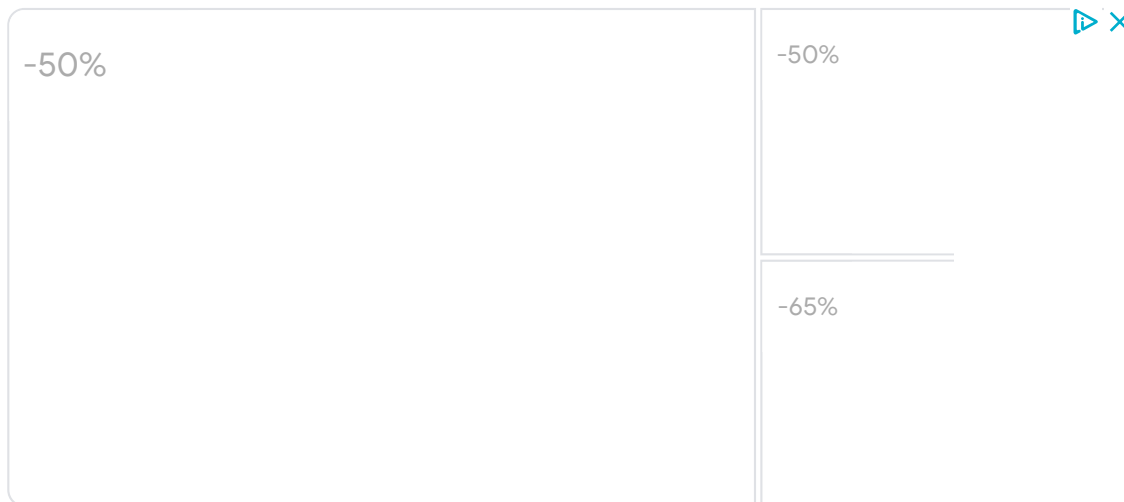
In individual events, WKU was team sweepstakes champion with 919 points, while the University of Texas at Austin placed second with 589.5 points and Bradley University placed third with 530.5 points.

WKU was also crowned team sweepstakes champion in Lincoln-Douglas Debate with 131 points, while the University of

Nebraska-Lincoln placed second with 82 points and Missouri State University placed third with 79 points.

WKU forensics team members captured five of the top 10 individual sweepstakes awards, which recognizes personal success across five events across at least two different genres (i.e.: public address, limited preparation, interpretation). Senior Derek Collins won the individual sweepstakes championship; junior Paige Allbright placed fifth; junior Kelly Lingen placed eighth; sophomore Caitlyn Woitena placed ninth; and senior Emma Warnecke placed 10th.

Director of Debate Chad Meadows said: “While debate recognizes individual accomplishments, it’s truly a team activity. This year’s debate program will be remembered for its teamwork, embrace of diverse pedagogical approaches and character under fire. From August to April these students never let up, and to see them recognized for those efforts was truly special.”



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Director of Forensics Ganer Newman said:

“This is a historic victory for Western Kentucky University. ... Not only did we achieve historic results in Lincoln-Douglas Debate, our students in individual events broke our previous record for the total number of points scored at nationals.”

WKU is the only team in forensics history to win the American Forensics Association team championship, the National Forensics Association individual events team championship and the National Forensics Association debate team championship in the same year. WKU has accomplished this feat 10 times since 2003.

WKU President Timothy Caboni congratulated the team for its national championships during a recognition

event. “Students, I am so pleased with your work and with your drive to compete. And I am pleased with the awards you’ve brought home to the Hill and what they mean for you both individually and as a team – and also what these successes mean for our university,” Caboni said. “Your achievements serve as a testament, to all of our programs across our campus, of what’s possible when you consistently strive for, pursue and demand excellence.”

The NFA national tournament brings the competition year to a close. Soon, work will begin for the next season. First, the team will move locations from the Garrett Conference Center, which has housed the team for more than 15 years, to a new location.

“Winning these championships in Garrett was an especially emotional experience,” Newman said. “It is not lost on me that some of the last sounds ever heard in this building are the voices of WKU forensics team members, winning all of our national competitions in history-making fashion.”

Lincoln-Douglas Debate

Double Octofinals: Miles Morton of Sherman Oaks, Calif.

Octofinals: Isaac Keller of Kansas City, Mo., and Madelynn Einhorn of Oakwood, Ohio

Quarterfinals: Ben Hanson of Louisville and Tess Welch of Houston

NFA-LD Champion: Andre Swai of Springfield, Mo.

After Dinner Speaking

Quarterfinalists: Jo Headrick of Wadsworth, Ohio; Emma Warnecke of Detroit; Reese Johnson of Burnsville, Minn.; Kelly Lingen of Lakeville, Minn.; and Joey Eberle of Maple Grove, Minn.

Dramatic Interpretation

Octofinalists: Rickey Williams of Minneapolis; Samantha Sallee of Danville; and Kelly Lingen

Quarterfinalists: Caitlyn Woitena of Houston; Reggie Jefferson of Houston; Daliss Hicks of Miramar, Fla.; and Tayland Ratliff of Youngsville, La.

Semifinalists: Jo Headrick

Finalists: Reese Johnson, third, and Paige Allbright of Youngsville, La., fifth

Duo Interpretation

Quarterfinalists: Reese Johnson and Jo Headrick

Semifinalists: Rashon Leday of Lafayette, La.; Tayland Ratliff; Caitlyn Woitena; Kelly Lingen; Paige Allbright; and Corey Newsome of Morehead

Finalists: Derek Collins of Hattiesburg, Miss., and Ryan Gosling of West Palm Beach, Fla., national champions; Corey Newsome and Reese Johnson, second; and Daliss Hick and Ryan Gosling, third

Extemporaneous Speaking

Octofinalists: Isaac Keller, Tani Washing of Henrico, Va., and Miles Morton

Quarterfinalists: Tess Welch

Finalists: Rahmane Dixon of Houston, fifth

Impromptu Speaking

Octofinalists: Isaac Keller and Miles Morton

Quarterfinalists: Madelynn Einhorn

Semifinalists: Rahmane Dixon

Finalists: Tess Welch, fourth

Informative Speaking

Octofinalists: Jo Headrick, Kellin Robinson of Roseville, Minn., and Kelly Lingen

Quarterfinalists: Derek Collins, Autumn Howard of Hendersonville, Tenn., and Rahmane Dixon

Finalists: Emma Warnecke of Detroit, second; Reese Johnson, third; and Rickey Williams, fourth

Persuasive Speaking

Octofinalists: Caitlyn Woitena, Autumn Howard, Naomi Desrosiers of Bowling Green and Emma Warnecke

Quarterfinalists, Paige Allbright

Finalists, Derek Collins, second, and Kelly Lingen, sixth

Program Oral Interpretation

Octofinalists: Kelly Lingen, Reggie Jefferson, Kellin Robinson and Stefani Giles of Hodgenville

Quarterfinalists: Corey Newsome

Semifinalists: Derek Collins, Rashon Leday
and Paige Allbright

Finalists: Ryan Gosling, national
champion, and Tayland Ratliff, sixth

Prose Interpretation

Octofinalists: Rashon Leday, Stefani Giles,
Tayland Ratliff and Daliss Hicks

Quarterfinalists: Jo Headrick, Kelly Lingen,
Emma Warnecke, Caitlyn Woitena and
Rickey Williams

Semifinalists: Paige Allbright

Rhetorical Criticism

Octofinalists: Kellin Robinson

Quarterfinalists: Autumn Howard

Semifinalists: Corey Newsome

Finalists: Derek Collins, national
champion; Caitlyn Woitena, fourth;
Rahmane Dixon, fifth; and Tani
Washington, sixth

Individual Sweepstake Awards

Derek Collins, individual sweepstakes
champion; Paige Allbright, fifth; Kelly
Lingen, eighth; Caitlyn Woitena, ninth; and
Emma Warnecke, 10th