

## Book Review

# Strategic Debate (5th Edition) by Roy V. Wood and Lynn Goodnight

This reader has often compared academic debate to the game of chess. The rules and moves can be understood by most. But the sophistication of the activity is limited only by the experience, skills, intelligence, and imagination of those who participate. Debate is so interesting because it is so challenging.

If anyone halfway interested in debate has not seen the 1995 edition (5th edition) of *Strategic Debate* by Roy V. Wood and Lynn Goodnight (National Textbook Company, Lincolnwood, IL), they owe it to themselves to have a look. The new text is a dramatic improvement over the previous edition (1989), and in this reader's view from the standpoint of competition it represents one of the most comprehensive looks at academic debate that anyone might want on the office shelf not to mention in the hands of classroom students. This reader has been familiar with *Strategic Debate* since using it first as a classroom text in 1972 (2nd edition). The 1972 version contained seven chapters - introduction, fundamentals, research, constructives, presentation, refutation, and persuasion (the single-word indicators don't do justice to the more provocative full titles of each chapter, but that's what they were about). By 1989 the chapter number had grown by two to nine - fundamentals, research, affirmative construction, negative construction, presentation, refutation, persuasion, Lincoln-Douglas Debate, and tournaments. The previous introduction chapter was combined with fundamentals, constructives were treated separately as affirmative and negative, and the chapters on Lincoln-Douglas and tournaments were new. By 1989, enough coaches and student debaters were experiencing the need to know about Lincoln-Douglas that any comprehensive debate book needed to include consideration. The tournaments chapter filled an important need to understand that debate as it occurs on any particular weekend is very different from sports and involves more than one long debate (two-days?) in a big auditorium between two teams with thousands watching ... (lots of people still think that's what must be happening...).

The 1995 edition is simply the cutting edge on comprehensive treatment of what competitive debate is today while care-

fully noting at every appropriate point of development from where debate has come. The new text is dramatically longer -- 421 pages versus 336 in the 1989 edition (there were a mere 192 pages in 1972). And the new length serves lots of important purposes. The 1995 *Strategic Debate* includes (new chapters in bold) -- fundamentals, **critical thinking, computer research, files and flowing, formats and speaker duties**, affirmative construction, **affirmative case, negative argumentation, counterplan, cross-examination** (the reader's favorite ... lots more attention needs to be spent on cross-ex), refutation, **Lincoln-Douglas fundamentals, Lincoln-Douglas strategies**, persuasion, and tournaments. While the table of contents no longer highlights "debate as a thinking activity" an entire chapter is now devoted to "Logical Argument and Critical Thinking" a treatment missing from previous editions. While it is good to see a chapter on "logic," the only model addressed is Toulmin (as a "version of Aristotle", p. 22). Deduction is not mentioned as a form of reasoning. The Toulmin Model is offered as "useful for debaters because it is more sensitive to the rules of audience judgment than some other systems of logic." (p. 23). Does that mean audiences use special rules that focus on probabilities or that most audiences have so little training as not to understand structural fallacies?

All "old" chapters have been rewritten to include the newest-new, but with important perspective upon history, context and development. Unless today's debaters and coaches understand the development of debate, "adapting" to judges from different areas is just not possible. And judges need to understand the development as well, in order to be effective contemporary officials. The text places strategy into context. The context is interesting. The price of the book is worth page 176 and the photo of the YOUNG stock-issues judge (what goes around comes around). The cosmetics of the book from cover-to-cover are new and impressive. The accompanying *Strategic Debate Teacher's Manual* houses countless valuable learning activities. (Debaters often think that one can't be tested about debate ... in any sort of traditional academic way ... the teacher's guide will lay that

thought to rest).

The most experienced coach will find the book a thoughtful, well-organized, analytic, insightful, truly comprehensive, and tremendously useful look at the strategy and development of competitive academic debate. The beginning coach will find the book to be a bible for survival, a bible of all one needs to know to understand just what he/she had gotten him/herself into... and yet survive to teach others. And the student debater will find the text to be everything anyone ever wanted to know about debate but was afraid to admit...

Over the years this reader has constantly compared academic debate to chess. *Edition 5 - Strategic Debate* serves as a most important tool to those who need to teach or learn the "rules and moves," as well as launching every reader into the sophistication of competitive academic debate. Every judge, coach, and student of debate should take a look.

*(Reviewer Douglas Springer coaches at New Trier, (IL) HS.)*