

There is no debate: the Irish are best

By KAISHI LEE
The Tattoo

SINGAPORE - When teens from across the world gathered here for a war of words recently, the Irish proved the best talkers of all.

During an intense and fiery two-hour contest with an Australian team in the finals of the World Schools Debating Championship, the Irish squad emerged on top after getting the best of an argument about the power

of the media.

The annual debate competition, which drew people from five continents, is considered the world's most prestigious tournament for debaters 15 to 19 years old.

Alex Just, debate captain from the Scottish contingent, said, "Worlds 2002 was a fantastic experience for me and Team Scotland. We met and engaged with some of the sharpest and wittiest minds in the world in the magnificent multi-cultural city-state of

Singapore."

Singapore, the first Asian country to serve as venue for the event, hosted 220 debaters from 28 teams, mostly from non-native English-speaking countries in a 10-day competition that started Jan. 25.

"It was great!" said debater Tomas Mertin of the Czech Republic. "We Czechs are more used to criticize, but it's rather difficult in this case - the organization was superb and the level of debating was high."

the championship outright," Just said.

In the Grand Finals at the Kallang Theatre, Ireland faced Australia on the final topic: "This house believes that the media has become too powerful."

The Irish teens argued the United Nations Charter of Human Rights grants every individual a right of individual privacy and a new law should be established to prevent the media from publishing information irrelevant to someone's job scope.

Team Australia, on the other hand, argued that celebrities and politicians were different than most people and cited issues about Bill Clinton's credibility after the Lewinsky scandal in a bid to make its point.

But the judges sided with Ireland on a 4-3 vote and Estonian judge Ragnar Siil called it "extremely close."

The Worlds began in 1988 when six teams convened in Canberra, Australia with the aims of achieving excellence in debating, encouraging debating throughout the world, promoting international understanding and free speech.

Fourteen years later, the close-knit camaraderie and contagious enthusiasm of the competition remains.

Past hosts for the championships have included South African Nobel Prize winner Nelson Mandela and British Prime Minister Tony Blair.

Christopher Erskine, president and founder of the Worlds competition, said that he finds "something inspiring every year" that gives him "hope for the future of the planet."

"Sometimes it's a small thing: in Bermuda (host of Worlds 1999), for example, sitting on a bus with kids from different countries and backgrounds all singing along to the same rock music tape, and realizing that people are really much the same no matter where they come from," he said.

"Sometimes it's a big thing: in South Africa (host of Worlds 2001) we had a day in the notorious city of Soweto, and there we met black students in local schools who might lead South Africa into a bright and peaceful future."

The tournament will be held in Argentina next year.

Want to read more? A longer version of this story can be found on our website at www.ReadTheTattoo.com.

No arguments between friends on Team USA

By KAISHI LEE
The Tattoo

The three 17-year-olds who made up the American debate team - two of whom live in Florida and the other in New York City - did most of their preliminary work through email.

And maybe that's just as well.

Team member Jana Checa Chong said she sometimes gave Mark Landsman, the New Yorker, a hard time.

"Once we had a debate practice round and Mark hadn't cleaned his room yet. I had to make his bed!" Checa Chong complained.

"I'm rather messy," admitted Landsman, who is the captain of the debate team at the Bronx High School of Science.

But Landsman asserted, "You couldn't have a Team USA without a New Yorker."

Team USA - made up of Checa Chong, Landsman and Ashley Steinberg - fell short in the Singapore competition when they lost to the eventual world champs in a debate about genetic screening.

But the teens, who said they loved the Japanese and Chinese food, had fun.

"The three of us went shopping and went crazy in Chinatown. Ashley and Mark kept buying posters with Chinese paintings on them. I swear each came home with at least six!" said Checa Chong.

She said the teammates got along just fine and worked well together.

Phyllis Hirth, coach of the U.S. squad, said, "We loved being here in Singapore. Everyone went overboard to ensure our needs were met

and every comfort was available. No one mentioned feeling homesick while we were there."

"Coaching Team USA is a unique experience as we're often not together and most of our work is done via email," Hirth said, adding that this year "was particularly difficult as we had only three instead of five on the team" because two teens opted out after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

"In spite of that, this was the best team I have worked with in the six years I've coached Team USA," Hirth said.

Checa Chong, a P a n a m a n i a n-Chinese, is from the American Heritage School in Boca Raton, Fla. Heavily involved in the national debate circuit for four years, she loves music, the beach, spending time with family and friends and doing community service.

"I'm in every club at my school. In college, I want to study international politics. I have two dream jobs, to be a U.S. Supreme Court

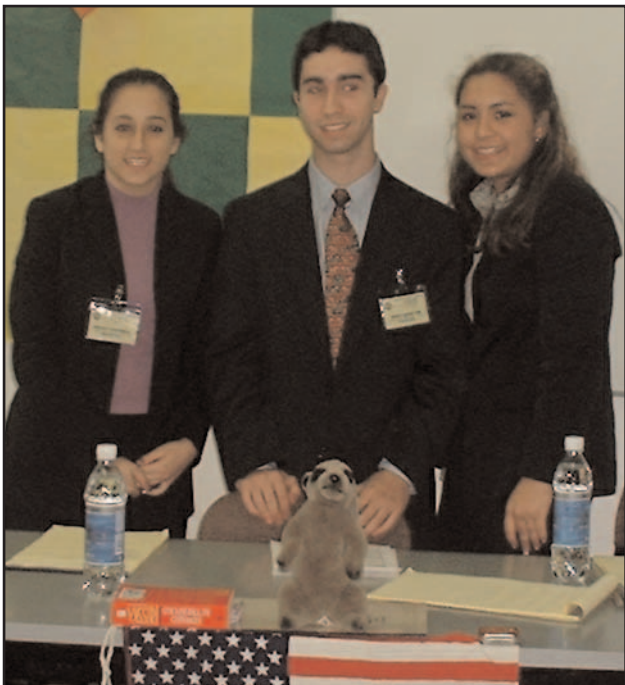
justice and also a high ranking official of the United Nations," said Checa Chong.

"I love politics. Bill Clinton is my favorite, anyone liberal," said Steinberg, a Canadian who's lived in the U.S. since 1994.

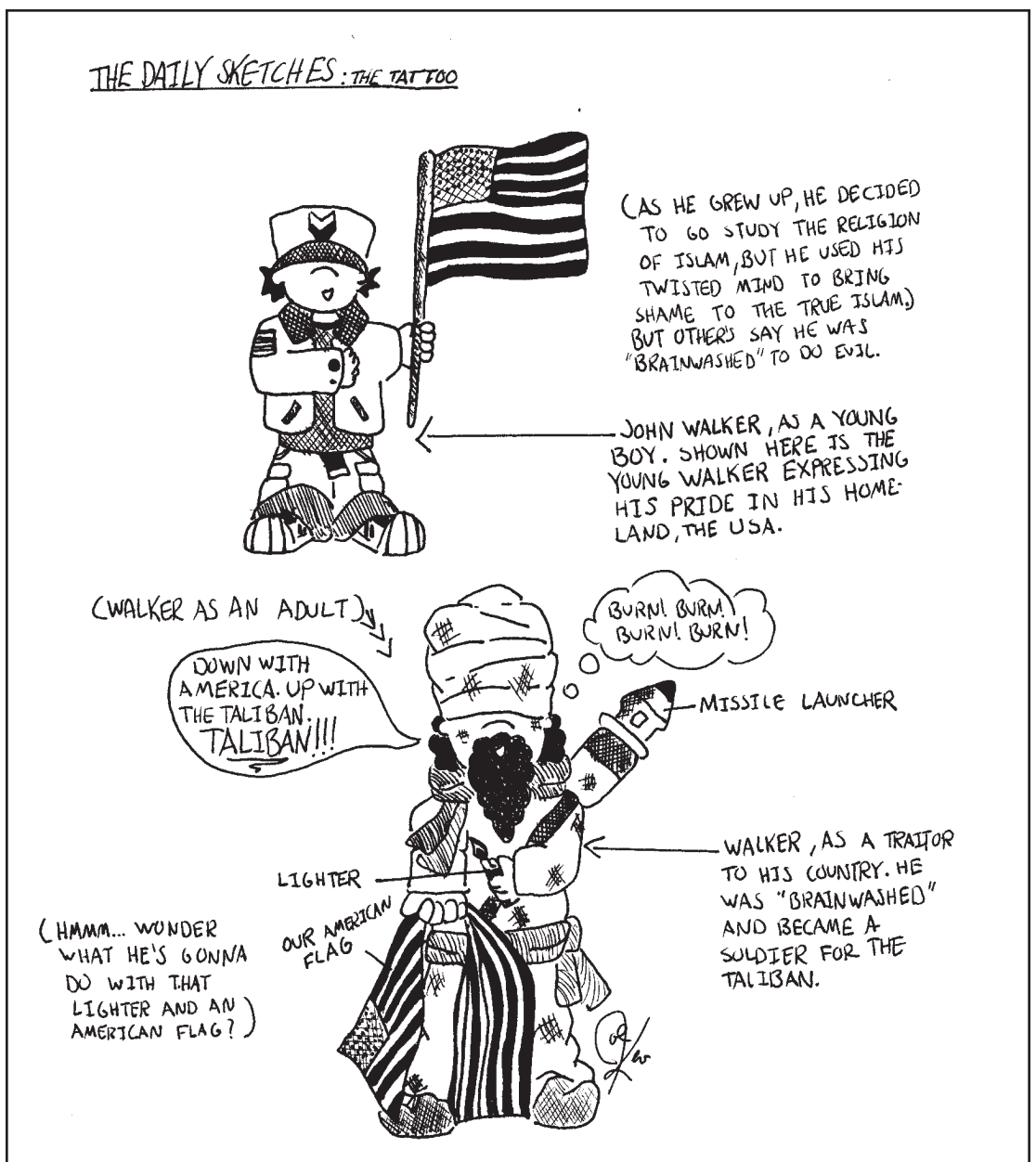
She's from Spanish River High School in Boca Raton. Accepted into the University of Pennsylvania, she aspires to be a lawyer and eventually a speechwriter for the president. Her interests are tennis, writing, reading and singing.

Landsman plans to travel around the world twice and become a history professor.

The American team won the championship in 1994 when the finals were held in New Zealand. The finals were held at Pittsburgh's Duquesne University in 2000.



Members of the Team USA debate squad Ashley Steinberg, Mark Landsman and Jana Checa Chong pose with an African miricat at the Pan American Championships in Peru last August. Photo provided.



Joe Keo / The Tattoo

Burlington students fretting over midterms

By JACQUI MOREAU
The Tattoo

11:59 p.m.: "Locke said that the sum of the forces equals the mass of the object times the acceleration of the object. No...that's not right. Hobbes said that."

Sound familiar?

Studying for midterms can be tiring and stressful. Many Burlington students, faculty, and parents question the necessity of burdening students with midterm 'hell week,' which annually plagues Lewis S. Mills students.

But others justify universal administration of midterms and say students would be at a disadvantage in college without having had exposure to such

testing situations.

Neighboring school systems like Bristol, which eliminated midterms last year, have varying stands on the issue, and even Lewis S. Mills has changed its policy on midterm exemption in recent years.

Midterms and finals are currently mandatory for all Lewis S. Mills students.

Not surprisingly, most Burlington students consider this issue a midterm crisis.

"I don't think that we should have midterms," said Britney Benedict, a 'C' student and sophomore at the school. "A final represents what you learn throughout the year."

When asked, Benedict said that she

would work harder if an 'A' average would exempt her from midterms.

"There is no way that 20 percent of an English grade should be determined by a midterm," said Paul Bentley, a teacher in the English department. "We're about reading and writing on a daily basis. The good student has nothing to gain from midterms, and the poor student has everything to gain."

Even freshmen have recognized the dilemma.

"It's a lot of last-minute studying," said freshman Ashley Coville, a 'B' student. "There should only be midterms in some classes to get us ready for college. Maybe you could get exempt from all but two subjects."

Meanwhile, in history, a subject centered around retention of factual knowledge, teacher Arthur Symonds said he is "against a midterm or final exemption policy."

Symonds said he might make an exception for second semester seniors. "Students need the experience of putting together material and synthesizing it for college," Symonds said.

Principal Robin Sorenson said she doesn't support exempting underclassmen from midterms.

Sorenson said students need the experience of applying and integrating what they've learned over long periods of time.

But Sorenson said midterms and finals are increasingly application-

based as opposed to a strictly multiple-choice format.

In the science department, labs were conducted prior to exam day, and part of the test required analysis of the results. Foreign language midterms incorporated grades from extended listening activities done prior to the two-hour test period.

A final exemption policy applying only to seniors with an 'A' average "can be used in the right place at the right time," Sorenson said.

Such a policy may motivate students to work harder in school as well as help decrease the spread of 'senioritis' - the springtime slacking disease that is already plaguing many Burlington students.

Super Bowl win no shock to Patriots

By T.J. O'CONNOR
The Tattoo

As New England fans sat and watched the final minute of the Super Bowl on the edges of their seats, their hearts pounded.

Coach Bill Belichick's decision to let Tom Brady try to score from all the way down at New England's 17 yard line with 1:30 to go in the game was so daring that Fox Sports announcer John Madden, an expert of the game, told fans he disagreed with it.

The coach's move was risky. It was dangerous. But it was what the Patriots had done all year.

Belichick handed the ball to Brady and let the second-year quarterback drive the Patriot offense down the field and into field goal range.

When Adam Vinatieri stepped out onto

the field to attempt the game-winning 48-yard field goal, Patriot fans knew that Boston was going to be partying.

Throughout the season Vinatieri had made crucial kicks, including two field goals in the playoffs against Pittsburgh.

It was only fitting that he was the one to win the Super Bowl for the team.

New England made history when it pulled off the second biggest upset ever in the Super Bowl.

Most critics had picked the Rams to clobber the Patriots.

"No one gave us a chance, but we put it on them," New England cornerback Ty Law told Fox Sports after the game.

Patriot fans finally got to celebrate after many disappointing seasons.

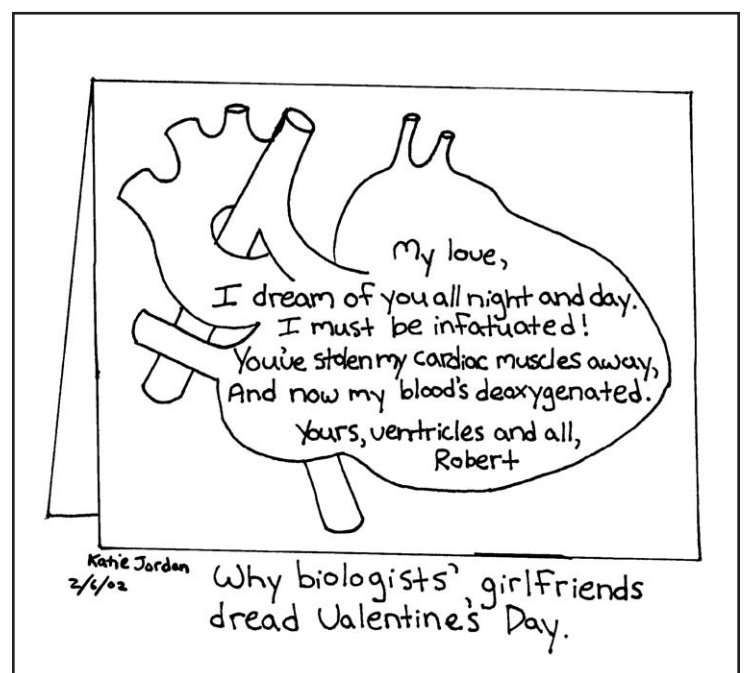
"The fans of New England have been waiting 42 years for this day," Patriots owner Robert Kraft told reporters.

Although the win was a surprise to everyone else, it was not a surprise to the Patriots. The whole team went into the game expecting to win. The Patriots knew that they had a great group of football players who were capable of winning the Super Bowl.

The Patriots finished their dream season with a storybook ending - with Vinatieri's winning kick seen 'round the world.

"We shocked the world," Vinatieri told reporters. "We didn't shock ourselves."

On the ball



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