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## May 2022 Mock Trial News

### [Reflections on its National Championship 11th Place Finish from Broughton High Mock Trial Team](#)



*The National High School Mock Trial Championship took place virtually this year on May 4 - May 7, 2022 and was hosted by the Michigan Center for Civic Education. Our state champs, Broughton High School, finished 11th out of 46 teams. Continue reading below for each team member's take on the experience!*

### **Chris Nichols, Nichols Law Firm, Raleigh - Attorney Coach**

In the week leading up to nationals, the pressure really started to mount. Some of the team got sick, International Baccalaureate and AP exams had started at school, and everyone was exhausted. One month to prepare an entirely new case for a National Championship (interrupted by spring break at our school) didn't seem like enough. Probably the hardest thing about prepping a new case in a short time is getting the time of each direct and cross into a predictable time frame. Eight and a half minutes for a complete direct examination of an expert mechanical engineer in a products liability case is daunting on the best of days. Each day we practiced and rewrote and cut and trimmed.

Before we knew it, Nationals had arrived. The opening ceremony was a massive Zoom conference, with all the teams gathered. To provide entertainment, Michigan hired a game show host to challenge all of the teams to a trivia quiz where you could respond to the questions on your cell phone to earn points on the leader board. We learned that the city name, Kalamazoo, could mean "boiling water" or "place where water boils" in Potawatomi. The Governor of Michigan, attorney Gretchen Whitmer, gave an encouraging and funny opening address. We all had fun, but it was hard not to think about the impending 10 am Round 1.

### **Olivia Sanchez Dun - Team Member; Junior**

The night right before each of our previous competitions, I had told myself that this was the big moment. The night before our regional competition, I worked harder than I ever had before, because I thought it would be the last chance for me to be in court with this year's team, a group of people who dedicated an enormous amount of time to our case, and whom I have grown to respect and admire greatly. And then, somehow, we won. The night before our state competition, I worked even harder than I had before regionals, because this was it, this was our last big moment to show that all of our work, time, and effort had been worth it. And then, somehow, we won again. The final night before we represented North Carolina in the National Mock Trial Competition (a phrase I never thought I would be able to say), I told myself the same thing I had before each of our previous competitions: that this was our last time competing together, and that it was our chance to demonstrate all that we had worked for. But unlike all the other times I had told myself that, this time, it was true. We all spent that night preparing like never before - we edited, we rehearsed, we debated objections down to the finest miniscule detail. It was a rush, and all of us were exhausted. But we were ready.

### **Parker Furr - Team Captain; Senior, attending Middlebury College in the fall**

As soon as I heard that we had made nationals, I knew that it was going to be a rough month and a half or so. The national competition fell smack dab in the middle of exams, and with jobs and other extracurriculars, I knew everyone on the team had their work cut out for them. As we began practicing in April once the case came out, I realized that we needed to work even more than I had anticipated. After spring break, we began meeting daily, sometimes for as long as eight hours. It was a HUGE time commitment but made easier by my team and my coaches. Some days, we would practice in person and then everyone would go have dinner at home before hopping on a Zoom call to practice some more. And then exams started which was stressful for everyone involved. We had to coordinate with our school to try and move exams around for some of the team members because otherwise we wouldn't have been able to compete. One of our team members had to do two exams and two trials in one day. It was insane. Having been with this club for all four years of my high school and having watched many of these team members grow and progress in their mock trial abilities, I can say I couldn't be more proud of the work we have done and the season we had.

### **Dale Stephenson - Ward Family Law Group, Cary, Attorney Coach**

I knew our students were good, but watching their performance at both the State and National Competition, I was simply blown away. Each of them, in their own unique style, stepped it up in a way I had never witnessed: they presented arguments I had never heard before, somehow transformed bad facts into gold, articulated objections with precision, but above all – they made it seem effortless. However, I can tell you that behind the scenes, it was anything but. My nerves were at an all time high, not only because we were competing at Nationals, but because our students were literally in the midst of exams. Following a morning competition round, they would race from their home office to the classroom in time to sit for their exam, still wearing formal court attire, and then back home again for another competition round. To this day, I still do not know how they did it but I will forever be in awe.

### **Jacob Rabin - Team Captain; Senior, attending University of Virginia in the fall**

In just a month, I formed some of the closest bonds with people that I was never more than casual friends with. That's what nationals meant to us. It meant hours upon hours of time spent together, sitting around a table, albeit not always working on mock trial. It meant crosswords completed and naps taken. At the end of the day though, I can't say I was

surprised. In September, I said we were going to win states. At the time, I didn't even believe that. But the five incredibly bright and talented students around me made sure it happened. None of us would say we enjoyed all the work. None of us would say we loved it all. But at the end of the day, we'd all do the exact same thing in a heartbeat.



**Eugenia Hartness - Team Member; Senior, attending University of Pennsylvania in the fall**

In all honesty, I never expected for us to win regionals, yet alone states. But if there is one thing that my participation in Mock Trial has taught me, it is to expect the unexpected.

Joining the team as a Junior, I didn't expect anything big to come of it, especially not to make it to the national level of competition the following year. The world of law was confusing to me; when veterans of the team began to discuss affidavits, objections, and cross-examinations, I was completely lost. However, my lack of knowledge only inspired me to work extra hard to catch up and truly absorb all the feedback I was given to become better.

One thing that my Mock Trial coaches have continuously told us is that every single trial, there's going to be something unanticipated that comes up. Sometimes it may be a line of questioning you'd never thought of, and other times it is a technical difficulty that occurs during the trial (which actually happened to me in round three of nationals). Through all of this, I've learned that being adaptable is the most important component of a good Mock Trial participant.

Just like in Mock Trial, I've found that expecting the unexpected is a good philosophy to have when approaching life in general. When I think back to my Junior self, I wasn't yet aware of how much I'd learn, how much I'd grow in confidence, or the community I'd find among my fellow team members. I especially never anticipated placing eleventh in the nation at nationals!

Now, as a Senior about to begin college in the fall, I will continue telling myself to expect the unexpected. After all, this Mock Trial season has proved to us what we are capable of, and the future is full of possibilities.

**Walt Brunson-Team Member-Junior, winner of Top 10 Best Witness Award**

I can remember the day I was scrambling to get ready for a regional finals after I had swiftly brushed off the contents of my desk onto the floor. I never expected us to go as far as we did, let alone get to the regional final. But what has come out of it for me was a few extra months of time spent with some newfound friends, sometimes doing mock trial. Even under an extremely crunched deadline, we never got stressed or anxious. Although we may have been a little burnt out, we still managed to make each practice entertaining. The commitment was more than I had ever expected, but I can say with certainty it was worth it.

### **Mary Grace Fields - Team Member; Junior**

This year was my first year with this team, though my third year on a mock trial team. As the newbie to the team, I joined hoping to make friends and memories and maybe even learn something. It is safe to say, these hopes were far exceeded. I will be honest; at first, I was skeptical of this team simply because the method to the madness wasn't quite the same as what I was used to. However, I soon recognized the dedication, knowledge, and community that made this team who they were, and I knew it was something special. I came in as an outsider and quickly became a part of the team. When we reached the regional competition, I told a few people we would win. Everyone told me to settle down. As they announced the final rounds, I had already changed into sweats and was about to leave to grab a cheeseburger after congratulating the teams that would continue. Then, our team was called and we were all stunned. We won regionals and went on to states, I once again told my teammates we could do this! And again, we managed to emerge with a hard-fought win. Then, came the time for us; a burnt-out team in the middle of exam season, to take on Nationals. It was during these practices that we developed into the team we emerged from Nationals as. The season proved to be a testimony of what we could all accomplish together.

### **Laura Lineberger - Teacher Advisor, Broughton High School**

To say that I'm in awe of this team is an understatement. I have been the teacher sponsor of Broughton's Mock Trial club for many years, and I have never seen a group of kids come together with the amount of purpose, determination, and hard work that I witnessed this year. Guided by their dedicated attorney coaches, they met frequently all year in whatever capacity they were able - at the public library, in the courtyard at the school, in their personal homes, and many, MANY Zoom meetings - navigating Covid restrictions, various extracurricular and academic obligations, and part-time jobs. Several members were active in sports teams, dance ensembles, and arts productions, and all of them are in the International Baccalaureate programme, which is extraordinarily rigorous and demanding. Yet, through it all, they managed to master a criminal case about first degree murder over the course of six months, and then turn around and learn a whole new intricate civil case about autonomous vehicles in just six weeks...while simultaneously preparing for IB exams. These kids are absolute ROCKSTARS!! During the national competition, they juggled multiple IB exams/papers, power failures, and tornado warnings while performing trial rounds at a level that would ultimately place them 11th in the nation. Broughton has never had a Mock Trial team make the regional finals before, so making the State and then National competition was truly amazing. I genuinely could not be prouder or more ecstatic for their incredible accomplishments this year!



Pictured above are state specific items Broughton High collected from other competing teams at Nationals as a result of the team "pin" exchange. Our April newsletter (which you can read here: <https://bit.ly/3LOBDph>) featured an article from Broughton Coach, Chris Nichols, explaining this tradition and the sticker Broughton designed for the exchange.

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