

Why do people dislike canned introductions in extemp?

Clearly, success in extemporaneous speaking depends on a great deal of preparation before the tournament ever begins.

As such it would make sense to prepare introductions just like filing and underlining articles is preparation. Having good introductions also lets students make some jokes and bring some levity to the rounds. Canned intros facilitate personability and therefore often are successful. They also help the speaker use the 30 minute preparation time formulating strong analysis rather than coming up with a pithy starting point.

However some coaches believe toleration of canned intros will result in the toleration of canned speeches. This is objectionable because the event is supposed to be extemporaneous—with limited preparation. Other coaches believe that canned intros are evidence of style triumphing over substance as students spend their time learning to memorize intros rather than how to critically analyze current events. Still others believe that canned intros are dull and get speakers into a rut rather than allowing creativity to flourish. And I can see their point when I watch a round and two people—or more—use the same intro. Yuck!

All in all it is a question of balance. There is not much value to stifling creativity or critical thinking. At the same time frowning on preparation sends an odd message as well. A solid intro should be no excuse to disregard shoddy analysis, no matter how funny the canned joke. But as any improve performer will tell you, when it's done right no one can tell it was canned.