

# Overbrook to State Finals After Upset in Legal Clash

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In a battle of wits, an inner city public school triumphs over a prestigious private school revered for its high academic standards. Sounds like something out of a fictional, feel-good movie. But it happened recently when Philadelphia's Overbrook High School defeated the eminent St. Joseph's Prep during the finals of the 21st annual John S. Bradway High School Mock Trial Competition co-sponsored by the Philadelphia Bar Association and Temple-LEAP. The Overbrook team now goes on to the state championships in Carlisle, on March 30-31. Should they win the State Championships, they would compete for the National Title, May 10-13, in Omaha, NE.

The competition, which began with 59 of Philadelphia's public and parochial schools, is a nation-wide event which presents student teams with a fictional civil case which they must argue as both the plaintiff and the defendant. This year's case was *Georgie & Terry Gorey vs. Al Bushing*. In the aftermath of a child accidentally shooting a friend, the fictional case charges the child's parent with negligence.

After a grueling semi-final victory over Julia R. Masterman High School, one of the city's top magnet schools, the 10-student team from Overbrook High School argued the part of the defense in the finals against St. Joe's at Temple Law School.

"This is the kind of case that is set up for the plaintiff to win," said attorney coach Sheryl Axelrod. "The defense is a lot harder to win and that's what makes this victory all the more impressive."

The Overbrook team, comprised of all seniors, was coached by faculty coach Philip Beauchemin, Esq.; attorney coaches Sheryl Axelrod, Esq. and Lisa Washington, Esq., both of Blank Rome Comisky & McCauley LLP; and student coaches Raiyna Abdus-Salaam and Khadijah Scott from Temple Law School.

For more than a month, students from the Overbrook team journeyed on public transportation from West Philadelphia into Center City to meet with their coaches twice during the week and one day on the weekend.

"This is a terrific program because it boosts the confidence of the students. They participated purely out of a desire to achieve--no extra credit was offered for this program," said Axelrod. "These kids are pulling themselves up by the bootstraps, yet they dedicated their free time and used their own money for transportation to prepare for this event."

The 10 spots on the Overbrook team were filled by: Josie Hyman, Yvette West, Sean Gethers, Tori Brown, Alicia Ferguson, Licia Washington, Courtney Jarmon, Whitney Tucker, Erica Brown, and Zuliakha Jones. Three of these students fill the number one, three and four spots in their graduating class. Every one of them plans to attend college in the Fall and most of them have received partial or full scholarships.

Next year, the national championships of the Mock Trial Competition will be held in Philadelphia.

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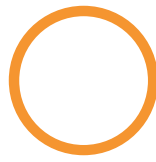
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