

2004 SPIRIT OF AMTA RECIPIENT

NOTRE DAME, TEAM 924

By: Drew Haase

Since its founding, AMTA has stood for something more than just intercollegiate competition. It has been the dream of its founders that the organization could be a beacon of civility, justice, and fair play, bringing like-minded college undergraduates together not only to learn the intricacies of trial advocacy, but also to grow as individuals.

At the 2004 National Championship Tournament, Team 924 from the University of Notre Dame was able to combine talent and civility to accomplish a rarity in AMTA competition - to win both a Prestigious Top Ten Finish and the Spirit of AMTA Award for the John and Christine Baker Division. Many at the tournament and after have noted the rarity of the accomplishment and have wondered what characteristics contributed to making the success possible.

The team, made up of then sophomores Michael Anderson, Drew Haase, Anne Marren, Trina Semelroth, and Kelly Snyder, junior Chris Sheehan and senior and All-American Michael Romano, was able to approach each trial with a sense of professionalism, Midwestern courtesy, and a unique sense of humor. Beginning with a pre-tournament scrimmage against Furman in memorable Radcliffe, Iowa, followed by great rounds with Holy Cross, Alabama-Birmingham, and Middle Tennessee State, and culminating with a wonderfully competitive round with Miami of Ohio, Team 924 could not have faced a better group of mock trialers in the tournament. The environment of cordial competition was something that took two teams to foster and without such wonderful competition, the achievement would not have been possible.

A most important component of the team's success was Notre Dame's attorney coach, William Dwyer, who donated so much time to the team, with whom his only connection was his alma mater. His dedication, both to the team and to tournament preparation was contagious; with his weekly commute from Chicago to Notre Dame, no student wanted to be the one to let him down by not having his or her material fully prepared. But Bill's most enduring legacy, and the primary reason Team 924 was able to bring home the Spirit of AMTA, was his personal dedication to the ideals of the "Spirit." Constantly reminding us to follow the rules — both by maintaining a thorough knowledge of the Rules of Evidence and by staying true to the case as written — and pushing his values of amicable competition, Bill provided the catalyst to allow the team's individual members to flourish.

In the seasons to come, Notre Dame hopes to continue this tradition that has been established — being competitive in tournament, but never losing focus on what is truly important: honesty, fair play, civility, and sportsmanship.