

2020 NJCL CERTAMEN FINALS RECAP

By Michael Howard (Massachusetts)

NOVICE FINALS: (1) Illinois Purple vs. (3) Massachusetts vs. (5) New Hampshire

Three storied programs continue to add to their legacy as a Massachusetts team making its ninth Novice finals appearance in ten years is joined by Illinois & New Hampshire teams who have a slew of their own finals appearances and have produced some well-known Certamen legends. As Eshan and Alan connected on the first two grammar questions to pull Illinois into the lead, both Mass and New Hampshire quickly realized the battle they were in for. Each team made an effort to stop the run by splitting the next two questions, but at the end of the first quarter the score still stood at **55 (IL) – 20 (NH) – 15 (MA)**. Having now awoken, Massachusetts took control of the next set and showcased their balanced attack with three different players scoring. Halfway through the score stood at **65 (IL) – 65 (MA) – 20 (NH)**. After withstanding this blow from Mass, Illinois picked up the reins once again as Eshan and Alan continued to show off their impressive grammar skills. But Sophia scored a myth question about Ethiopia to keep her New Hampshire team within striking distance. Going into the final quarter the scores stood at **105 (IL) – 85 (MA) – 40 (NH)**. This type of close finals round is precisely where legends are born. Determined to be added to that list, Team Mass shifted into another gear and wowed the crowd as they knocked down four of the last five questions to close things out. Their aristeia was only temporarily interrupted as Sreesa picked up his third tossup on a question about Lucius Junius Brutus.

Final Score: Massachusetts (160), Illinois Purple (105), New Hampshire (70)

Creighton led all scorers with 4 tossups. Biya added 3 more for Mass, while Joanna scored on the geography question, and Alex made some key contributions that helped lock down several of our bonus points. Illinois Purple had a balanced attack that saw Eshan, Kaylani, and Alan each pick up 2 tossups. For his impressive play all tournament, **Sreesa earned MVP honors** as he scored 3 tossups in the Final Round for New Hampshire. His teammate Sophia added 1.

INTERMEDIATE FINALS: (1) Texas vs. (2) Massachusetts vs. (4) Florida

What happens when unstoppable forces meet? You get this Intermediate Finals round. Unsurprising the first question about the motto of Michigan went unanswered as these teams were settling in and getting into the right mindset for the battle they were about to enter. After getting past the initial jitters Massachusetts was off to the races, scoring on what *appeared* to be five of the next six questions. Not backing down, Fefe stopped the run by providing a form of the phrase “locus urbanus” to spark a mini-run for Florida. Enter Marco at question ten who scored on the passage question to give Texas their first points. The next quarter was played pretty evenly until a pair of back to back grammar questions scored by Fefe seemed to indicate that Florida was heating up and ready to make its run. Once again Marco from Texas cooled down those embers as he scored and got Texas going again. Once again it *appeared* that Mass had a commanding lead, but while the Florida and Texas coaches continued to work hard fact checking

questions behind the scenes, their players kept their heads in the game and kept firing away to hopefully give their teams a chance.

You may have noted that I have not included scores to this point. This was intentional since there were so many challenges at the moment that no one actually knew the score. I will spare you the details, but after everything was resolved and the dust settled after question nineteen, the score stood at **115 (MA) – 95 (TX) – 85 (FL)**, with twenty points still on the board. Despite an attempt by Fefe, Marco once again stepped up to the plate and knocked a derivative question right out of the park to end the round the exact same way the Round 1 matchup between Texas and Mass had – in a tie! However in finals ties have to be broken through a series of five tossups only. Texas had already picked up so much momentum during their comeback that they scored on four of the tiebreakers and sailed off into the sunset.

Final Score: Texas (115+4), Massachusetts (115+1), Florida (85)

For Texas, **Marco earned MVP honors** tying for a game high 4 tossups. His teammate Victoria scored 2 myth questions, and Logan scored a history question about the Battle of Heraclea. For Mass, James led the way with 3 myth tossups. Owen scored 2 culture questions, while Kyler added a grammar question and Louisa had some key contributions that helped keep the ship afloat during boni. Fefe led the way for Florida with 4 grammar questions, and William added a history question about Aemilius Paullus.

ADVANCED FINALS: (1) Virginia vs. (2) Massachusetts vs. (3) Wisconsin

Once again the top three seeded teams squared off in what would be the final game for several legends of this generation of Certamen players. Showing no signs of jitters in his fifth consecutive finals appearance, Dante got his team off to a hot start, scoring on a question about the archaic verb form “duint”. Feeling the momentum swing in their favor, Ethan and Danny each joined the action and helped pull our team to an early lead. David of Virginia was able to briefly interrupt this rhythm by landing an incredible by on a question about the genre Atellan Farce after only hearing the names of two authors mentioned. After the first quarter the score stood at **80 (MA) – 15 (VA) – 0 (WI)**. Being the ultimate competitors, Wisconsin would waste no time getting themselves on the board as Ali scored on an analogy about the derivation of the Latin adjective “pugnax”. During this second quarter Ali seemed to catch fire as he also scored the visual question about passages taken from Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses*. After ten the score stood at **100 (MA) – 30 (WI) – 15 (VA)**.

Ready to take back control of the round in the second half, Dante would shock the crowd with the buzz heard around the world. “In a story told only by Aristeas of Proconessus...” Needing to hear no more Dante buzzed in and confidently gave the correct answer “griffins”. As the quarter continued Virginia kept battling back with Joseph scoring on a difficult culture question about the town of Lavinium and David connecting on a tough sentence translation involving a characteristic clause dependent on the adjective “dignus”. After 15 questions the score stood at **160 (MA) – 40 (VA) – 30 (WI)**. At this point Mass seemed to cool off as Wisconsin and Virginia continued to jockey for position. However Danny would get one more shot, scoring on a myth

question about the Trojan Antenor. Kyle from Wisconsin immediately followed this up by picking up the final points of the round on a literature question about the author Caesius Bassus.

Final Score: Massachusetts (180), Virginia (70), Wisconsin (45)

In an impressive performance rivaling Texas' last year, Massachusetts accomplished a feat I have never seen in my 10+ years of Certamen involvement by scoring all 4 myth questions in Advanced Finals. This effort was led by **Dante who earned MVP honors**, scoring on 6 total tossups. Danny scored 2 myth. Ethan added a history question about Gabinius, and Jinwoo made some key contributions which ensured that we did not drop a single bonus question.

For Virginia, David led the way with 2 tossups, while Joseph added a culture and Ayush scored a difficult history question about Tetricus and the battle of Chalons. For Wisconsin, Ali led the way with 2 tossups, and Kyle added a literature question.

This concludes the recaps of this year's tournament. First I would like to congratulate our Novice team on their victory! Year in and year out Coach Moguel has proven herself to be among the top coaches in the country. Her ability teaching the innerworkings of the game, help her students maximize their potential, and remind them of the importance of having fun has once again culminated in a championship for her team.

I would like to congratulate Texas on their intermediate championship! It is truly a testament to your students will and your coaches' relentless support that you earned this tremendous honor. Your students were truly phenomenal and will continue make a tremendous impact on the game in years to come.

Next I would like to congratulate our Advanced team on their victory! Coaching you all has been a tremendous honor for Coach Fontin and I. When we embarked on this journey not long after a disappointing finish in Finals last summer you all set what seemed to be some nearly impossible goals for yourself, but you rose to every challenge and this victory is a testament to that effort.

I would like to acknowledge and thank all of our competitors from this years' tournament This was the final show for so many legendary competitors including our friends **Teddy Trakus (TX)**, **Nosa Lawani (NH)**, and **Alazar Lemma (DC)**. I would especially like to acknowledge our finals competitors at every level, and in particular the seniors **Kyle Jain (WI, Georgetown '24)**, **Joseph Amsbary (VA, William & Mary '24)**, and **David Chen (VA, MIT '24)**. Getting to watch you all compete at Yale, Harvard, Princeton, and Nationals, and see your growth over the past few years has been incredible. Without competitors like them the game would not be worth putting in the effort that we do.

The success of our Massachusetts program would not be possible without the contributions of all our coaches **Beth Moguel (Novice)**, **Michael Cowett (Intermediate)**, **Dustin Brownell (Intermediate)**, **Francesca Fontin (Advanced)**, and **myself (Advanced)**, as well as our content specialists, and the players themselves whose hard work and dedication inspires us to continue to do what we do.

Lastly, a special thanks goes to our lone senior on the Advanced team, **Dante Minutillo (Harvard '24)**. I have never seen a Certamen player develop such facility with the Latin language as you have, and your skill in so many other areas is unparalleled. Your leadership and mentoring of our younger students has helped mold the culture of our program and we are forever indebted. You will forever be remembered as one of the all-time greats.

Thus concludes the 2020 NJCL Certamen Tournament. Thank you all for your support throughout! Hopefully we will be reporting live from San Diego in 2021!!!