

TRIALS & Tribulations

All rise, the court is now in session.

Mock Trial has been a staple at the high school for many years and recently the team has formed into a **fierce competitor** against **all the schools in Berks County**. Trials were held in **zoom format**. Along with a handful of technical difficulties, this allowed **redistricting** as it was now easier to compete against schools in **farther locations**.

During the preseason, the team took part in **two tournaments** held by **LaSalle University** and the **University of Pennsylvania**. As the season continued, the team won the **Berks County Championships**, a title they have held for the last seven years. Due to the newly formed districts, they had to face Daniel Boone to win a **wild card spot** to be one of the top four teams advancing to regionals. After beating Daniel Boone, they earned **3rd place in the district competition**. Mock Trial continued to the **regional quarter-finals**, where they lost to Nazareth by a difference of **three points**.

Throughout the virtual trials, the team branched out and tried new ideas. **Cassandra Batz**¹⁰ played a character witness and peaked the interest of the judges with a faux **British accent**. "It all started as a joke, but then it came naturally to me when the trial started and I just flipped a switch to be British in my brain. Other teams and jurors thought the accent was real and were confused when we revealed it was not," Batz said.

Coach **Mrs. Molly Sherman** sums the season up in a word, "**Bendy**, I've lost track of many ways the **kids had to adapt** and bend around the virtual world this year, but each time they found ways to **creatively solve problems**. Plus, they bent around each other. This year I thought the team was especially supportive and worked hard to make sure **everyone felt valued**," Sherman said.

Story by: S. Joseph



Photo by: S. Joseph

May it please the court. **Aidan Kotsch**¹² exudes **passion** as he practices giving his **opening statement**. Although Kotsch initially had to be coaxed into joining the club, he has learned a lot from his experiences. "Mock trial has helped me with my ability to **publicly speak** as well as think on my feet and **improvising strategies** to best get the job done," Kotsch said. While at first it was intimidating, Kotsch shares that he will miss the club and will try to come back and help out whenever possible.



Photo via: M. Sherman



Photo by: S. Joseph

Litigation in new locations.

Sacha Joseph¹², **Natalie Slusser**¹¹, and **Cassandra Batz**¹⁰ congregate around their teacher's computer outside the **school's front entrance** to hear the judge's post-trial comments. The team was competing in the **Ben Franklin Invitational**, a weekend long tournament put on by the University of Pennsylvania. On the last night, students had to rapidly **pack up and race out of the library** seconds after Joseph finished her **closing statement**, because the school's **alarm** was about to be set. "I remember the custodian pulling up and setting it [the alarm] as we were shivering out on the porch," Mrs. Molly Sherman said. Many people left after a long day of intensive trials beginning at **7:30 a.m.**, yet a few stayed behind and bundled up to learn from the **jury advice**.

Motivating mentor. **Mrs. Molly Sherman** has been the Mock Trial advisor since **2012**. Over this time she has become fluent in **case language** and is always ready to keep the group on track. "She is an amazing mentor and just an **inspiring** person to know. She gauges the amount of effort the group wants to put forth and works with it, no matter how many long meetings or tiring practices it takes. Along with countless mock trial hours, she will help you through any other **aspirations** you have. I've been with her for four years and her **consistent positive attitude** and **constructive mindset** has changed my life," **Sacha Joseph**¹² said.

I plead the fifth. After winning points for their team during an activity to learn objections and mock trial rules, **Natalie Slusser**¹¹ and **Cassandra Batz**¹⁰ celebrate, cheering on the next group. At practices before the case file dropped, the team focused on **perfecting the basic elements** of a trial through interactive learning exercises. "At practices we **work hard**, but we also **play hard**. There is a lot to get done, but we always have fun together," Batz said.

Objection overruled. **Izzy Funari**⁹ reads over a witness statement to practice. Funari's **older sister** spent four years in the club and would tell her all about it, so as a freshman, Funari was excited to join. "It was somewhat different. I **knew it was a lot of work**, but it turned out to be more than I expected," Funari said. Although it was not exactly what she imagined, Funari enjoyed her first year, learning a great deal about the **court and trial system**.



Photo by: S. Joseph



Photo by: S. Joseph



Photo by: M. Miller

You are under oath. **Maddie Ammon**¹⁰ checks her setup before a virtual trial. At the start of the season, all witnesses **zoomed in from home**, but as it became more competitive, everyone **competed from the school** with quality lighting and backdrop. While she thought virtual trials felt impersonable, Ammon still prepped the same way and made the best of the season. "Beforehand, I **reread my statement** dozens of times. You never know what you're going to get hit with on cross so you have to be **super prepared**," Ammon said.

TAG Yourself on the TEAM

@ **Kenzie Miller**



Photo by: S. Joseph

- Leaves early every practice
- Barely reads her statement
- Comes to court knowing everything

@ **Sam Mitten**



Photo by: S. Joseph

- Knows every rule of evidence in the book
- Consistently scores 10s on an opening statement

@ **Natalie Slusser**



Photo by: S. Joseph

- Un-ironically makes trial jokes outside of the courtroom
- Extremely stressed, yet extremely put together

@ **Sacha Joseph**



Photo by: M. Miller

- Writes ten minute cross examinations
- Will destroy the other team with a glance