

'Having begun my university career at a different university, it was through participating in a Moot Court Competition that I came to realise that TUKS was the university I really wanted to attend. In my first year of studies I represented the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal at the First Year Kovsie Moot Court Competition in Bloemfontein, where we were drawn to face TuksLaw in our second round. I remember that round clearly because it was in that moment that I realised that the students across the bench from me were the type of law students I wished to become. They displayed all the skill and poise I had come to expect from the legal profession which I sought to join. From that day I knew that TuksLaw was the University I wished to attend and more importantly represent in a moot court competition.

It was thus an incredible honour for me to have been selected to the team which was to represent the University of Pretoria this year at the 23<sup>rd</sup> African Human Rights Moot Court Competition in Kenya. The prestige of such a selection was not lost on me and I was fully aware that there was an incredible amount of hard work to be done. This hard work was most possibly the most arduous task I had undertaken in my student life, but it was one which I have most thoroughly enjoyed. I came to realise that the opiate of Moot is that as a law student one is able to practically apply all the skills one learns in the broad spectrum of subjects presented by the university.

Our problem had me pouring over various sources of law dealing with subjects varying from international treaty law to the law of specific contracts. For the first time in my student career, the various library tours and lectures on how to conduct research which had been provided to us in first and second year truly found application. As much as I enjoy the study of law, mooting opened an entirely new, previously unexplored concept of what it meant to interact with the written law and this exposure ignited a passion for the continued pursuit of knowledge in all my other classes as well. Suddenly it was not enough for me merely to understand the view of the lecturer to the extent that I could regurgitate it back out to them in a test, I needed to know more, I needed to know how to practically apply it in a court of law, to experience how it had been applied. In essence the process of preparing to submit memorials allowed me to truly experience the excitement of practicing law and further lead to a greater appreciation of its academic element.

Once memorial submission had taken place, the process of oral practise began, in which our arguments were tested and hammered. I learnt to think on my feet, to remain calm under pressure, to prioritise points of order and essentially how to conduct oneself in court. The prestige of the TuksLaw Moot Society as well as the dedication of our coach, Gift, meant that our arguments were assessed and prodded by an incredibly diverse range of people, from students to the most senior of lecturers. Whilst this process was also tough, it was immensely gratifying and honestly humbling to know that such a diverse group of people were willing to take time out of their day to assist a paltry second and third year student achieve the best they could. It was during this period that I was exposed further to a practical application of law in an oral form - the age old concept of legal persuasion.

It was our coach's view that the most prepared team getting on to the plane to Kenya would be the winners. We boarded the plane quietly confident but unsure as to whether we had done enough to be truly successful. After the completion of the preliminary rounds, we became confident in the fact that we had done the groundwork. Our training and access to resources had allowed us to be prepared enough for the toughest bench, to work our way into the position of leading judges into asking the questions we wanted them to ask, rather than the ones we knew we could not perfectly answer.

Being the highest ranked English team we were able to make the finals. Unfortunately we lost those finals by a margin of but three speaker points. I was honoured enough to be awarded the best speaker title. After the finals we had the incredible opportunity of interacting with the finals judges at a closing dinner. One of the judges was Justice Johan Kriegler, former South African Constitutional Court Justice. He had little to say about the result of the round, but an incredible amount to say about how proud he was that South African law students are representing their country in such a manner and that he was able to rest a little easier knowing that our country's legal system is in the hands of such students. I felt this pertinent to mention, not for the personal gratification of such a statement, but rather as a starting point for a summary of the impact Moots may have on the lives of a student.

Moot has had an influence on my choices for over three years, with the prestige of the faculty driving me to attend this great institution. Whilst representing this institution I have learnt what it means to truly be a student of the Law and have been given the honour of practically applying what I have learnt. I have been exposed to a wide variety of views and a wonderfully diverse field of law and in truth I have had more fun doing it than in all my years of study. Even though I have been intensely scrutinising them for the past four months, words are unable to describe my gratitude to the Faculty of Law for making such an experience possible. My final parting words would be that one of the reasons that I toiled so hard and so late was that I wished to do my University proud and ensure that the prestige of TuksLaw Moots lived on and my only wish is that our success as a team and my personal success as an oralist paves the way for others to do our University proud.'

**- Alastair Dey Van Heerden**