

Meet the G whizzes who beat the rest of the world



The great debaters ... Anna Garsia from Ryde and Julia Bowes from Lane Cove celebrate winning the World Universities Debating Championships on Kitsilano Beach in Vancouver, Canada. Photo: Jeff Vinnick

Tim Dick

THEY were not even considered good enough to go, but a G-team of Sydney debaters have managed to clamber over all their colleagues, and international rivals, to win the World Universities Debating Championships.

Julia Bowes, 20, in her second year of an arts-law degree, and Anna Garsia, 23, a science

graduate now studying law, were not part of the University of Sydney contingent selected for competition in Vancouver.

But after the hosts invited more teams to come, they were included, and cleaned up.

They beat every other team this week - including from Oxford and Cambridge in the final, and all of their university's other teams, from A to F.

A delighted Ms Bowes said

there was much surprise at an Australian G-team - the only one in the competition - conquering all, including the twin pillars of British academia.

"Particularly because there was so many Sydney teams above us, it was thought that it couldn't be done," she said.

Being a G-team meant "we had an agenda, we wanted to prove our worth", she said.

That led one commentator to

call them "the best G team in the tournament" during the final, in which they also beat a team from the University of Queensland.

Its own handbook says the World Universities Debating Championships is the "largest and most prestigious debating competition in the world".

Far from the three-a-side, speech-and-rebuttal format of high school nightmares, it follows the British parliamentary

style with two teams of two on each side. One side is the "government", one the "opposition", but all four teams compete against each another.

"It is a subtle art. It involves competing with a team on your side, without appearing to disagree with them," the handbook says. Sides are balloted. "Often this will lead to speaking in favour of things you don't believe in, and against those that you do."

In this year's final, Cambridge and Oxford formed the government, and the Australian teams the opposition.

They debated this motion: "That this house believes that economic growth is the solution to climate change."

Ms Bowes confessed their winning arguments were not very interesting - but then she was speaking while celebrating in a Vancouver nightclub.