DAVE ROSS
CHAMPIONSHIP SPEECH BREAKDOWN

Speech Transcript:

All aboard!

There's a train rolling, an iron horse, with an iron will. **[R3] [PD] [SM]**

Its stop is destiny.

There it is, just beyond the hill.

Mr. Toastmaster, **family** and **friends**…**[R3]**

The train **I'm** talking about is not an Amtrak train, and even though there's no fare to this train, it's nothing that John Sununu would use to go on a **free ski vacation**. **[SM]x2**

No, the train **I'm** talking about is the metaphysical train. A train that can pac...transport all of **us** to success. **[SM]x2**

And perhaps the most remarkable thing of all about this train is that **we** have all ridden it at one time or another. **[SM]**

Every one of **us**, all of **us**, are the product of a fabulous competition to select a unique and particular genetic and chromosomal make-up to produce the winning design. **You**. **[SM]**

For **we** are all winners and **we** know that, or **we'd** knew that when **we** were children. **[SM]**

I recall how Faustina and **I** watched our son Daryl when he was learning how to walk. And there this little child would take his first furtive step and then another and then we beamed with pride as our son suddenly fell flat **on his rear**. **[ST] [PD] [SM]**

To watch this kid learn how to walk, **you** kinda wondered if it would ever happen. He even once fell and chipped both his front teeth on our coffee table. **[SM]x2**

And did we go to our son and say, "Look, you smile like a **hockey player now**, you shouldn't try this walking thing, **just crawl a little bit**."? **[Q] [R3] [PD] [CB] [SM]**

And did he stop, did he stop trying after a few bumps and bruises? Well, **you** know the answer to that. Without even seeing **my** active 7-year-old son, **you** know that he learned how to walk. **[Q] [SM]**

And what's interesting is, he knew he would learn how to walk. He was born with that knowledge of success. **[SM]**

But it's very difficult for the adult mind to conceive, that somehow there's some **sort of a train** for all of **us** to ride to success, especially when **we** compare **ourselves** to others. **[SM]**

After all, she's smarter than **I** am. And he has far more talent than **I** do. While he's far better looking than **I** am. **Well, maybe not**. **[R3] [SM]x2**

But the point is, the point is, that when **we** compare ourselves to others, that's not the measure of success. **[SM]**

Success is not **me** better than **you**, it is **we** better tomorrow than **we** are today. **[SM]x2**

That's what it is.

Many well-meaning and good people along the way have convinced **us** that these tracks to success lead nowhere. **[SM]**

A very good friend of **mine**, Robert Brown, is an excellent vocational counselor. And if **you** wanted to be a doctor or a plumber or a lawyer, he could help **you**. He could get **you** into the right classes, the right training program, and get **you** on **your** way. **[R3] [ST] [SM]**

But if **you** went up to him with a dream and said, "Mr. Brown, I'd like to be a professional baseball player."

He would look **you** in the eye and give you what he called reality, "I want you to go out in this community and find 5 people who are currently making their living at this. Then, you can come back and talk to me." **[SM]**

More likely than not, would come back and say, "Mr. Brown, I couldn't find those 5 people. Could I see a brochure about becoming a policeman, or an insurance salesman, or a doctor?" **[R3] [SM]**

And those are fine professions, the point is that he taught those students to fail before they entered the arena. **[SM]**

And more importantly, they never learned that **you** can succeed by not winning, but by giving it **your** all. That is the true measure of victory. And he deprived that of those students. **[SM]x2**

Sometimes **you** wonder what he would have said to a young girl who had come up to him and say, "You know Mr. Brown, I want to run track. Of course, I had polio as a child." **[SM]**

What would he have said to Wilma Rudolph who went on to win 3 Olympic gold medals? **[Q] [SM]**

Or what would he say to the young man who said, "Well, I failed at business, I've had a nervous breakdown, **I guess I'll enter politics now**." **[R3] [SM]**

What would he have said to Abraham Lincoln? **[Q]**

And what would he have said to the young man with a dream, at **5 feet 7 inches tall**, "I want to play professional basketball?" **[SM]**

What would he have said to the former Atlanta Hawks star, Spud Webb? **[Q] [R3] [SM]**

Maybe he would've warned him about being traded to the **Sacramento Kings, I don't know**. But the point is, these people succeeded. And why.

Because their engines were powered by a secret ingredient. Luck? No. **[Q] [SM]**

Noted French author, Jean Cocteau once commented, "Do you believe in luck?" And he said, "But of course, how else could you accommodate for the success of **people you do not like**?" **[SM]x2**

No, it wasn't luck. Something far more potent powered those people. It was courage. Courage. Courage to believe, to continue on when good sense tells **you**, **you** can't win. **[SM]**

Historians have written about Great Britain during WW2. That Great Britain had no chance against the massive Nazi war machine. But they had Sir Winston Churchill. **[SM]**

A full-fledged conductor on that **train to success**. And he inspired that beleaguered nation to overcome overwhelming odds. **[SM]x2**

The following speech by Sir Winston Churchill, delivered several times, sums up that attitude when he said, "Never give up. Never give up. Never, never, never give up!" **[R3]**

Those are the words of someone who knows that victory is a birthright. But **we** all knew that. **We** all know that. **We've** heard that story before. About the little engine that thought he could. **[SM]**

Listen, listen. Saying, "I think I can, I think I can." It's in **your** hearts now to this day. "I think I can. I think I can." **[SM]x2**

This train rolling, an iron horse, with **your** iron will. **[R3] [CB] [PD] [SM]**

Your next stop is destiny, 'cause **that train is rollin' still**. **[SM]**

All aboard! **[CB]**

Mr. Toastmaster…

SPEECH STATS:

Word Count: 1013

Speech Length: 7:09

Title: The Train's Still Rollin'

Click here to watch the speech

COLOR KEY

- ## Humor [H] - x 8

  This includes only parts that received genuine laughter from the audience. Laughter varies in intensity.

  This speech averaged **1.12 LPMs** (Laughs Per Minute) and **126.63 WPL** (Words Per Laugh).

  First laugh came at **0:29** of the speech.

  His speech wasn't overly littered with humor. But he did distribute laugh points evenly throughout the entire speech. This helped keep it balanced.

- ## Foundational Phrase [FP] - x 3

  Foundational Phrase for this speech: **"The Train's Still Rollin'"**

  Other notable and *related* phrases:

  - "*Train to success.*"
  - "*Train*"
  - "*All aboard!*"

  The Foundational Phrase varied and wasn't a concrete phrase that was repeated in the same exact way each time it was mentioned. It was used 3 total times during the speech and here are the 3 different variations:

  - "*There's a train rolling.*"
  - "*This train rolling.*"
  - "*…that train is rollin' still.*"

  The title of the speech was also a variation of the Foundational Phrase although it is not included in the total.

  Another note is that he did use the word "Train" 10 times throughout the speech; this was in addition to the 3 Foundation Phrases that were used. They weren't particularly memorable although they do relate to the FP and kept the speech focused on *that* idea. And then of course, the "*All Aboard!*" that he used to open and close the speech—these were memorable but did not quite fit the criteria to be the Foundational Phrase.

- ## "You"; "Your"; "We"; "Us"; "Our" - x 38

  I included these words that were directly aimed at the audience, dialogue excluded (character and internal). Talking *to* the audience will be more "you/your" focused. This could mean abstract ideas, "imagine this…" hypotheticals, concepts that describe how something works, etc. Those will naturally use more "you/your" words.

- ## "I" or "Me" or "My" or "Myself" - x 10

  The original reason for tracking this stat was the thought that it might be useful to compare with the amount of "You" focused words. Turns out, it is. Just not in the way I originally thought.

  The theory was, if this number was much greater than "You" focused words, it would show that the speaker was more "*me, me, me*" focused and not tailoring the message to the audience.

  While that is a possibility, what I've found thus far is that it tells more about the content of the speech. More specifically, it tells us that there are personal stories being told.

  **The total number counted does not include in-story character dialogue.

- ## "Ladies and Gentlemen" or "My Friends" [MF] - x 2

  The speaker used "*Family*" and *"Friends"* to address the audience.

- ## Physical Descriptions or VAKS [PD] - x 5

  Descriptive physical characteristics of people, things, and locations. The ones I included were any overt words that described the setting for where the speaker was at during the story, where the speaker wanted to take the audience, or descriptions of people in the scene.

  Describing complex processes may also be included since they are intended to make it easier for the audience to imagine.

  Physical in this case is what was heard, smelled, and what was seen. It also means that "*We were at my house*" is not enough—this requires specifics that are intended to paint a picture in the minds of the audience. I intentionally left out what was felt emotionally or metaphorically.

- ## Callbacks [CB] - x 5

  Humorous and other. It's common for speakers to derive humor from callbacks to *something* or *someone* from the speech journey. Foundational Phrases after the first one are essentially callbacks as well.

The idea of a callback is to move on from "it" (the eventual callback) so the audience is no longer thinking about it, and then call it back later so it's an "A HA!" moment of familiarity. For that reason, only *some* of the Foundational Phrases may be included, and some may not. Normally the Foundational Phrase (subsequent ones after the first) get counted in the Callback section, but in this speech, only the ones that had a recognizable phrase were included.

- ## Rule of Three [R3] - x 10

    The rule of three is all inclusive. Whether used for comedic effect or not.

    It's common to see the Rule of Three used all at once in a single sentence such as, "*He was tall, strong, and mean*." Dave used it in a variety of different ways.

- ## Questions [Q] - x 6

    Questions directly aimed at the audience (rhetorical or not).

    The original intent of the Questions category was to include only thoughtful questions— things that made the audience reflect on their lives. However, even benign or rhetorical questions aimed at the audience can help build a connection to the speaker, just as addressing the audience as "My Friends" or "Ladies and Gentlemen" does. Because of that, those types of questions were included as well.

- ## Time Transitions [TT] - x 3

    Transition words that indicated that there was a time change from the speaker's point of view. The idea is to show progression from one point in the speaker's life to another. So, if there are multiple time transitions within the same story, they may or may not be counted. These help to prepare the audience for a change in the story in order to prevent confusion.

- ## Stories [ST] - x 2

    This includes all stories told throughout the entire speech. Some stories may be slightly exaggerated, but the idea is that the speaker is telling the audience a story that happened, either in their life or somebody else's. This does not include metaphorical stories, intentionally exaggerated tales or things like "Imagine you are…"

    In this speech there were 2 stories. The first story was about his son Daryl learning to walk and the other one, which initially began as a story, and then transformed into a hypothetical was about his friend Robert Brown who helps people find their career path. The other small anecdotes about famous individuals who reached success were not so much stories, but rather simple proof elements to reinforce his point.

- ## Stage Movement [SM] - x 44

    This section covers how many times the speaker moved to a different place on the stage during the speech. Minor movements for in-story character changes (for dialogue) or for small side steps for illustrating points or addressing different parts of the audience will not be counted. I'll also keep track of anything else that's notable about the speaker's stage movements**.**

***Initials were put at end of sentence if multiple Color Key elements were in the same sentence.*

Observations:

- **Notes on Style**: This is something that I'm noticing more and more as I continue down the path of past champions. The more recent speeches focus more on entertainment that has gotten away from the what I'd consider the more serious, or credible, or perhaps "professional" type of speaker.

    Even the way humor is used seems to have changed. It seems like the objective of speeches nowadays is to have a bunch of funny lines with the message being secondary. The creativity and the complexity (I don't mean jargon) of the speeches seemed more unique in my opinion as well.

    More recently, they seem more cookie-cutter in how the speech is put together. The speech messages have been more predictable as well. Take 2019 for example. The 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place speakers all had a similar message about not judging a book by its cover. This concept is fairly mainstream and by no means novel.

    Take Dwayne Smith, the 2002 winner. His speech was about the power of music. Randy Harvey, 2004 winner, told of emotional lessons learned from his dad—one of my favorites. Another one, Lance Miller, who won in 2005. He crafted a speech around a valet ticket being validated.

    Don't get me wrong, the speeches are by no means bad. They are technically sound and definitely worthy of being champions. These are simply my observations of *then versus now*.

- **Stories**: He didn't really have a core story. He used the volume approach for quick snapshots of other people's stories—the famous individuals. They did help with giving the audience proof in what he's trying to convince them of, though, so it wasn't the end of the world. The closest thing to a core story was how his son was learning to walk. It wasn't very dramatic, but it did help guide the speech.

- **Voice**: Credible voice. Not a lot of colloquialisms. He had a strong voice and didn't need to rely heavily on humor and other gimmicks, he simply used his voice and content to make his case. And he had a heavy word count (1013 words). Compare that to the 2013 Public Speaking Champion, Presiyan Vasilev, who had a 473-word speech. That is a hefty disparity.

- **Proof Elements**: He had solid proof examples in place of what typically would be a story. Wilma Rudolph, Abraham Lincoln, and Spud Webb. These lend credibility to the speech's ultimate message.

- **Props:** No props. The closest thing to a prop would have been his "*All aboard!*" yell at the beginning and the end—in a sense he was pretending to be a train conductor.

- **Use of Names**: He used names for people he mentioned throughout his speech. Some examples were his wife Faustina, his son Daryl, and his friend Robert Brown.

- **Gurus and Side Characters:**

  - **Gurus**: His son Daryl, Wilma Rudolph, Abraham Lincoln, Spud Webb, Sir Winston Churchill, and The Little Engine That Could were gurus.
  - **Side Characters**: His wife Faustina, Dave, his friend Robert Brown, Jean Cocteau, and the students were all side characters. Side characters are part of the stories but don't directly contribute to a learning moment. This isn't a problem, just an observation. Side characters help give depth to a story.
  - A Guru is someone or something in the speech that teaches the speaker (and ultimately the audience) something meaningful. As a speaker, you don't want to be the wise Guru. You want to be the dolt who learns from the guru(s), and that's who end up teaching the audience as well. **Tip:** Self-deprecation can be an important element in allowing the guru to shine.

- **Passion and Conviction**: His words had a lot of passion and conviction and this contributed to the success of his speech.

- **Direct Approach**: This speech did not have the extra bells and whistles in terms of props or other add-ons that seem to be present in most of the more recent speeches, and I'm not quite sure if this speech would win in today's era. However, I know that this is a successful speech regardless.

- **Tie Up Loose Ends:** He started and ended his speech by yelling "All aboard!" It echoed throughout the room and was one of the most memorable parts of the speech. It was well done technically to keep his voice from sounding too harsh, even though he was intentionally raising his voice.

Feedback / Criticism:

- **Contemporary Events**: He used some things that were clearly contemporary events. The ski trip jab at the politician, John Sununu. I had to look that up to know what he was talking about. It worked for that audience at that time, but to make the speech stand the test of time, I think it would be

better to avoid those type of contemporary events. He did win so there's *that*…

- **Walking on Laughter**: He had a good joke that he could have milked for more laughter. "*While he's far better looking than I am. Well, maybe not.*" It was a great line, but he moved a little too fast and talked over the laughter.

- **Foundational Phrase**: I didn't feel that the Foundational Phrase was very memorable. Although it was used 3 times (a respectable total) during the speech, it was different each time so didn't lend itself to being catchy or easy to remember. The title helped in this area, though.

- **Incongruency**: There was a part at the end of the speech which to me felt forced, and perhaps unnecessary altogether. It was the part about The Little Engine That Could. The train part at the beginning felt concrete (more serious), but when he tried to link The Little Engine That Could to his original train idea, it felt like it watered the point down—lessened its seriousness. Another thing is, they are similar ideas, but not exactly the same. The train to success as he introduced it felt more like the speech was going to be about fate, or destiny. The Little Engine That Could to me is specifically about perseverance and endurance. I'm probably just splitting hairs, but that was my initial thought when I heard those ideas converge.

- **Stage Movement**: He moved around on stage a lot. With that said, it didn't seem very distracting and I guess it makes sense due to the fact that he had a higher than average word count. However, there were times that felt like he moved unnecessarily. Take this sentence for example: "*The train I'm talking about is not an Amtrak train, and even though there's no fare to this train, it's nothing that John Sununu would use to go on a free ski vacation.*" He moved 2 times during that sentence and was only still for a few words. This gives a snapshot of what most of the speech was like.

- **Perfection:** He had a few spots in the speech where he flubbed on some words. He didn't bring attention to them and kept it moving along, which is the best way to handle those. Examples: "*Its stop is destiny.*" And "*A train that can pac...transport…*"