

Sample Press Coverage

The media highlights stories about *FIRST*[®] teams and events every season. Below are some examples of compelling stories that were covered in the 2013 ULTIMATE ASCENTSM season. To view more *FIRST* In the News stories, please visit: <http://www3.usfirst.org/aboutus/first-in-the-news>

March 03, 2013

TMCnet.com

(Lubbock Avalanche-Journal - McClatchy-Tribune Information Services via COMTEX)

Students compete in *FIRST* Robotics Competition in Lubbock

Mar 03, 2013 Local teams won awards at the Hub City *FIRST* Robotics regional competition Saturday, but failed to advance to the World Championship in April.

The City Bank Coliseum was filled with music, enthusiastic teens and the excited atmosphere of a sporting event. But it wasn't a sporting event; it was the For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology regional competition, where winners advance to the World Championship in St. Louis.

Saturday's competition of *FIRST* -- started by inventor Dean Kamen -- featured 41 teams from seven states, and three teams from Mexico.

Five of those teams were from Lubbock and 28 from Texas.

The organization's website says its mission "is to inspire young people to be science and technology leaders by engaging them in exciting mentor-based programs that build science, engineering and technology skills, that inspire innovation, and that foster well-rounded life capabilities including self-confidence, communication, and leadership." While teams compete on an individual level, they also join forces to compete in the final rounds.

On Saturday, the winners were teams from Lee's Summit, Mo., Kountze and Chickasha, Okla.

Cameron Lerch is the co-captain from the Lee's Summit team.

"I feel great," Lerch said. "All the other teams played well." The robots had two tasks to perform in the competition -- throwing Frisbees and climbing a pyramid. Some teams focused on having their robot accomplish only one of the tasks.

"Our goal was to be able to do everything," Lerch said.

Lerch said one of his team members spent four weeks focused on an idea for climbing the pyramid.

"We had a tough fight," Lerch said.

The junior in high school plans on studying mechanical, industrial or aerospace engineering in college. Lerch praised his team for their success.

"We couldn't have done it if we didn't work together as a team," he said.

Richard Cook is the facilitator of the *FIRST* team from Idalou.

"I'm as proud as I could ever be," Cook said.

This is the first year for the team and they earned the Rookie Inspiration Award.

"They were like clockwork," Cook said of the team's performance. "Every performance was spot on." Cook compared it to watching a pit crew at a NASCAR event.

The team's captain, Guy Harmon, said the robot didn't do everything they'd hoped.

"But what it did we were impressed with," Harmon said. "Other teams were impressed too."

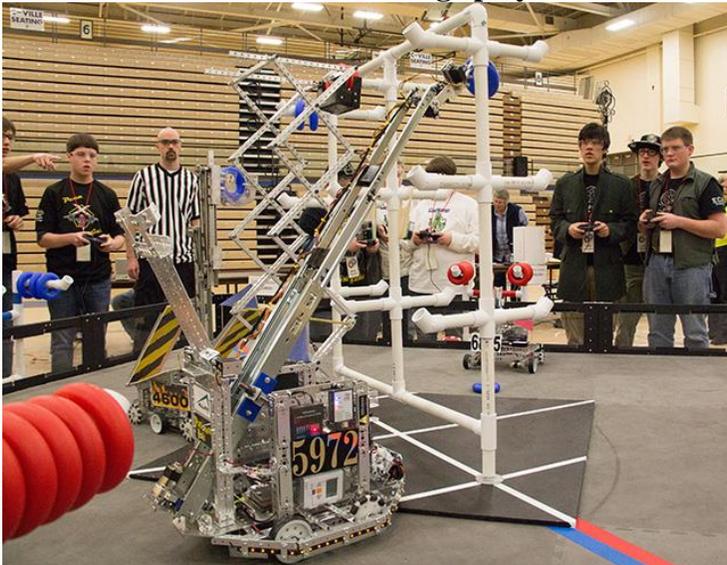
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Monday, March 4, 2013

Journal Review

Jonathan Streetman jstreetman@jrpress.com |

Battle of the Bots - Tech challenge plays out at CHS



Robotics Competition

Two robots jockey to place a ring on the same post on Saturday during the Indiana FTC State Championships in the Crawfordsville High School gymnasium. Twenty-nine teams from five states competed for a chance to compete at the World Championships in St. Louis April 24-27.

"Let the autonomous round begin!" has never sounded so thrilling as it did on Saturday in the Crawfordsville High School gym.

Twenty-nine teams from Indiana and four surrounding states descended upon the hardwood court usually filled with the sound of sneakers and the swoosh of nets and replaced it with the whirring of motors and metal on metal collisions for the Indiana *FIRST* Tech Challenge State Championship.

Two battlegrounds stood on each free throw line as four teams at a time, split into a blue or red alliance, pitted their robots against one another for one purpose — to play tic-tac-toe.

This was the second year CHS has hosted the competition and Crawfordsville High School teacher and Robotics Club leader Darrin Wilcoxson said the day is always a lot of fun.

“There’s a lot of emotion — you come in all jacked up and get everything set up in the pit area, then you’ve gotta settle down for the presentations to the judges then it’s ramped right back up for the competition,” Wilcoxson said. “Then it’s just a rollercoaster of ‘did it work? No, it didn’t. How do we fix it?’”

The competition portion lasted about four hours and had the feel of a Friday night basketball game. Contestants and fans alike had on costumes ranging from a Roman soldier to red camouflage shirts to hats with life-sized “thumbs up” hands on them to a dancing Patronium Bot pumping up the crowd.

Although the atmosphere was electric in the competition areas and in the stands, with a DJ spinning energetic tunes non-stop, CHS junior Dalton Williams provided his services as emcee throughout the day to keep the crowd going and informed of the rules.

“If people don’t quite understand what’s going on, I describe if this ring goes on that post they get so many points. The main point is trying to keep the crowd into it,” Williams said, taking in the atmosphere himself. “It’s really interesting to see all the teams that dress up and just express themselves and be creative.”

The winners of the tournament earned an automatic bid to the *FIRST* World Championships in St. Louis on April 24-27, something these teams have been working towards for months.

“This is pretty much the last week of competition, so everyone wanted to come here to be able to qualify,” Wilcoxson said. One team was also chosen by the judges to receive the Inspire Award, given to those who have demonstrated fair play, community service projects and generally just have the most fun with costumes and each other, he said.

The winners of the tournament this year were the Metallic Controllers, the Oddly Charged Particles and Octopi, while the Inspire Award went to Mechahampster, a team from Martinsville. Those teams will compete at St. Louis in the World Championships.

The two robots from the CHS Robotics Team, Plumber and Tobor, placed 14 and 23, respectively, ending their competitive season.

Sunday, March 3, 2013
Richmond Times-Dispatch
 BY LAURA KEBEDE

City of Richmond

Students get their geek on at annual robotics battle

With sportscaster-like voices and booming cheers from parents and students in the bleachers, it sounded like a basketball game. In this contest, the announcers tipped their hats to introduce much smaller players: 18-inch robots.

Organizers estimated 1,000 people watched 48 middle school and high school teams engage in a battle of wits, nuts and bolts Saturday at Richmond’s Arthur Ashe Athletic Center in the *FIRST* Tech Challenge state championships.

The *FIRST* Tech Challenge is a junior branch of the For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology program, which has been around since 1992, has up to 5-

foot-tall robots and can cost a team up to \$6,000 in materials and expenses.

FIRST Tech Challenge began in 2006 with smaller robots and smaller budgets to make the experience accessible to more students.

“It was designed to get kids excited about more than athletics and Hollywood,” said Jim Babb, manager of media relations for Virginia *FIRST* Robotics. “This is a culture to celebrate the geek.”

And with names like Geeks In Just Their Underpants, Teenage Mutant Ninja Squirtles and Geek Gods, these students aren’t afraid to show it.

In a flurry of shouted commands and up to three or four drivers remote-controlling their robot’s arms or wheels, teams were challenged to pick up plastic rings and move them to vertical pegs on a 12-foot-by-12-foot field.

“You learn how to build a robot, build teamwork and make new friends,” Saint Gertrude High School 10th-grader Maddie Crown said. “Plus, I love collecting all the shiny buttons” from each competition. Crown and her teammate Sylvia Kriva were the only Richmond-area students to make it to the semifinals. She said she wants to be a mechanical engineer.



ALEXA WELCH EDLUND/TIMES-DISPATCH

Lennard Schleiff, 17 (left), Olivia Slater, 16, and Trip Zobrist, 16, watch their robot. The were with the Geeks In Just Their Underpants team from Hot Springs.



ALEXA WELCH EDLUND

Kellan Childers, age 18, tries to coax the RoboWarriors' robot to perform as Risheek Chemudupati (left), age 15, and Jayvon Banks (right), age 17, watch during the *FIRST* Tech Challenge robotics state tournament at the Arthur Ashe Center.

At Deep Run High School, Virginia *FIRST* teams have been around for 11 years. Lately, more girls have joined.

“I feel good that there are a lot of girls getting the technology experience,” said Priti Patil, whose daughter is a freshman on the team.

Defying Gravity, a rookie community-based team made up of middle school and high school students from Albemarle County, and Tuxedo Pandas, a community-based team of middle and high school students from the Christiansburg area, will compete in the FTC World Championship in April in St. Louis.

Nick Butler, 16, who was featured in Saturday’s Richmond Times-Dispatch, and his Stafford team finished 15th in their division, and did not advance to the finals at the state championships.

May 6, 2013

Radio Iowa

By: [O. Kay Henderson](#)

Iowa high school teams wins award at world robotics competition



Lt. Governor Kim Reynolds watches as students display their robot.

A group of Iowa high school students won the “Inspire” award at a recent world robotics competition.

Lieutenant Governor Kim Reynolds honored the group of seven juniors from West Des Moines Valley High School this morning and the students gave a demonstration of their robot.

“That’s our future, folks,” Reynolds said to the reporters and staff who’d gathered in the governor’s office this morning for a news conference. “I just want to commend this team.”

Saketh Undurty said their robot was designed to pick up rings from a field that were placed in a vertical tick tack toe board.

“We have, as you see, a three-jointed arm to reach all three levels,” he explained.

The Valley High team was one of two Iowa teams to go to the world competition at the end of April, to compete against 128 other teams from around the world. Chase Schweitzer and two of the other high school juniors already have had paid internships where they've use the science, technology, engineering and math skills they learned from being part of the team.

"Sidd (Somayajula) and I work at a local web design company and we had no idea how to do it, but just because we had tackled so many problems in the *FIRST* Tech Challenge we knew we could pull it off," Schweitzer said, "so we actually learned how to create websites while we were working there and now we're actually working there, coding websites."

State officials have been pushing to expand so-called "STEM" courses in high schools, to encourage students to learn science, technology, engineering and math skills. Schweitzer said Iowa has the highest concentration of high school robotics teams of any state in the country.

"The number of teams doubled last year and we're becoming more and more impactful at the world championship," Schweitzer said.

Daniel Miller, who wants to make a robot that can fly or jump, was asked by a reporter if it's "cooler to be a geek" these days.

"I think it's definitely cooler," he said, laughing.

The Valley High helped start three other teams at their own high school in the past year. Their robot costs between \$2000-3000. They have shared the prototype for a light-weight, \$200 robot so teams in other countries could have a go at the technology.

March 22, 2013

NBC DFW

By [Christine Lee](#)

FIRST Robotics Competition Begins in Irving
High school students aspiring to become engineers fill the Irving Convention Center

A large group of future engineers are gathering this week in North Texas. The *FIRST* Robotics Competition Dallas is getting ready to begin at the Irving Convention Center.

FIRST stands for "For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology."

For six weeks, Alex Sandro Sene from Brazil said he spent countless hours on his team's newest creation.

"A lot of nights without sleep because we have to work on the robot... it's exhausting work," he said.

Program Manager Carolina Azevedo said the ninth through 12th graders work on creating a robot that can compete in a given task.



"They gave them the game, which in this year is going to be Frisbees," Azevedo said, "So they have certain field with point levels and they have to get their robots to be able to make points. And the robot also has to be able to climb a pyramid."

72 regional competitions take place in 48 states and seven foreign countries. Every team is looking for a spot at the national championship next month in St. Louis.

Azevedo said more visibility and success at competitions like this could lead to scholarships for many students.

"This is the generation that will be building our next phones and cars and different technologies," she said.

17-year-old Wesley Tavares said it was his third year participating in the competition. He said each year gave him an opportunity to learn from within his team as well as from those around him.

"Learning how to come up with different ideas, I've learned throughout my years that no idea is impossible. You just got to work with it." Tavares said.

The two-day competition began Friday morning.
