

RU Robotics Teams Head to State Championship

By Michelle Holder

Excellent design, knowledge of coding, and expert driving skills are essential to building a good robot; but it's practice and teamwork that make a robot a champion.

On February 3, 2024, the RU robotics teams put all their skills to the test when they competed in the Vermont New Hampshire Region Robotics Tournament at the Coe-Brown Academy in Northwood, New Hampshire. Over 50 teams from 11 schools were there hoping to qualify for the state finals.

RU has 3 robotics teams, coached by Tim Moynihan, a Randolph Union's high school math and robotics teacher. 11th graders Victor Helberg, Ryan Millington, and Coilin Becker make up team "R," Antonio Reyes (grade 10), Shota Armstrong (grade 9), and James Joaquin (grade 10) work together on team "U," and Aiden Murphy (grade 9), Laurin Salls (grade 9), Ben Donnelly (grade 8), and Wyatt Jacobs (grade 8) drive team "H."

Each of these teams built robots using the Vex Vector kits that contain everything you need from basic parts such as steel plates and screws to more complex items such as sensors and motors. Once students have put the robots together, they must be programmed to perform certain tasks, such as getting balls into goals or climbing a structure.

There are different types of competition at the tournament. In one, teams are allied with another team from a different school. They go head-to-head with another alliance, and the four robots have two minutes to score as many goals as possible on a 12 by 12-foot playing field that loosely resembles a soccer pitch.

In another type of competition, teams test their skills, working individually to score the highest number of goals in one minute. In another skills challenge, the robot is driver-controlled, and in another, the robot is pre-programmed to perform autonomously.

Helberg, Millington, and Becker have practiced together since 9th grade, and each student has his own specialty: Millington drives, Becker builds, and Helberg codes. After Saturday's competition, Millington expressed joy in seeing their creations finally "come to life." He also said loves the challenge of working with teams from other schools. "It's really fun to cooperate with other people you don't know."

The teams practice every day after school, and often on Saturdays, too. With so much time spent together, students learn to work together. Helberg, who loved the challenge of writing code during the competition, said, "It's also just fun to hang out. We're all just good friends."

Thanks to their strong performance in the skills portion of the competition on Saturday, the RU “U” and “H” teams qualified for the NH/ VT Vex Robotics State Championships that will be held at Manchester Community College in New Hampshire on February 17th. Everyone at RU wishes them the best of luck. May the best team – and robot– win!