

Vernonia Robotic Team is Ready to Rumble

By Scott Laird

The Boys and Girls basketball teams weren't the only ones making important baskets at Vernonia High School recently.

The Vernonia Robotics Team 4127 has been busy getting ready to compete in the Oregon FIRST Robotics Regional Competition on March 8-10, 2012 at the Memorial Coliseum in Portland. In mid-February the Vernonia team was doing their final tests and fine tuning their robot in preparation for packing and shipping it on February 21 to the competition.

As part of the competition, the robot the Vernonia team built must put a basketball through a hoop. During testing the robot was very successful.

This is the first year that Vernonia has formed a team to compete in the Oregon FIRST competition. FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Sci-

ence and Technology) seeks to inspire an appreciation of science and technology among young people, ultimately motivating them to pursue opportunities in science, technology and engineering. The FIRST Robotics Competition brings professionals and young people together to solve an engineering design problem

in an intense and competitive way. On Saturday, February 18 several Vernonia students and their mentors were working on their robot, correcting a few bugs, putting together and installing the final parts and practicing their operating and driving skills in preparation for their upcoming competition.

Colleges, universities, corporations, businesses, and individuals provide scholarships to many of the competing teams. This year the Vernonia Team received a \$6,500 grant from NASA and a \$6600 from the Oregon Department of Education to get their program started.

This is the twentieth year that the Oregon FIRST competition has been held. The competition shows students that the technological fields hold many opportunities and that the basic concepts of science, math, engineering, and invention are exciting and interesting.

In Vernonia, the team is made up of fourteen students working under the direction of James Brookins. The team also includes several local mentors who have volunteered their time and professional skills to assist the students in designing and building a working robot.

Mentors include Tim and Michelle Bero with TNW Firearms Inc., Jack Finzel, Jay Anderson and Don Rainbolt who offered fabrication assistance, Jeff Ely and Mitch Seibert who assisted with electronics and computer programming and Brandon Eyrrick.

Brookins also noted, with appre-

ciation, the assistance of the Vernonia Shop Program and instructor Cecil Felas who offered the use of his facilities, technical assistance, and practice space.

Each team receives a basic parts kit at the FIRST Robotics Kickoff event in January and a new, challenging game is introduced. These competitions combine the practical application of science and technology with the fun, intense energy and excitement of a championship-sporting event.

With their kit and challenge in hand the Vernonia Team then had six weeks to design and build a robot capable of completing the tasks assigned as part of the challenge.

According to Tim Bero, the Vernonia Team built much of their robot by hand, using parts fabricated from donated, recycled and scrap metal. They also located surplus recycled electronic parts. "The team saved a lot of money by building their own parts," said Bero. "The kids even designed and built our own clutch."

This year the challenge and competition is called Rebound Rumble which is played by two competing alliances on a flat, 27 x 54 foot field. Each alliance consists of three robots. They compete to score as many basketballs into their hoops as they can during a 2 minute and 15 second match. The higher the hoop in which the basketball is scored, the more points the alliance receives.

The match begins with a 15-second Hybrid Period in which robots operate independently of driver inputs. During this Hybrid Period, one robot on each alliance may be controlled using a Microsoft Kinect. Baskets scored during this period are worth extra points. For the remainder of the match, drivers control robots and try to maximize their al-



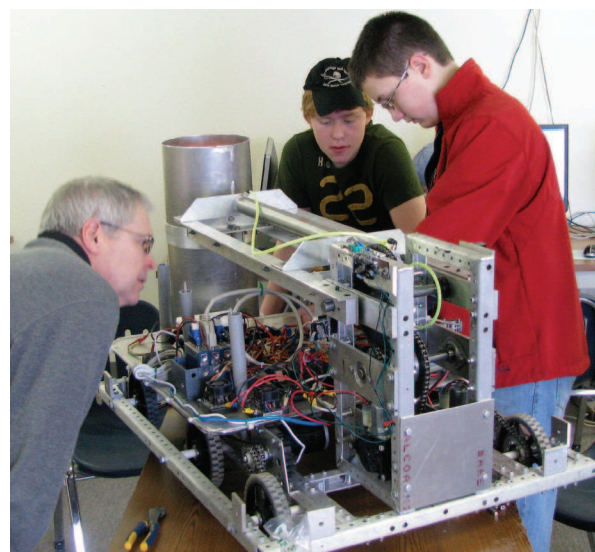
Tim Jennings practices with the Vernonia robot.

liance score by scoring as many baskets as possible. The match ends with robots attempting to balance on bridges located at the middle of the field.

The Vernonia robot is designed to pick up three basketballs at once, move quickly to the basket and drop all three balls through the hoop in quick succession. During their recent practice sessions the robot was operating and handling well. A test of the programming for the Hybrid Period was also successful. The team even had a chance to demonstrate their robot in front of the entire high school at a pep rally for the basketball and wrestling teams. The robot performed to perfection, dropping all three balls through the hoop.

According to Bero, the team used a lot of aluminum and plastic in the design and construction and the robot moves faster than the team expected, in part because it is very light weight.

On March 8-10 the Vernonia Team will head to Memorial Coliseum to see how their robot stacks up against robots from high schools all around the Portland region.



Mitch Seibert (left) assists students Nicky Rainbolt and Jacob Eyrrick with the Vernonia Robot.

VHS Equestrian Team Results

The VHS Equestrian Team had an outstanding start to their season at their first meet in McMinnville in February. Representing Vernonia High School are Brett Benes (senior and fourth year on team), Makayla McCord (freshman and first year on the team) and Chrissy Garrison of Jewell High, (senior and second year on the team).

Top Ten placements were as follows: Break-away roping- Benes 1st place and Garrison 2nd place, Steer daubing- Benes, 3rd place, Canadian Flags team

(Benes, McCord and Garrison) took 5th place. In addition the team placed well in the following events: Team Penning (Benes, McCord and Garrison) -13th place, Two-man birangle (Benes and McCord) 11th place, Working Pairs (McCord and Garrison) 14th place.

In all of their events, the team showed a willingness to work together and have a lot of fun supporting each other as a team.

Coach Diane Benes is excited about the enthusiasm and the unity the kids share for their new season. She feels that they have done a good job so far and is looking forward to what the season holds with their dedication to practicing together as a team. Coach Benes says she would also like to recognize the assistance of Josh Rowlett and Suzanne Talbot with getting the team ready for their upcoming season and providing lots of laughter at practice. Coach Benes would also like to encourage the people of



Makayla McCord, Brett Benes and Chrissy Garrison are the VHS Equestrian team.

Vernonia to come and support their Equestrian team in the upcoming meets held in McMinnville on March 8-11 and April 12-15 at the Yamhill County Fairgrounds.

VHS Alumni Basketball Game
Sat. March 10th 6:00PM

Boys & Girls Varsity vs. Alumni

Last Basketball game in the VHS gym before the building comes down.
Come fill those Logger bleachers one last time, take that last stroll down memory lane.

Tickets:
Adults \$5
6th Grade - High School \$4
K-5th Grade \$3

Raffle, Concessions & Baked Food Table

Sponsored by OSEA Classified Employees of Vernonia School District