

Robotics = (Chairman's Award) 2



Courtesy of www.lelandrobotics.com

At their most recent competition at San Jose State University, the school's robotics team won the prestigious Chairman's Award for the second year in a row and qualified for the national tournament.

BY STEPHANIE YU
Staff Writer

The annual FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) High School Robotics Silicon Valley Regional Competitions took place at San Jose State University between March 13 to March 15.

In the intense period of six weeks given to each competitor before a major tournament, the school's team, Quixilver, worked vigorously to construct its unique robot to compete in the tournament games. Dubbed "FIRST overdrive," these games occur on a 26 by 64-foot field and consist of a combination between NASCAR (National Association for Stock Car Auto Racing) and soccer.

During games, opposing robots score points by pushing "trackballs" of 40 diameters in a counterclockwise direction. Teams whose robots score the most points are declared the winners.

While the dates of March 14 and 15 opened to the public with free admission, only members of the teams attended on March 13. The date was closed to the general public in order to allow teams to organize practice matches as well as complete the finishing touches on their robots.

"We had some complications with the elevator, which lifts the ball during the tournament. It was too stiff and the pieces weren't sliding as easily. But we were able to figure out a way to work around it," Sophomore **Beeta Modaressi** said.

The tournament officially began on March 14 as "seeding" or qualification matches took place between the various teams. These matches paired teams together randomly to compete against other pairs. Schools such as Bellarmine College Prep, Pioneer High School, Lynbrook



Courtesy of Jenny Yang

The robotics team prepared rigorously in the weeks before their most recent competition, staying several hours after school to ensure perfection.

High School and Monta Vista High School, as well as two teams from Mexico and one from Alaska, participated.

Quixilver began with a rough start in the morning, scoring lower points than desired. However, the team soon picked itself back up in a comeback fueled by the determination of the hardworking team members.

"I wasn't very nervous, but I had to really concentrate on not messing up when I was driving the robot," Sophomore **Nick Zafropoulos** said.

March 15 held a continuation of the games as well as the grueling elimination rounds between noon and 5 p.m. In these last rounds, partnership is chosen by two teams rather than selected for them randomly. Eight alliances are created and each team plays another pair for best of two out of three games.

Quixilver, one of the selected teams, played in the eighth seeded alliance. However, the team suffered a defeat in the quarterfinals by the first seeded alliance, who went on to win regionals.

The Awards Ceremony took place after 4:30 p.m., in which the competition presented Quixilver with the Chairman's Award, FIRST's most prestigious prize. It honors the team judged to have created the best partnership effort amongst the team's participants, exemplifying the true meaning of FIRST.

While the award helps maintain the central focus of the FIRST Robotics Competition, inspiring greater levels of respect for cooperation and good sportsmanship, it also qualifies the school's team to advance to nationals. With the prominence of earning the National Chairman's Award last year, the team is steeling itself for an even tougher challenge—winning the National Chairman's Award two years in a row.

"We were really happy with our performance at Silicon Valley. The robot performed great; the team performed even better. But we're looking forward to a competition with 340 teams, so we've got a lot of work cut out for us," Robotics club president Senior **Alejandro Arambula** said.

Correction: A mistake appeared in the previous issue of *The Charger Account* in the article about the school's Robotics Team, Quixilver. Presently, the team has not won the National Chairman's Award; they won the Regional Chairman's Award last year and this year as well. Additionally, the article about the speech and debate team did not mention that Senior **Vivek Musinipally** and Junior **Ryan Kuo** also qualified to Nationals.