

Robotics team from Coventry competes



A statewide robotics competition for high schools brought out Coventry's Robotic team. From left to right John Lomi, Brett LaSorsa, Jason Miech, Rico Falco, Ryan O'Rourke and the coach and school robotics instructor Jaime Cotnoir

Team places fifth in competition

JESSICA SELBY
jselby@ricentral.com

COVENTRY — A team of students from Coventry High School secured a spot in the top five at a statewide annual high school robotics competition last weekend.

The students, members of the Coventry High School Robotics Club, were one of the more than 30 teams to enter in this year's For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology Tech Challenge.

The students had to design a robot for the challenge that would complete a variety of tasks. Ryan O'Rourke, captain for the Coventry team, said that this year's tasks were "quite challenging." For one of the tasks, he said that the robot had to make its way over a see-saw to get to the opposite side of a ramp. In another challenge, the students had to design some

type of claw system for their robot because it had to scoop up a few different objects and hold onto a ball.

"This year, I think, we had the most difficult challenges, but [ironically] we did the best we ever did," O'Rourke said. "I think that it helped that we had a lot of good feedback from all of our members this year, but it still came down to a lot of trial and error.

"We had to test many different ideas, there was a lot of strategy involved, and it did get frustrating at times, but overall, I think we did very well and I was very pleased with how our team did, especially considering we had never driven on the field before."

The field that O'Rourke was referring to was the location that the robot must perform its tasks on. The challenge coordinators design a field and require that the contestants complete the assigned tasks on that field.

Some schools, O'Rourke said, build replica fields to prepare for the big day, but his

school, he said, didn't. They just use the measurements assigned for the field to program their robot and try to imagine the robot performing the tasks on such a landscape.

This approach, he said, can put the Coventry team at a slight disadvantage, but because of cost related expenses, this is the way that the Coventry team practices. The team meets after school and occasionally before school to prepare for the big event.

The team coach, who is also the school's robotics instructor, Jaime Cotnoir, said that the group typically begins meeting at the beginning or the middle of November and continues to do so until the challenge in February. Just before the competition this year, the members decided to beef up their practice times to twice a week, as they often do before a competition.

Cotnoir said that he too was pleased with the outcome of the competition.

"I think that the kids did in-
See COVENTRY, Page A-2

Coventry robotics team places fifth in competition

Continued from Page A-1

credible,” Cotnoir said. “The way it works is that the kids have to compete in several qualifying matches and up until the final round, we were in 5th place.

“Once it gets to that point, the top four teams go on to the final round, but they have what is called the alliance team and the top teams pick two more teams to move on with them to the finals as the alliance team

and even though we were the fifth place team, they didn’t pick us for the alliance team,” Cotnoir said. “That was a little tough to finish fifth and then have teams that finished below us get picked to move on, but that is just the way it works, but I still think that the kids deserve an applaud for how good they did do.”

According to information about the challenge, the goal of the event is to “engage students in order to develop prob-

lem solving, critical thinking, and innovative reasoning skills using a custom-designed robots,” all skills that Cotnoir said he is confident that his students are walking away from this competition with, regardless of where they officially placed in the competition.

The event was held at the New England Institute of Technology Automotive Building in Warwick last weekend on February 5th.