

BH Robotics newsletter



Let It Snow!

January 11, 2010 - Vol 3, Issue 3

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Greetings!

Important Dates:

March 4-6th -- Portland Oregon Regional Competition
March 25-27th - LA Regional Competition
April 15-17th -- Championship in Atlanta

Mock Kick-off!



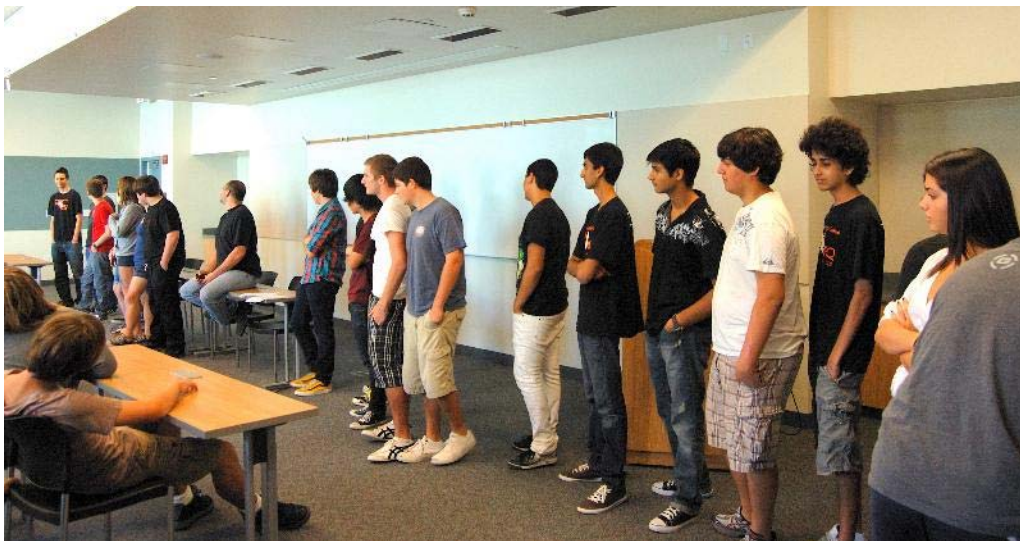
By: Madison Kern and Justin Brezhnev

It's without doubt that preparation is key. With less than a month left until the official kick-off on January 9, it is no wonder that MorTorq, the Beverly Hills High School's Robotic Team, had a mock kickoff on December 3. Both new freshman and veteran members alike participated in this well attended workshop. Matthew Forman, junior, and Evan Friedman, senior, led the meeting by using a previous FIRST competition video and rule book from 2005. After watching the video multiple times in order to fully absorb the context of the game, the attendees split off into groups of four. Each group made a rough sketch of an idea for a robot, planned the strategy they

wished to use during the competition, came up with reasons for certain machine parts, and planned their tactics for the game's "autonomous mode," a time where the robot has to move without the controller. While some groups created defensive robots that moved at high speeds, other teams created offensive robots that had various ranges of motion, robotics arms, and counterweights. Creativity spawned but was checked by the realistic commentary and constructive criticism of the mentors and veteran Mortorq members.

Though it was not our official kick-off, many members found the meeting to be very informative, citing that they came away with a firmer understanding of what is going to happen in January. Samantha Rawlins, a new member to the team said "I thought the meeting really prepared me for my first season on the robotics team. It showed me how many ideas people could think of to solve the same problem. I am hoping for a great season." The importance of this mock-kick off was to push people into the "Mortorq mindset" - more creativity and more ingenuity. With the guidance of the senior members, many of these newcomers enjoyed the thrill of creating intricate robots in a timed setting while bonding with their teammates.

Coming Together



By: Anna
Khananashvili
and Trudy Pham

On Sunday, December 13, BHHS Robotics met to do some team bonding activities and to continue working on Animation, Building, and Business projects. Caitlin Braverman, one

of the directors of Canyon Creek Sports Camp, helped us become closer as a team by guiding us through bonding exercises that also challenged us mentally and allowed us to use our creativity. We started by playing a game that helped us familiarize ourselves with one another and went on to do some teamwork activities. Team members loved the games - Junior and third-year member Stephen Meng said "It was a good way to break the ice and I thought that it was cool how the new recruits interacted with the old members as if they'd been friends forever." Not only veteran members enjoyed and learned from the day's activities: Freshman Eva Zheng was keen on the warm and friendly environment and added "I loved how everybody was included in the games we played today! I go to know a lot of great people and I can't wait for Robotics Season to start so I can work further with them." It was a fun and productive day for Team 1515 at BHHS!

The Programming Wizard

By: Lisa Bahadori

Although Team 1515 is very fortunate to have an abundance of mentors, Leif Bennett is one of its key figures, functioning as the programming mentor to our Beverly family. He is a man who comes to life most when he speaks about his work or his three children. It was so inspiring to speak with someone who realized his dream so early on in his life, with a man who managed to make a successful career out of his lifelong dream.

Leif's mother would often bring him boxes of Lego's from Denmark, a toy that had yet to be released in the U.S. After a childhood filled with toys and exploration, he received a programming book in high school and actually started writing programs although he had neither any prior experience nor a computer. Although years later he would look back and realize that those elementary programs would not work, they stand as a reminder of his childhood passions and



aspirations.

After being accepted to the prestigious Caltech, Leif studied applied physics and would have graduated with a double major, but was one class short of the computer science requirements. Afterwards, he got a programming job at Xerox, where he met his wife, Maria, and helped write programs to debug copiers. Amazingly enough, some of the programs he coded are still in use these ten years later. After twelve years at Xerox, Leif did a bit of freelance work and worked at both Activision and Symantec for a short period of time. Now he is involved with a start-up

company that uses mathematics on electronic communications to discover patterns such as spam and malware. Companies like this can actually use this innovative software to detect who is leaking organization secrets.

On top of an impressive list of accomplishments in the programming world, Leif has also practiced jujitsu since he was eight years old and now teaches the intricate martial art. He has also been a reserve officer for the LAPD for twenty-two years, and is proud to say he was called to duty during the Rodney King incident, a memory he recounts with a solemn voice and excitement in his eyes. He loves outdoor laser tag, as well as travelling the world.

When asked his opinion on our team, he has no other comment but to simply say that we are motivated and hard working, qualities that surely point to victory. His recommendation for the Beverly team is to simply enjoy what you do, and always try your best. His advice not only embodies his own life, but also remains as words of wisdom to Team 1515.

A Warm Welcome



By: Sarah Newman

When I first joined robotics, I felt completely overwhelmed. At my very first meeting, I found out that I was one of nearly 100 other people involved in this program. The other students were all joking around about things that had happened last year, and I felt completely lost. "No one would even have noticed if I wasn't here," I thought. Soon, I learned that my original fearful perceptions about MorTorq Robotics were completely wrong. Everyone has been incredibly supportive and welcoming. I have been on Robotics for only a few months, and I have already made many new friends. Everyone from the jock, to the computer genius, to the class clown is involved in this program. Each person has their own niche based on their individual interests. In addition to the team of people who build the robot, there are many groups of people working on other projects including producing the TV show, organizing donations, working on publicity, designing animations, and an almost unlimited number of other specialized jobs. In addition to fulfilling my original commitment to the building team, I am currently also involved with helping the younger elementary school Lego team, learning about computer animated design (CAD), and now, writing. Robotics has been such a positive experience so far and I cannot wait to continue learning with the rest of Team 1515.

Yes, We Can!



By: Emmanuelle Hodara

MorTorq took third place in this year's Thanksgiving canned food drive. Organized by the service learning class, the "Yes We Can Drive", as our Robotics team called it, was a competition between all the classes at Beverly to collect the most cans. This project was undoubtedly a success, amassing a record number of these food packages for Beverly Hill High School. The

Service Learning Class brought these to The Rescue Union Mission in downtown Los Angeles, where they satisfied more than the shelter's need.

The Thanksgiving Drive was yet another successful community service project undertaken by MorTorq, demonstrating that yes, we can make a difference! Along with our work with the Muscular Dystrophy Association and the Ronald McDonald House Organization, our participation in this school wide event illustrates the fact that Robotics is, indeed, more than just building robots, but is also about being committed to the wellbeing of our community.

Team 1515 appreciates all the support!

Team 1515 is grateful to be supported by so many wonderful people. Our program would not exist without the generosity of our community and our corporate sponsors. Walt Disney Imagineering, The Beverly Hills ROP program, BHEF, and all of our family donors. All are vital to our program.

Special thanks go out to all the families that have supported our team by supplying food for our hungry students.

We also wish to thank the people that give us support financially. Thank you to our major donors who are listed on our website!

Newsletter Edited by Rebecca Stromberg

Visit our website for more information!

BHHS robotics is funded solely by donations, corporate sponsorships and fundraising. All business aspects of the program are run by the Beverly Hills High School ROP Entrepreneurship classes taught by Eileen Kahn. If you are interested in supporting our team either as a mentor or as a financial contributor, please contact Eileen Kahn at eileenkahn@gmail.com.

Sincerely, TEAM 1515, BHHS ROBOTICS

Eileen Kahn

1/19/2011

Gmail - BH Robotics newsletter

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