

Analysis of the Various Factors Influencing the Success of FRC Teams

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Contents

1	Introduction	1
2	Literature Review	1
3	Method	2
3.1	Analysis of individual variables	2
3.1.1	Drivetrain	2
3.1.2	Scoring capability	3
3.1.3	Consistency	3
3.1.4	School budget	4
3.1.5	Team age	4
3.2	Predictive models	4
3.3	Data collection and sources	4
4	Findings	5
5	Analysis	5
6	Conclusion	5
7	Bibliography	5

Abstract

TODO

1 Introduction

FIRST Robotics Competition is a robotics competition in which teams of high schoolers build robots to compete in a game that is different every year.. FIRST is the organization that runs these competitions, and the acronym FIRST stands for “For the Inspiration and

Recognition of Science and Technology.” Each year, FIRST reveals a new game in which alliances of 3 industrial-size robots compete against each other on a field to complete various tasks. Teams have limited time after “Kickoff” (the game reveal) to design, build, wire, and program their robot to perform the tasks required for the game. For example, in this year’s game, CHARGED UP, robots must travel across the field to the Substation Area to pick up one game piece (a cube or a cone) at a time and then travel back to their alliance’s Grid and deposit the pieces onto Nodes.

There are many factors that could have an effect on a team’s success. These include general things about the team, such as the team’s age, its budget, and its size, and also things about their robot in a specific season, such as drivetrain type and scoring capability. The goal of this research is to determine which of these factors have the greatest effect on a team’s success.

2 Literature Review

There is not much work that has been done on this topic. The most relevant paper that I could find was “An analysis of the Success of FRC Robotics Teams” by Max Tepermeister. Tepermeister found that team age had a small amount of correlation with success, while team budget and team size had no correlation with success. However, Tepermeister used OPR (offensive power rating) rather than win rate to measure a team’s success, which means that his results could be different from mine.

3 Method

3.1 Analysis of individual variables

I plan to analyze whether several variables have a significant influence on a team’s success. Only qualification matches will be analyzed because the alliances are random and the data only covers scouting matches. **TODO: ADD MORE HERE (HOW IS SUCCESS MEASURED?)**

3.1.1 Drivetrain

A robot’s drivetrain can have a huge influence on how successful it is. FRC games are typically quite fast-paced, so a better drivetrain can make a huge difference. For most games, the playing field is quite flat, with few obstacles to overcome. This is true of both RAPID REACT and CHARGED UP. In games with few obstacles, teams will typically use some sort of “normal” drivetrain (i.e. one without huge wheels or anything like that). The three main types of drivetrain typically found in FRC are:

1. Differential
2. Mecanum
3. Swerve

A differential drive has normal wheels on the left and right sides of the robot. A Mecanum drive uses Mecanum wheels, which are special wheels with diagonal rollers mounted around the circumference. A robot with a mecanum drivetrain can drive forwards and backwards, similar to a differential drivetrain, but it can also drive sideways by driving specific wheels in specific directions. A swerve drive is another type of drivetrain that can drive in any direction, but unlike the Mecanum drivetrain, the swerve drive achieves this by using two motors for each wheel: one to drive the wheel, and another to steer the wheel. This allows each wheel to be steered independently of the others, which allows for complex maneuvers.

These can be grouped into two categories, namely holonomic (Mecanum and swerve) and non-holonomic (differential). The difference between these two categories is that while a non-holonomic drivetrain constrains a robot to only move forwards and backwards such that it must turn to change its direction of motion, a holonomic drivetrain is free of these constraints.

A differential drive is usually the cheapest, since it requires no special parts. The next cheapest of these three is the Mecanum drive because you only need the 4 wheels and a motor for each. However, one major drawback of a Mecanum drivetrain is that the wheels are more prone to slipping. This means that a robot with a Mecanum drivetrain has a lower maximum acceleration before the wheels start to slip. It also means that in FRC, a robot with a Mecanum drivetrain is very easy to play defense against because a robot with a differential drive or a swerve drive can easily shove it around. Finally, the most expensive, but also the most effective is the swerve drive. The swerve drive combines the lack of slip (and by extension, pushing power) of a differential drivetrain with the flexibility of a holonomic drivetrain. The main drawback of swerve drive is that it can at times be prohibitively expensive, with a single swerve module typically costing upwards of \$300 not even including the motors. This is because they are very complex, with lots of gears and custom machined parts.

To analyze the effect of drivetrain on a team's success, I will perform two inference tests:

1. A two sample difference of means t -test to compare the success of teams using holonomic and non-holonomic drivetrains
2. A one-way ANOVA test to see if the difference in success is any greater if Mecanum and Swerve are not grouped together

3.1.2 Scoring capability

A robot's scoring capability can have a very direct effect on its success. If a robot can only score in locations that give low amounts of points, such as the LOWER HUB in RAPID REACT or the HYBRID NODES in CHARGED UP. Robots that are able to score in locations that give higher amounts of points are obviously going to score more points than robots that can't in almost every situation. From what I've seen, robots built by "good" teams tend to have this capability.

Also, in CHARGED UP, some teams can only score cubes or cones. Many teams can do both, but teams that can only do one could potentially be at a disadvantage.

In the event of a specific robot being a chassis bot (i.e. only a drivetrain, can't score any pieces), the scoring capability will be NA.

To analyze the effect of scoring capability I will do a different set of inference tests for RAPID REACT and for CHARGED UP:

1. For RAPID REACT, I will do a 2-sample difference of means t -test to compare robots that score low against robots that score high.
2. For CHARGED UP, I will do a one-way ANOVA test to see if there is a difference in the success of robots that can only score in the HYBRID NODES, robots that can score in the MIDDLE NODES, and robots that can score in the HIGH NODES. I will also do a 2-sample difference of means t -test to compare the success of robots that can only score one type of game piece against that of those that can score both types.

3.1.3 Consistency

A common characteristic of robots that people would consider “good” is consistency. These robots tend to perform very consistently throughout an event and throughout the season, with the main source of inconsistency being an improvement in the skill of the driver. This will only be analyzed for the Pacific Northwest because the scouting data is the only data source detailing the performance of individual robots.

To analyze the effect of consistency on a robot's success, I will calculate the standard deviation of the change in score between consecutive matches for all of a robot's matches. Then, I will create a linear model using that standard deviation to predict win rate and perform a t -test for slope to see if the relationship is significant.

3.1.4 School budget

A school's budget can have a huge influence on a team's budget, which can in turn influence the team's success by allowing them to use more complex tools, purchase higher-end parts, and go to more events.

To analyze the effect of budget on a robot's success, I will create a model using school budget to predict win rate and perform a t -test for slope to see if the relationship is significant.

3.1.5 Team age

An older team will likely have more advanced techniques and manufacturing processes at its disposal, while a younger team will typically not have these things. Team number is a good proxy to team age because the team numbers are assigned sequentially.

To analyze the effect of a team's age on its success, I will create a model using team age to predict win rate and perform a t -test for slope to see if the relationship is significant.

3.2 Predictive models

After analyzing individual variables, I will create two models:

1. A multiple linear regression model using a combination of the above variables to predict a team's overall win rate
2. A multiple logistic regression model using a combination of the above variables and various metrics from a robot's allies and opponents to predict whether a robot will win a specific match

3.3 Data collection and sources

My data comes from three main sources:

1. Evan Kuykendall's 2023 scouting data from Glacier Peak, Auburn, and the Pacific Northwest District Championship
2. Jake Benjamin's 2022 scouting data from Auburn and the Pacific Northwest District Championship
3. The Blue Alliance

The scouting datasets contain information about each robot in every match that was scouted. An example of something that would be included in the data for 2022 would be number of pieces scored in the UPPER HUB while an example of something that would be included in the data for 2023 would be number of pieces scored in HYBRID NODES. The Blue Alliance only has more general data, such as match results (win/loss). However, it also contains information about who was on what alliance for a specific match. This will be useful for gathering data about alliance members to use in the logistic regression model.

4 Findings

5 Analysis

6 Conclusion

7 Bibliography