

Charging the Competition

Robotics Team Has Resounding Rookie Season

By Alex Fumelli

The very first year of Smithtown High School's robotics team was a successful one to say the least. They captured a division title and placed first in the country in a certain event, they were named All-Star Rookie at the New York City regional, and, by the end of the national championship, they had been rewarded with the tournament's prestigious top rookie award. As described by Mrs. Champey, the Research Coordinator, "We were a force to be reckoned with."

The Mechanical Bulls are one of 999 robotics teams -- 257 of them rookies

-- in the United States and United Kingdom comprising FIRST, a thirteen-year-old organization that hosts regional tournaments throughout the U.S. and a final, culminating championship in Orlando, Florida. It was there that Smithtown was awarded the distinguished Highest Rookie Seed.

The competition itself is unique. Each two-minute match consists of a large field on which two competing robots attempt to place soccer balls into circular goals and position the goals -- as well as the robots themselves -- into particular scoring

zones. The robots must gather, push, and race across the field to earn as many points as possible before time runs out.

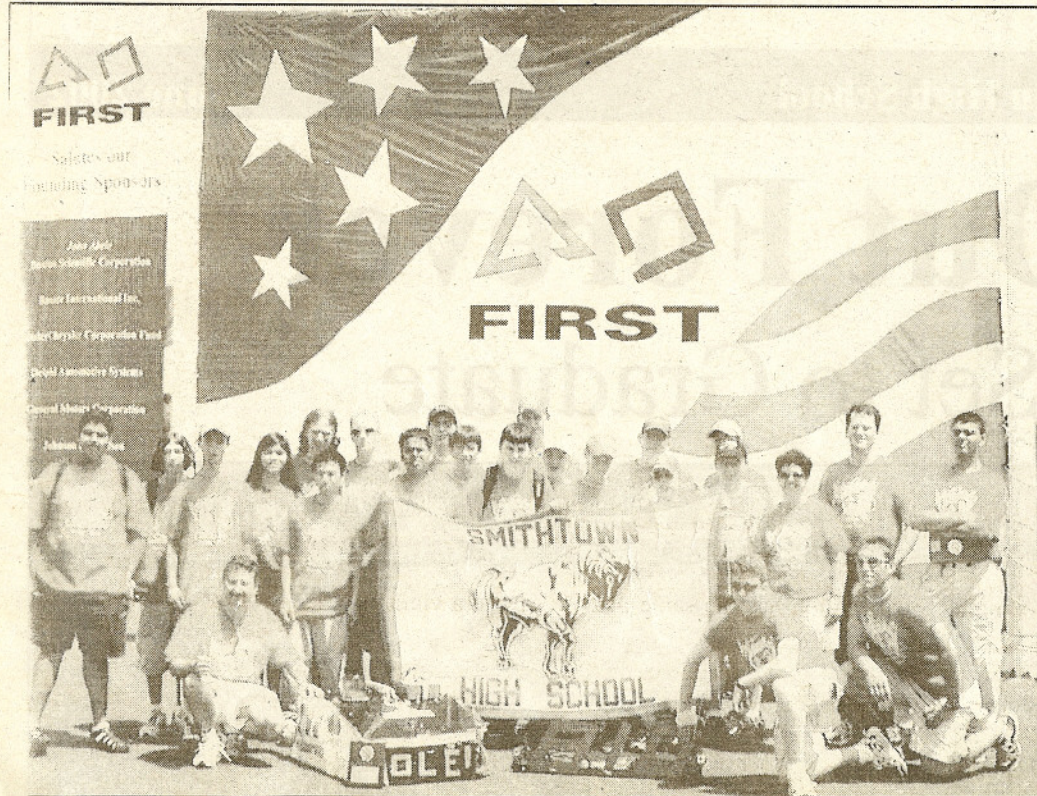
Of course, building a robot to fulfill all these requirements is not an easy task. "At first," said Vice President Kedar Choksey, a senior, "It felt like we weren't getting anywhere, but it's amazing to look and say, 'wow, we actually built that thing.'"

The club's Secretary, sophomore Phil Weiss, also expressed a great deal of pride. "Seeing what we did in our first year compared to other first year teams, we really did a phenomenal job, and it's

all because we had so much support."

This support includes Technology Coordinator Mr. Dennis, Finance Coordinator Mrs. LoFrese, Marketing Coordinator Mr. Aleci, and seniors Amy Ho and Rich Muscolino, the team's Treasurer and President.

The team, which normally meets daily after school in the Freshman Campus Tech Room and once a week after "building season," is sure to be a major contender in next year's competitions. Though this year's achievements were well beyond expectation, the Mechanical Bulls insist not to expect anything less in 2003.



The Mechanical Bulls (left) show off their prize-winning robot after receiving a remarkable series of honors. The robot (below) is the first entered by Smithtown.

