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Robotics competition draws 22 teams

Entrants from area high schools earn points based on robots' performance

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POCATELLO — Twenty-two teams from three area high schools competed in the finals at the VEX Robot challenge Tuesday at Pocatello High School.

The event was sponsored by Haywire Robotics Team 1569. Team member Kevin Housley, 18, said the team sponsored the annual high school physics competition for the past three years as a precursor to the FIRST Robotics competition. Team 1569 will compete in the event in Portland, Ore., in March.

During the FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) competition, the team will design and build a 159-pound robot —the VEX machines were scaled down versions.

The VEX robots, constructed from kits, were limited to 12-inch, by 12-inch, by 12-inch models.

"They have to fit inside a preset box," said Pocatello High School physics teacher Mark Edwards.

Edwards said teams received awards for championship performance, best design, best teamwork and the most improved robots.

Teams from Marsh Valley, Pocatello and Century High Schools earned points by successfully pushing, scooping and lifting ping pong balls and then returning to their designated corner.

Pocatello High School art teacher Bob Beason announced the competition and said teams had a good time with the physics project.

James Boyd, 16, from Marsh Valley High, said the competition was, at times, frustrating.

"Especially when your robot falls apart," he said.

Boyd said the entire class collaborated on the project.

One robot, equipped with a plastic bucket, picked up the balls after pushing them to the wall. A second Marsh valley robot had a built in flexible scoop.



Tom Delehanty, 17, left, and Cory Labrum, 16, compete in the VEX Robotics competition Tuesday evening at Pocatello High School. **DEBBIE BRYCE / IDAHO STATE JOURNAL**