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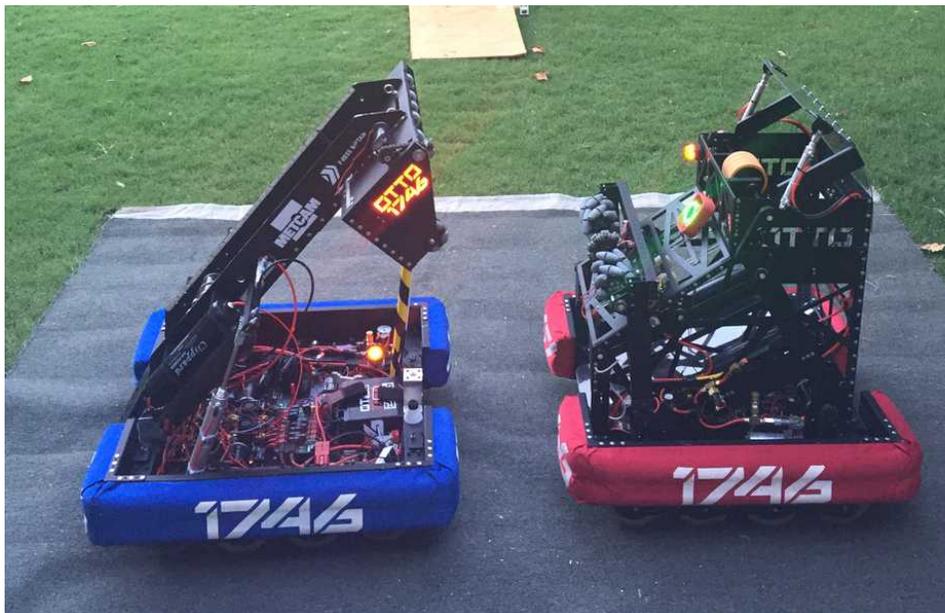
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Forsyth Central robotics team takes tall strides

Attended invitational competition over summer

By Kelly Whitmire
Staff Writer kwhitmire@forsythnews.com

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A local team was invited to a big competition this summer.

In July, six students from Forsyth Central High School competed in the Indiana Robotics Invitational, a prestigious competition for high school students held by FIRST Robotics Competition, or FRC.

Coach Jonathan Lillie said Central's team — Team OTTO, named for sponsor Automation Direct — was one of 70 teams chosen to compete, though twice as many entered.

"They took in over 140 applications and these people that actually apply to the tournament are

seasoned veteran teams. The best in North America is probably the best description. We have teams from Mexico and Canada that apply," Lillie said.

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The team was made up of seniors Reese Mitchell and Derek Comella, juniors Michael Aguilar, Christian Scanlon and Cooper Meitz and sophomore Kyle Roe.

Lillie said the team had never been to the competition, which began in 2000, though it was rare for teams in the state to be selected.

"We're only the second team in Georgia history to go," he said. "It's the deepest field of robots for the FRC competition."

Many robotics competitions judge teams based on their robot's ability to toss a ball in a net or container, but the invitational added extra elements.

"It's a medieval setting. It's called 'Stronghold,'" he said. "You're crossing over defenses that are on the ground, so you need to build a drive system that is going to be able to cross the different defenses, little functional arms that might help you get over stuff or maybe help your bot get so low it can move under things."

Lillie said the team had to do significant work to the robot prior to the competition.

"They redesigned their robot, the top part of their robot, over the summer," he said. "During the regular season we had a low goal bot ... over the summer they designed a high goal shooter after having gone to world's last year."

Included in that was adding camera tracking to help reach the higher goals.

The team also designed the body of the robot and had it sent to local fabricator MetCam Inc., another sponsor, who cut and powder-coated the sheet metal.

Lillie said the redesign might be the most important lesson for the students.

"They really got the best benefit out of redesigning the bot," he said. "They understand they might have been able to do better had they had time to test the new robot, but they did very well considering it was a brand new robot and performed better than half the teams that were there, and they were quality teams."

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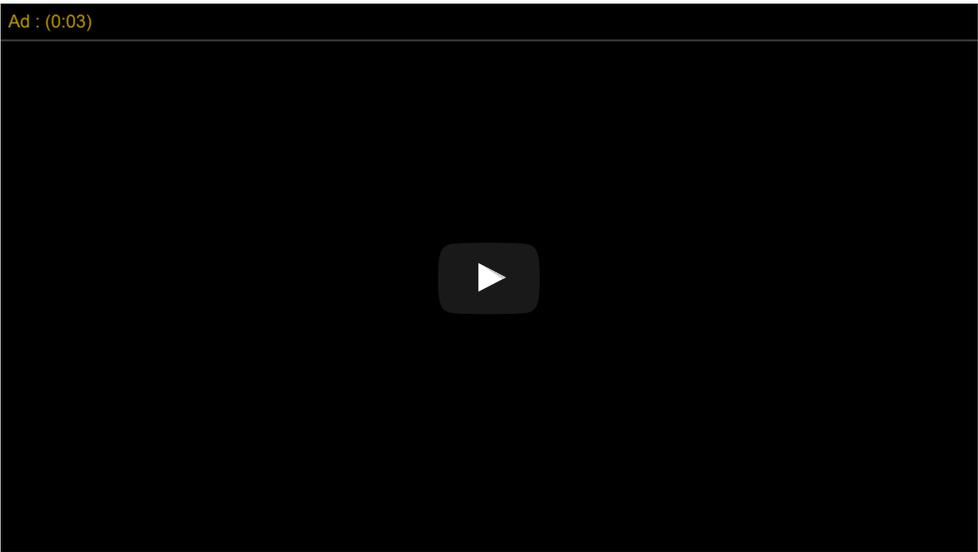


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