

Students Win Robotics Basketball Tournament

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Student-build robots compete in FIRST's regional basketball tournament. Image credit: NASA/JPL

It may not be the final four, but it's definitely an exciting time for some Southern California high school students who won a regional game of robotics basketball. Now they're heading to the finals in the FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) competition next month.

The students and their customized robots, with precision parts and shooting capabilities, defeated 47 other teams during the regional competition held this past weekend at the Great Western Forum in Inglewood, Calif. About 20 engineers from NASA's Jet Propulsion

Laboratory, Pasadena, Calif., helped students in building the robots and provided technical advice during the competition.

"These students built some amazing robots that could compete in a game that combines the elements of basketball, soccer and rugby," said Brian Muirhead, JPL's chief engineer and a judge at the competition. "This was a wonderful opportunity for students who are interested in engineering and science to work with mentors and a team to accomplish something extraordinary they will treasure their entire lives."

The competition was one of 30 regional contests held around the country. More than 340 teams from around the world will next compete in the national robotics competition at the Georgia Dome in Atlanta, April 27 through 29. The championship team alliance, made up of three teams, will work together in the national competition. The team includes West Covina High School, High Tech High School in Los Angeles, and Chaminade College Preparatory in West Hills.

FIRST is a non-profit organization whose mission is to generate an interest in science and technology. Dave Lavery, NASA's Program Executive for Solar System Exploration, is also in charge of NASA's involvement with the FIRST robotics competition.

"NASA and JPL are involved in FIRST because we believe in investing in the future," Lavery said. "These students are the scientists, engineers and technologists who are going to drive the economy for the next several decades."

JPL/NASA-sponsored teams also earned several awards at the regional competition:

Regional finalists included:

- Hope Chapel Academy, Hermosa Beach

- Granada Hills Charter High School
- Mark Keppel High School, Alhambra

Judges Award:

Imperial Valley MESA Program, El Centro

Industrial Design Award:

Granada Hills Charter High School

Rookie All-Star:

Don Pueblos High School, Goleta

More information about the competition is available online at

<http://www.usfirst.org/>

Source: NASA

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