



KISS Institute for Practical Robotics
1818 W. Lindsey, Bldg D, Ste 100
Norman, OK 73069
t. (405) 579-4609 f. (405) 329-4664
info@kipr.org

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CONTACT:
Outreach Coordinator
KISS Institute for Practical Robotics
outreach@kipr.org
(405) 579-4609

BOTBALL ROBOTICS COMPETITION: ROBOTS THAT DON'T NEED REMOTE CONTROL

Botball Educational Robotics Program teaches Science, Technology, Engineering, Computer Programming, and Math through Robotics

Oklahoma City, OK - February 28, 2009 - 36 middle and high school robotics teams from around the region (including 26 from Oklahoma) participated in the 10th Annual Oklahoma Botball Educational Robotics Tournament at the Science Museum Oklahoma. Botball is an international program of the KISS Institute for Practical Robotics, a nonprofit organization based in Oklahoma. The Botball Educational Robotics Program engages middle and high school aged students in a team-oriented robotics competition, developing students' skills in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM), as well as project management and the fine art of working together as a team.

Melissa Maynarich from Channel 9 emceed the Botball Tournament, with a loud, enthusiastic crowd cheering the teams on. Several legislators attended and spent time interacting with the students.

Whittier Middle School Boys Team, from Norman were the overall champions, receiving the highest combined score from Seeding Rounds, Double Elimination, Documentation, and On-site Presentations. In the Double Elimination Rounds, Oklahoma teams swept the top 4 spots, with Whittier Boys Team in first place, followed closely by Whittier Middle School Girls Team, Southwest Covenant High School, and Alcott Middle School. Norman High School won the KISS Trophy for a very simple but unique approach to programming. Other awards that went to Oklahoma teams were: Outstanding Middle School: Whittier Middle School, Best Rookie Team: Howe Public Schools, Most Effective Strategy: Alcott Middle School, Outstanding Spirit: Moore West Jr. High School, Overcoming Obstacles Award: Haileyville High School, Quick Learning Award: Dimensions Academy, ACE Award and Best Approach to Conquering Windmills: Southwest Covenant Schools, Best Defense: Whittier Middle School Girls Team.

Botball teams consist of 5-20 middle and high school aged students who learn how to design, create and program two autonomous (no remote control) robots to address this year's game based on the theme of "Alternative Energy". What was the hardest part of the challenge? "It takes A LOT of teamwork!" exclaimed a young man from Davenport High School. Others agreed. One girl on the Dimensions Academy Team stated

that she was most proud that "we all worked together - even when our programmer didn't show up today. Non-programmers had to learn fast!"

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Team leaders and student participants began their 2009 season at the Botball Educators Professional Development Workshop on January 9-10, 2009 at the University of Oklahoma. During this two-day professional development workshop, teams received their reusable robotics kit. Each kit contains enough to create at least two original robots. This equipment will be used for competition and can be integrated into the classroom. This ensures that schools will be able to continue to grow their science, math and technology curricula through robotics after the Botball season is over.

KISS Institute for Practical Robotics, an Oklahoma based nonprofit organization, will present 14 Botball Workshops and Tournaments this year - 12 in the United States and 2 based internationally. All teams who participate in their regional workshop and tournament, regardless of how they place in their competition, are eligible to participate in the International Botball Tournament taking place this summer in Leesburg, VA, during the Global Conference on Educational Robotics on July 1-5, 2009.

Over 6,000 students participate in Botball every year and more than 50,000 have competed worldwide over the course of 13 years. In 2009, teams from 23 states and 6 countries will participate in Botball.

Why is it important for young people to know how to do computer programming? "Getting students programming early is crucial if we want to have better software. Botball Programming in the C programming language is not like using an Email or Word program, which has already been created. These students are learning how to design the software we'll be using in ten to twenty years." said Cathryne Stein, President of the KISS Institute for Practical Robotics. KISS stands for the old engineering term, "Keep it Simple, Stupid."

For more information about Botball in Oklahoma, go to: www.botball.org/oklahoma or contact: info@kipr.org.

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The Oklahoma Regional Botball Program is sponsored in part by: NASA Robotics Alliance Project, Solidworks Corporation, Innovation First, Incorporated, iRobot, igus, inc., the University of Oklahoma, the Oklahoma Aeronautics Commission and BancFirst. Venue Sponsor: Leader Communications, Incorporated.

2009 Oklahoma Regional Botball Tournament Teams

Alcott Middle School, Norman, OK
Arkansas School for Mathematics, Sciences and the Arts, Hot Springs, AR
Canadian Public School, Canadian, OK
Cheyenne High School, Cheyenne, OK
Davenport High School, Davenport, OK
Dewitt Perry Middle School, Carrollton, TX (2 teams)
Dimensions Academy, Norman, OK
Eastern Plains Education Enrichment Program, San Jon, NM
Edison Preparatory School, Tulsa, OK
Edmond North High School, Edmond, OK
Emerson High School, Oklahoma City, OK
Fort Gibson High School, Fort Gibson, OK
Glenpool Alternative Program, Glenpool, OK
Gracemont High School, Gracemont, OK
Haileyville Public School, Haileyville, OK
Howe Public School, Howe, OK
Irving Middle School, Norman, OK
Kingston Robotics, Kingston, OK
Longfellow Middle School, Norman, OK
Los Lunas Middle School, Los Lunas, NM
Moore West Junior High School, Moore, OK
Mounds High School, Mounds, OK
Newman Smith High School, Carrollton, TX
Norman High School, Norman, OK
RL Turner High School, Carrollton, TX
Robo Rappas, Hot Springs, AR
Southeast High School, Oklahoma City, OK
Southwest Covenant High School, Yukon, OK (2 teams)
Wayne Public School, Wayne, OK
Western Heights High School, Oklahoma City, OK
Westmoore High School, Oklahoma City, OK
Whittier Middle School, Norman, OK (2 teams)
Yellowjacket Academy, Kingfisher, OK