

## **Code Red Robotics Headed to Competition**

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Ithaca High School's FIRST Robotics Team 639, Code Red Robotics, is headed to its two 2013-14 season competitions. First is the Buckeye Regional competition in Cleveland, Ohio, where the team will defend its 2013 championship title from March 20 – 22. One week later, the team will participate in the Finger Lakes Regional at the Gordon Field House of Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) Campus, March 27 – 29.

FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) is an organization committed to educating and motivating the next generation of engineers, scientists, and leaders. FRC (FIRST Robotics Competition), to which Code Red belongs, is the highest level of a number of programs, all designed to introduce students of all ages to science and technology.

The team has been preparing for these competitions for the past four months. Six of those weeks comprise Code Red's "build season", the time frame in which FIRST teams consider the game challenge and then design, prototype, and fabricate the robot. This year's robot, named The Red Hippo, was packed away and ready to ship out to competition a few weeks ago, and is promising to be a successful contender in this year's game challenge: Aerial Assist.

Aerial Assist is a game that revolves around the use of two feet diameter, inflatable "exercise balls". Each team creates a robot that can successfully shoot balls into two targets – one just off the floor, and one about seven feet high. The higher the target, the more points awarded to the team. The team can also gain points if the robot can either pass the ball between alliance partners or over an approximately six feet high truss which spans the center of the field. The match goes for two minutes and 30 seconds. The first ten seconds of the match are known as the autonomous period, where the robot functions only on pre-programmed instructions.

Teams at FIRST competitions compete in randomly picked alliances of three. After playing in a series of qualification matches, each team is ranked based on the number of points scored and number of matches won. The top eight teams then choose their alliance partners for the elimination matches, played in a tournament style.

"It's the most stressful, infuriating, exhausting, and greatest weekend of my life," says Wade Engelhart, a Code Red Senior and four year veteran.

Over 40 teams come with their robots, team members, and mentors. Each member is clad in their team's apparel, not to mention striking dyed hairstyles, costumes, and buttons. There is a constant buzz of energy and excitement as thousands of people file into and around the stadium. "We see our work pay off as we compete as hard as we can," says team President Rishi Verma. Directly adjacent to the competition fields lie the pits, the area where teams have a small space in which to make adjustments to their robots. Students and mentors are not only working on their own robots, but also interacting with members from other teams. The pits are teeming with a wide variety of people with similar interests and goals, but different ways of achieving those goals.

A key facet of FIRST is Gracious Professionalism. Each team is encouraged to emulate sportsmanship and support of their opponents. Code Red has made extra efforts to reflect the ideal of Gracious Professionalism. At past competitions, Ithaca High students have helped other teams fix their robots, shared spare parts, and

offered guidance for a team in distress.

Code Red has done well at past competitions. In 2004, 2005, and 2013, Code Red won Regional Competitions. In 2012, the team had the honor of receiving the Engineering Inspiration Award at the Finger Lakes Regional, an award that qualified them to attend the World Championships in St. Louis. The team also attended Worlds last year, after winning the Buckeye Regional.

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