



Megan Stacey/Sentinel-Review

Chris Beimers, a member of the College Avenue Secondary School robotics team, starts up the robot for the judges at the Oxford Invitational Youth Robotics Competition on Nov. 24.

Battle of the 'bots

Students from Oxford County and nearby regions compete at the 10th annual Oxford Invitational Youth Robotics Competition

Megan Stacey
Sentinel-Review

It was all about the robots.

The 10th annual Oxford Invitational Youth Robotics Competition took place on Nov. 24 at Goff Hall, with more than a dozen schools competing for the top prize as best robot-builder.

Teams came from Dorchester, Aylmer, Waterloo, and all across Oxford County.

"A lot of the teams are pretty serious. They're into this. There's a little bit of apprehension as to whether it's actually going to execute properly," said competition co-chair Ian Heikoop before the judging began.

"There's a lot of last minute adjustments and tweaks going on. They're intense."

Rehoboth Christian School in Norwich sent two teams, one with students in Grade 9, and the other with Grade 10 students.

The younger team said they tested three different robot designs before settling on the last one. They've been working on the robot since October.

"We did at least two hours after school every day during that first week," said Steven Byl.

The task was to design a robot from a kit, and program it to match small coloured cubes with a matching coloured hockey puck.

"Last night we tried to figure out the sensor, we started at 7 (p.m.) and stayed up until 11:30 (p.m.)," added Mark Van Lagen.

Heikoop said it was one of the most difficult projects he's seen during the past decade with the

competition.

"The challenge this year is probably the toughest we've had in the 10 years we've been doing this," he told students, teachers and parents before the judging began.

"It might look like a simple task, but there's some very complex programming that's required to get it to execute properly."

Since the challenge was so tricky, many of the teams built a machine that could match one or two of the blocks with their pucks, but not all three.

Heikoop wanted those groups to know their work was still very impressive.

"You might feel a little bad if your robot doesn't do exactly what the task was," he said.

"But I want to congratulate you for taking on the challenge and showing up today."

Students gain so much by working with a team to build the robot and test it at the challenge, Heikoop said.

"It exposes them to robotics...some really thrive in the challenge, and to them, it opens up new horizons of career possibilities. And they're right here in Oxford County."

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(from left to right) Annette Vriendts, David Coad, Bill Mackesy, Jeff Workman, David Wilton, Scott Lawrence

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