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FIRST UNVEILS NEW GAME AT 2008 FIRST ROBOTICS COMPETITION KICKOFF

Life-changing program inspires young people to pursue opportunities in science and technology

Over 37,500 High-school Students to Compete in 41 Regional Events

Manchester, NH, January 5, 2008 – *FIRST* (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) launched its seventeenth *FIRST* Robotics Competition season today with a Kickoff at Southern New Hampshire University in Manchester, NH, hometown and headquarters of *FIRST*. The *FIRST* Robotics Competition is an annual competition that helps students discover the rewards and excitement of science, engineering, and technology. Over 37,500 high-school students on more than 1,500 teams from Brazil, Canada, Chile, Israel, Mexico, the Netherlands, the U.K., and every state in the U.S. are participating in this year's competition.

At the Kickoff, all teams were shown this year's game field for the first time and received a common kit of parts made up of motors, batteries, a control system, and a mix of automation components – but no instructions. Working with mentors, students now have just six weeks to design, build, and test their robots to meet the season's engineering challenge. Once these young inventors create the robot, their teams participate in regional competitions that measure the effectiveness of each robot, the power of collaboration, and the determination of students.

In this year's game, "*FIRST* Overdrive," students' robots are designed to race around a track knocking down 40" inflated Trackballs and moving them around the track, passing them either over or under a 6'6" overpass. Extra points are scored by robots positioning the Trackballs back on the overpass before the end of the 2 minute and 15 second match.

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Teams across the nation and in Brazil, Canada, and Israel watched the Manchester Kickoff proceedings via NASA TV broadcast or Web cast from 49 local kickoff sites, many of which also offered workshops and a chance to meet other teams. The Kickoff agenda included presentations by *FIRST* founder Dean Kamen; New Hampshire Governor John Lynch; *FIRST* advisor Dr. Woodie Flowers; *FIRST* chairman John Abele; *FIRST* president Paul Gudonis; and NASA program executive Dave Lavery.

In 1992, the *FIRST* Robotics Competition began with 28 teams and a single 14 x 14 foot playing field in a New Hampshire high school gym. This season, more than 1,500 teams – including a record 316 rookie teams – will participate. Forty-one regional competitions will lead up to the 2008 *FIRST* Championship at the Georgia Dome in Atlanta, April 17-19.

Since its beginning, *FIRST* has had a positive impact on students and academic communities. Research has shown that *FIRST* has significantly improved students' attitudes about math and science and has fostered a culture of teamwork, leadership, and self-confidence. FRC participants are eligible to apply for over \$9.5 million in scholarships from leading universities, colleges, and companies. In addition, interest in internship and employment opportunities with sponsoring companies has increased.

To find *FIRST* Robotics Competition events and teams in your area, visit www.usfirst.org and click on the map in the top right corner.

About *FIRST*

Accomplished inventor Dean Kamen founded *FIRST* (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) in 1989 to inspire an appreciation of science and technology in young people. Based in Manchester, N.H., *FIRST* designs accessible, innovative programs to build self-confidence, knowledge, and life skills while motivating young people to pursue opportunities in science, technology, and engineering. With the support of many of the world's most well-known companies, the not-for-profit organization hosts the *FIRST* Robotics Competition and *FIRST* Tech Challenge for high-school students, the *FIRST* LEGO[®] League for children 9-14 years old, and the Junior *FIRST* LEGO League for 6 to 9 year-olds. To learn more about *FIRST*, go to www.usfirst.org.

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