



## Reprint of Article from Newspaper

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Building better robots

*Tech High reaches semifinals in Silicon Valley robotics competition*

By Nicolas Grizzle



Alex Richter, center, of Tech High's Robotics Club works on "Gloria Machina" earlier this year in preparation for the club's two competitions, including one this weekend.

Though Tech High freshman will not be allowed to participate in Rancho Cotate sports beginning next year, there's another activity that may replace it: Robotics.

**Tech High Robotics # 675** Technology High School Sonoma State University - Salazar Hall  
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"Our robotics team is the equivalent of our football team," said Catherine Fautley, proud mother of Paloma Fautley, sophomore, whose primary job, she says, is safety captain. She also is involved in the construction of the robot. "Our robotics team is one of the things that sets Tech High apart (from other schools)."

The club's advisor, Greg Weaver, doesn't think the robotics club will become more popular just because sports won't be an option anymore, but that it will get more popular because it is getting better.

"We've got the strongest, most robust robot that we've ever had," he said about this year's competing robot. With only three seniors in the club, most of the over 40 students will return next year. In the seven years of the club, Weaver says each year's robot has been better than the last, because, in part, each year's team tries to "build a better robot."

The Tech High Phantoms competed March 15-17 at San Jose State University in the FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) Silicon Valley regional competition. The team did well, winning their way to the semi-final round. They were even asked to join a top-seeded team (yes, they rank the robotics teams) to join their alliance in the double-elimination competition.

Gloria Machina, which translates roughly from latin to "glory to the machine," was built to pick up small, round inflatables, similar to mini inner tubes, and move them to a certain location on the course.

It also has a platform, which folded out into a ramp with a long bed. This was for bonus points given for lifting alliance robots off the ground at the end of each round.

Forty-eight teams from Hawaii to Massachusetts came to this year's competition in San Jose.

Tech High's robotics team began Thursday in the Davis Sacramento regional competition at UC Davis, finishing up this weekend.

The competition is announced by FIRST in January each year, and teams have six weeks to design, build and test their robot before shipping it to the site. The competition "challenges teams of young people and their mentors to solve a common problem in a six-week time frame using a standard kit of parts and a common set of rules," according to the organization's Web site. The rules of the competition are a surprise to the teams each year.

This year's team included groups dedicated to chassis, electronics, pneumatics, drivetrain, payload, fundraising, programming, Web site and animation. Not everybody went to the competitions, but they all contributed. Weaver said Tech High's is the only competitive high school robotics team he knows of in the North Bay.

A pasta feed fundraiser for the club is coming up April 27 at Rancho Cotate High School's multi-use room. Call the school at 792-4825 for more information.

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