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A.W. Beattie's FIRST Robotics team earns award at regionals

The March Madness of high school robotics competitions kicked off Friday and Saturday at the California University of Pennsylvania, and A.W. Beattie took home the Industrial Design Award.

This is the first time A.W. Beattie has earned the award in 13 years of regional FIRST Robotics competition. A.W. Beattie, which sent 17 students from its to the competition, beat out 44 other schools for the award.

"Off the bat when we were first building it, I didn't really think about winning an award, so I'm really proud of this," junior Dawson Skelley said. "We just wanted to build the best robot we could, and I'm happy that we did our best. It definitely made everything we put into it worthwhile."

The FIRST Robotics Industrial Design honor is awarded to the team that best designs and builds a robot with elegance, efficiency and practicality. Other factors like the reliability, maintainability and the machine's system functionality are considered by a panel of judges.

"Last year, we tried to do a little bit too much in too little time," Deer Lakes senior Dom Miller said. "We simplified it a lot, and this year we wanted to push for greater success. We knew with this robot we could do that."

The FIRST Robotics team has made incredible progress in the last year.

"We've had so much growth in numbers and experience," Miller said. "We had 8 kids last year and close to 20 this year. There's a lot of younger, skilled students on our team, and I feel like they're going to continue to do pretty good."

The team largely consisted of participating students from A.W. Beattie's Engineering Design and Robotics Manufacturing, Advanced Computer Programming, Computer Systems Technology and Building Construction programs.

Students in FIRST Robotics logged more than 1,100 hours in research and development of the robot, an experience that Skelley said has given him the foundation for his future.

"Our robotics class and FIRST is allowing me to pursue the career path I desire," Skelley said. "Me personally? I want to be a biomedical engineer and a mechanical engineer. This class helps me progress toward doing that. FIRST also helps you really learn how to be a part of a team."

Miller believes his experience in FIRST Robotics will give him job and college options after high school.

"This is one of the best ways my experience could have ended in FIRST," Miller said. "Would we like to place higher? Yeah, but with how we did and this award, I'm happy. I hope being in FIRST will help me with job placement. This is a pretty well-known competition, and it's really good for job placement and scholarships."

Team members who competed at regionals were:

SENIORS

Dom Miller

DEER LAKES

Peter Millhoff	NORTHGATE
Josh Karkaria	HAMPTON
Alex Mekovsky	HAMPTON
Benjamin Zou	NORTH ALLEGHENY

JUNIORS

Benjamin Marcouiller	HAMPTON
Marvin Posadas	HAMPTON
Dawson Skelley	SHALER (Homeschool)
Sanjay Johnson	HAMPTON

SOPHOMORES

Taylor Blair	HAMPTON
Max Romano	PINE-RICHLAND
Aakash Kottakota	PINE-RICHLAND
Logan Husek	NORTH ALLEGHENY
Ming Chen	NORTH ALLEGHENY

FRESHMEN

Ella Graham	DEER LAKES
Sabastian Pike	NORTH HILLS
Brayden Devinney	PINE-RICHLAND

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