

## Wins Regional Competition

# GM's FIRST Robotics Team Is Red HOT

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Tech Center News

In what can only be described as a topsy-turvey day inside Eastern Michigan University's Convocation Center, FIRST Team 67 from GM's Milford Proving Ground rallied to capture a berth in the robotics competition's national meet in Houston.

"We've won before with skill alone and then we've won with skill and luck. This time it was all luck," said Dave Verbrugge, a Milford project design engineer and advisor for Team 67, also known as HOT, or Heroes of Tomorrow.

"I think we cashed in all of our luck on this one," he laughed.

Hundreds of students gathered on March 22 in Ypsilanti for the spirited FIRST regional competition, which is a showcase of the engineering and technical talent of young people from around the country.

FIRST is a national engineering contest that immerses high school students in the exciting world of engineering. Teaming up with engineers from businesses and universi-

ties, students get a hands-on, inside look at engineering and technical professions.

In six intense weeks, students and engineers' work together to brainstorm, design, construct and test their "champion robot."

Competitions are spirited, no-holds-barred tournaments complete with referees, cheerleaders and time clocks.

Sixty-eight teams, mostly from Michigan battled in Ypsilanti for a chance to go to the Houston nationals on April 11-12, known among competitors as the Super Bowl of FIRST events. More than 20,000 students will gather for the competition, held at Reliant Park, home to the 2004 Super Bowl.

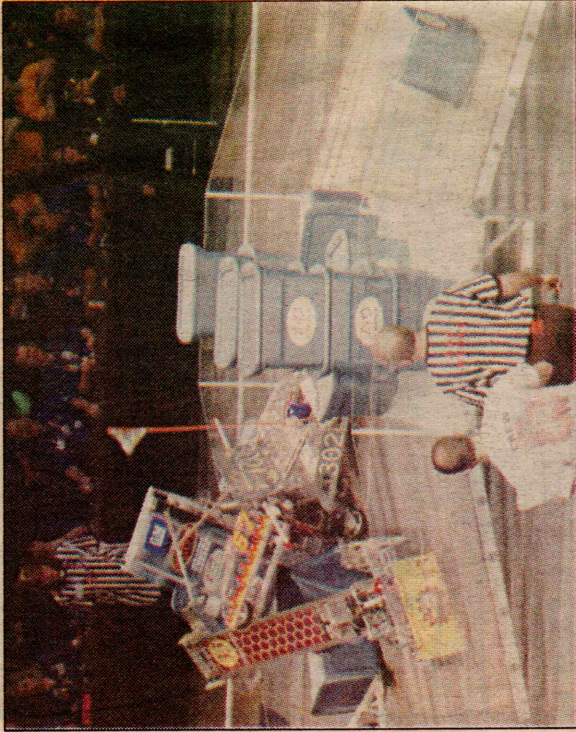
One of the more successful FIRST teams in the nation, HOT

includes students from Huron Valley Schools and engineers and technicians from the Milford Proving Ground.

HOT's competitive record is impressive, but in the true spirit of FIRST, it took help from rival teams 226 GM CRW/Craft Line Inc. Troy/Athens High Schools, and

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**THE GM MILFORD** Proving Ground FIRST team, known as HOT (for Heroes of Tomorrow), repeated as champs of the Great Lakes regional robotics competition on March 22.





# ROBOTICS

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Team 302 DaimlerChrysler-Lake Orion High School for Milford to repeat as Great Lakes champs. Verbrugge said HOT got off to a slow start in qualifying competition on Friday and fell into 40th place, but the DCX-Lake Orion team selected Milford as an alliance partner for Saturday.

DCX also chose GM-Troy because the skills sets of the three teams matched up well.

"We each know each other very well. In fact, last year we picked the Chrysler team for our alliance," Verbrugge said.

In FIRST matches, teams work together in alliances against other alliances.

This year's game involved stacking storage containers and jockeying for position on an elevated playing field. With four robots working in the arena at the same time, pushing, shoving and physical contact between the robots was the name of the game.

Interestingly, the HOT team realized at a Cleveland regional earlier this year that the physical nature of this year's game caused a lot of the robots to tip over.

So Ypsilanti HOT made a few modifications that basically provided their robot with a "wheely-bar" to right itself in case it were to fall.

While it didn't help much on

Friday, it was a big reason Chrysler-Lake Orion chose HOT for the alliance. Ironically, GM-Troy had a similar wheely-bar set-up, too.

The Saturday competition included its share of excitement, as HOT performed well in the quarterfinal matches; received a friendly "bump" across the finish line from Chrysler-Lake Orion to get into the semifinals; and then watched as its alliance partners overcame a 60-point deficit in the finals to provide the title. The three teams share the Great Lakes championship, which has grown into a "very healthy regional," Verbrugge said.

The next competition for the teams is the West Michigan Regional on April 4 -5, a slightly smaller event where teams see lots of action and prepare for nationals.

HOT is hoping to head to Houston with a head of steam.

"We're optimistic," Berbrugge said.

FIRST partnerships developed between schools, businesses, and universities provide an exchange of resources and talent, highlighting mutual needs, building cooperation, and exposing students to new career choices. The result is a fun environment in which participants discover connections between classroom and real world applications.