

‘Get Smart’ getting ready for another round of robotics

By TONY BRITT

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Working with tools such as shooters, sweepers and controllers isn't rocket science, but it's pretty sophisticated stuff. The Columbia High School robotics team, Get Smart, has matters well in hand, however. It's the middle of building season as team members construct a robot to compete in the FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) Robotics Competition. The contest will take place March 8-10 at the University of Central Florida in Orlando. In this year's contest, called "Rebound Rumble," teams are tasked with constructing and operating robots that will shoot basket- balls into hoops. More than 60 teams from around the country are slated to compete. In preparation for the contest, the 25 members of Get Smart were broken into small groups to handle specific

tasks, including building, programming and using computer aided design in the robot's construction.

The students already have 20 days, roughly 100 hours, invested in the project.

Haley Lewis, team captain, said she is excited about preparing for this year's competition.

"I'm so excited to see how our new team will handle the competition," she said. "Last year all of us were rookies and now this year some of us have that experience and we get to bring in this whole new crowd of people so they can experience how amazing it is. It's a high energy weekend and it's going to be great for everybody involved."

During its first trek into competitive robotics, the CHS team won the 2011 Florida FIRST Regional Gracious Professionalism Award, an award for great sportsmanship.

Celena Crews, a Columbia High School math, science and engineering teacher, is Get Smart's coach coach.

"This is build season and we have six weeks to design, build and test the robot," she said. "This is our second year and we are way ahead of the game from where we were at this point last year. We're

at the end of our third week, so we're essentially halfway through, and we've made amazing progress."

Crews said the team used principles of physics to develop a way for the robot to score the basket, as well as a way to collect balls from missed shots.

"In the meantime we're raising funds and preparing for competition," she said, noting it takes about \$14,000 annually to get part of the team to the Orlando regional competition. "Part of competition, which is three days long, they (students) go around and talk to other teams and learn from other teams. Our focus right now is getting ready for competition."

