

## **Trumbull Robotics Team Places Sixth in New England Competition**

The Trumbull High School Robotics Team traveled to the University of Massachusetts-Lowell in early April to compete in the 2008 New England Botball Tournament. The team faced twenty teams from other high schools from Connecticut and Massachusetts.

Despite being a first-time entrant in the tournament, the Eagles team turned in a remarkable performance by earning sixth place in the seeding round and climbed to fifth place in double elimination brackets. Scores in on-line project documentation and on-site presentation maintained the sixth place overall placement for the team, whose members include Peter Greenwood, Tyler Kramka, Alex Mark, Eric Meeson, Eric Pacelli, Dan Regan, Matt Rescseanski, Jillian Wyckoff, and Alex Zimmer.

The tournament culminated months of preparation by the team under the guidance of Advisor Hans Drenkard.

“Botball” is a structured international competition sponsored by the KISS Institute for Practical Robotics, a non-profit educational organization based in Norman, Oklahoma ([www.botball.org](http://www.botball.org)). It involves strict guidelines that promote student creativity and teamwork as team members collaborate to build two working robots from the same kit of parts provided to all competing teams months earlier. All robots entered into the tournament must be constructed using only the standard parts, such as sensors, actuators, and controllers common to robotic systems, in the supplied kits. In addition, teams are required to document their process on-line as they design and build their robots.

Focused on detail construction and programming of the robots to do required tasks such as object identification, sorting, and distribution to specified areas, rather than hardware procurement, the team members worked to design and build a robot that would perform the tasks more efficiently and accurately than robots built by other teams.

The benefits of participation are wide reaching. The Robotics Team members learned the programming language of the supplied robot controller. While developing their robots, the students also learned resource management and optimization as they developed the instruction sequences aimed at accomplishing the various tasks most efficiently. The complicated tasks were divided among team members, who needed to draw upon their science, technology, engineering, math, and writing skills to detail solutions that were subsequently integrated in the team effort.

The team was very pleased with its results and grateful for community funding that enabled its participation in the Botball tournament. In addition to in-kind contributions by several team members' families, the team received significant contributions covering the tournament participation fee, materials, travel, and accommodations from the Trumbull Academic Challenge for Excellence (ACE) Foundation, the Trumbull Business/Education Initiative (BEI), and the Trumbull High School PTSA.

Team members are already enthused about building upon their efforts to rise to the challenge that will be posed by next year's competition.