The robot runs down a line, picking up a red barrel followed by a red ball. It gingerly moves its way towards its 30 inch tall objective. The lift system begins to wobble slightly as it aims its intake at the top of the goal. Score!

It’s during these moments that I recall the times spent sitting in a cold garage building VEX robots with my friends. I recall the sounds of dremels grinding away at a piece of metal and the sight of a soda can next to a laptop covered in code. Each memory echoes stories of frustration at a broken motor, confusion at a clogged intake, and enthusiasm at a successful autonomous. I remember the hours spent writing countless essays and filling out paperwork to get sponsors. I remember the time a teammate wore a conveyor belt as a bandoleer. I remember all nighters spent to ensure that the engineering notebook was just right. However, in the end, the work and effort was all worth it because I got to build robots with my friends. I got to grow as an engineer and a leader, preparing myself for my future. And, best of all, I got to put everything I’ve learned to the test, under the pressures of a VEX robotics competition.