Finishing in last place wouldn’t have been so bad if it weren’t for the fact that we had been beaten by a surrogate robot – it couldn’t even pick up a ring! Going into the tournament, we had been so confident of our robot design and our abilities. Having spent so many late nights building, programming, revising, and debugging, we were extremely disappointed with our performance.

Luckily, we still had time to make changes and get ready for the next qualifying tournament. For the next six weeks, we worked hard perfecting the design and code as well as practicing robot navigation. It was during this period that we all really came together as a team. It was our first year as a school VEX team, and most of us had never worked with each other before. Unified by a common goal, we joined forces to make sure we were more than prepared for the next tournament.

Our hard work paid off. At the tournament, we were part of the finalist alliance, won the Think Award, and won the Excellence Award, qualifying us for the VEX World Championships.

The VEX competition taught us the importance of collaboration and how much more we can accomplish when we work together. It also taught us the power of perseverance. We could have easily given up after our first tournament, but we worked hard at it and achieved our goal. Those valuable lessons will help us throughout our lives, no matter what we pursue.