

My Adventure

My older sister has always been a role model for me, so when the summer of 2016 came, I jumped at the opportunity to join VEX EDR at 6th grade. I started doing research in July with the help of my dad who printed things for us to study. Around this time I knew I wanted to be the programmer even at the cost of less free time during summer due to research. I even came up with some ideas for the future robot. None of those ideas came anywhere close to our newest robot, Levi.

When school came close, our team had its first meeting. Our parents basically shoved us into my home theater to talk and get to know one another while they talked in the other room. Obviously we just awkwardly sat there. I knew Rohan and Nitin since they were in my sister's team last year but never really talked to them. Now Jauston..... I had only heard of him and knew he was from the other Lakeside team last year called Supernova. So Jauston and I are silently sitting there while Rohan and Nitin are just on their phones..... GREAT START! After a while we had to introduce our designs which took away some tension.

Jauston and I eventually became friends. The fact we were different genders never stalled this process in any way but something boosted our relationship pretty quickly. It was a game called "Undertale" that connected us in the 2nd, 3rd, or 4th meeting because it gave us something to talk about. Jauston and I were taking a break and he began to draw one of characters from "Undertale" which I immediately recognized. That blossomed our friendship and things weren't as tense afterwards.

It took probably 4 months since I started researching until I had to start a program using RobotC. I knew a few simple things but I needed my dad's help to do a basic program to drive the robot, Kai. I still have help from my dad, but experience makes me more independent.

Before my first competition, I thought the only bad thing about being the main programmer would be all the time spent into fixing bugs, testing autonomous, and implementing automated features. In the end, it turns out the worst part, for me, is the judge's interview. I'm mostly an introvert and HATE talking to strangers, so I barely spoke in my first interview. It isn't all bad though. I'm trying to take advantage of the interviews so I can improve my public skills.

Another downside of being introverted are at the times when you have to tell what your alliance should do. I'm a strategist as well and communicating with the other team is crucial to a solid victory. You also have to have a loud voice since the robots are so darn loud. On the first competition I didn't talk to the alliance during the match and instead let whoever the second teammate was to talk.

There is one last problem that I don't think is that bad. Some teams consider the Killer Monkeys as a "Daddy team" where the adults do most of the work while the kids only attend the competition. As I said before, my dad helps me with programming but he doesn't do ALL the work ,and my team, including me, definitely built our robots.

If those problems went away, I'd be fine! But problems don't just go away. You have to be determined enough to stop them yourself, just like the real world. That is one reason VEX is good. It can get pretty fun, it helps you're STEM skills, and creates lasting memories. I don't see why other girls don't join. I know I'm not the only girl ,and if I was, I most likely wouldn't feel lonely. If I somehow do feel alone though, I would encourage others to join.

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