

A Girl's Experience

By: Sophia Summers

My experience being a member of a girl powered robotics team has been great, yet difficult and angering at the same time. When I first entered the world of robotics, I had no idea what I was doing. Everything was so new to me and I was like a deer in headlights. My first year being involved in vex robotics was eighth grade. That year, I learned a lot and did a decent amount of work for my team. I guess that was mostly because everyone was in the same grade and mostly everyone was equal in terms of experience and ability. The team I was on was basically all girls and one boy. Our sister team however was all males. My role was mostly co-piloting at competition which I was actually really good at and I did a little programming. Our team made state with a skills score that I co-piloted on during the run. At state, we did not do that great, but that was okay since we made state which was pretty cool. Our sister team however won and qualified for worlds. Once that happened, my role was solely programming sensors. I decided to decline co-piloting at worlds because it was a different robot that I was not very familiar with and I knew that I wouldn't do a great job at worlds. At worlds, I mostly did volunteer work with the college matches which was fun, but very tiring because standing for 5 hours really hurts your feet. Our team placed 11th in our division and then the season was over. I personally believe I did a lot this year being an active member of the team. No one in fact was pushed to the side in any way and everyone had an equal role. I was really great because I felt that I was doing my share of work and never had a thought thinking I wasn't doing enough. I was really enjoying robotics at the time and I thought that this was something I could do for the next four years in highschool. But I guess I was wrong, so wrong.

The next year (this year) I moved to the high school level which has been a definite change. One key difference is that the team you are on has people of different grade levels. This means that there are levels of superiority within teams. The team I was put on was basically freshman and seniors on it. Also, one really big difference that deeply impacted me was that in high school they do not do pilot co-pilot during matches. They only have a pilot. This means that there was no chance of me being co-pilot which I was good at. I can not drive a robot for my life, controlling the actions of flipping and stuff, I can do, but driving that thing. No way. Will never happen ever, driving and me do not go together. I have tried to drive in the past, it did not go well at all. So all I had left this year was programming. But do you know what? They changed the program language. Yay! So happy. Not. I mean, the language is not that hard, it's just I am not really great at learning it, mostly because I don't have the patience for it. Which means I don't do a lot in robotics. I try to do as much as I can to be an active member, but it's just not enough. It isn't completely my fault however, some members of my team who work the most do it because they can. They have the option to stay after school. They can drive, have parents who work at the school, or have to stay after school because they have no other choice. Meanwhile, I and other members have parents who work and do not have that option to stay after everyday because we can't. Also, high school robotics has brought down my liking for robotics in general. I try to find every reason possible to not go to competition because I know I will just sit there and I do not want to waste my Saturday at a robotics competition when I could

be at home or anywhere else doing anything better than robotics. Furthermore, our robotics room has been moved into a tight, cramped trailer due to construction at our school. This means that the amount of space we have now is so small. The amount of people who would usually go to robotics practice on wednesday which was maybe 20 to 25 people, cannot fit in that trailer. With the mat, boxes, and tables, there is no space at all. Meaning I'm not going to practice anymore. With the little space, there is nowhere you can be without having to move for someone to need to get by for a part or anything else. Like I'm currently outside writing this right now in the 40 degree weather and the wind gusts because it is so cramped. We are like sardines in a can in the trailer. This has really ended robotics for me. And I know that next year the seniors will be gone so you would think that would mean more opportunity for me and other members to do more right? Nope. As I see it, I see the freshman next year from the middle schools move up into the robotics team and "replace" the lost seniors. And once again, I and other teammates will probably get pushed back to the back. I am not going to be there for it though. After the last competition, I am done. I am never going back to robotics again. No end of season and World's view party, no one last practice, nothing. I am done. To me, robotics is a parasite that is eating away at my freshman year. There were many clubs that I would have loved to be apart of, but robotics is a big club, and it takes all my club spaces. This really limited what I could do this year. I do wish that things turned out different because I did really enjoy being a part of robotics, but I guess things have to come and go from your life, and robotics has got to go. I feel like I will be so much happier with robotics gone. I can join all the clubs I wanted to join before and just be in a better mood without robotics as this dark cloud weighted above me. Even though my experience as a member of robotics has been extremely rocky, I do not regret at all joining when I was in the eighth grade. That robotics season, I learned a lot and had some amazing experiences some people never have.

Even though my personal experiences have not been that great, my current team does embrace the girl powered aspects fully. Even though some of us girls do not do a lot(we want to do more, but just can't and i'm not sure why) the higher powers of the team try their best to make everyone included. For instance, having me write this essay. Also, there is one girl member who is part of the "main four" members. She does a lot for the team and is very much included up there in the higher powers. To me, girl powered means to have everyone on the team girls and boys have somewhat equal power and participation. Basically, my eighth grade team. Like I said before, everyone had somewhat equal power on the team and everyone participated fairly. When I say somewhat I mean that there are still team captains who have only slightly more power than everyone else. To my team however, I honestly believe that they do their best to include girl powered in our team and make everyone feel like they are part of the team. Finally just to clear something up, everything written here is how I see robotics, other girls on my team my see it in a completely different way.



After winning state last year.



After we were eliminated at world's



And finally, Me! Thank you so much for taking your time to read this piece. I put a lot of thought into this and was conflicted whether or not to pour EVERYTHING I felt out or keep some of it in. Based what I have said in this, i think you can guess which(it's everything). Also, I am sorry for the lack of photos, I do not have many and was not able to find any.

Credits:

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