

***"If you don't fall, how are you going to know
what getting up is like?"***

– Steph Curry

STRONGER

THAN

Before



TEAM: 94568G

VEXOTICS-CURIOSITY

PART ONE: LOST FOREVER

Last year we had a great season. We had racked up some awards pretty quickly and were preparing to win the state championship. Just one day prior to this tournament, a tragic event happened.

It was a normal Friday night and we were having robotics practice at my house. Sonya (my partner) and I ran upstairs to the robotics room to squeeze in all the possible practice before states the next day. We were highly motivated to win, despite all odds, but if we didn't, we would have appreciated the experience all the same. Just as we started practicing, my mom called a team meeting. Everybody was there. This included my parents and Sonya's parents. We could sense tension in the meeting room. The awkward silence continued for a while, until finally, someone spoke up. It was my mom.

"We just wanted to tell you guys how proud we are of you for claiming all these trophies," she said gesturing towards the trophies.

Sonya's dad chimed in. "You guys are great at this challenge," he started. "But sometimes, getting so good makes you a target for your rivals."

Where was this conversation going? Nothing would be able to prepare me for what I heard next.

"For some reason, some people have accused us of breaking rules, causing us to be disqualified from States and Worlds. We are pleading our case to Vex but we don't know what will happen," Sonya's dad told us.

Our ticket to Worlds was gone. Our entire season of hard work, lost forever. I was speechless.

"We can still go to Nationals, if that makes you feel better," said my dad.

But the damage was done. Sonya and I just sat there, open-mouthed, staring into the silence.

PART TWO: WHY???

The silence lasted for what felt like forever. I don't know what everyone else was thinking about, but I wanted to know why. I was just too afraid to ask. *What if we had done something wrong, like terribly wrong?*

Apparently, Sonya wanted to know the same thing. She spoke up and asked, "Why?"

"That's hard to explain," said my mom.

I had finally gotten the courage to ask. "What did we do wrong? Was it actually our fault?"

"Yes and no," said my dad.

"You know how sometimes we subbed in one of our club's other teams when a team member was sick. We had done this with permission from the event organizers and appropriate authorities. We just learned today morning that this was against rules, even though we were given permission to do that. Since this was an honest mistake being a rookie club, we are pleading forgiveness for our ignorance," explained Sonya's dad.

"But, but, but," I started.

"We clearly saw other teams doing that.. Maybe even more than us," stated Sonya.

"We know," answered my dad.

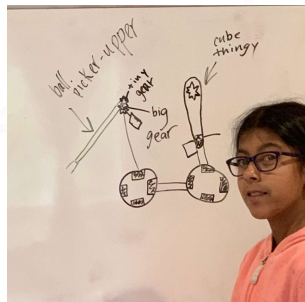
"We know it must be devastating for you to hear this. You've been working day and night for the past 10 months. Starting from independently building the robot to working on the STEM project. We know that most teams in Vex are awesome and have great sportsmanship, however, there may be some people who decided to treat us unfairly. They may take an opportunity away but can never take your skills. We learnt so much from Vex including creativity, independence, respect, and kindness. These virtues in themselves are huge trophies. I know you guys are strong, and will prepare well for nationals," explained my mom.

"Yes, we can do it!" we cheered.

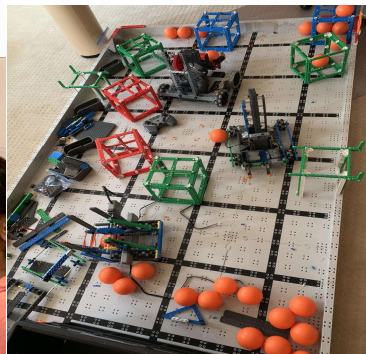
PART THREE: GETTING UP

The summer after we got ourselves out of this mess, we made sure to read the Vex IQ rulebook from cover to cover so we wouldn't get ourselves in trouble again. We made sure we knew all the rules, then we started to build our robot. We experimented with many designs and decided we wanted a robot that could focus on scoring cubes but could also score balls.

Our first designs were simple and allowed us to push the cubes around. We decided that we were going to need a conveyor belt, (since it had no arch) to lift the cube up onto the platforms; a hook, to drag cubes across the field and into scoring zones; and a ball machine, to score balls on top of cubes. All of our designs had conveyor belts to lift cubes up onto platforms up until our current robot, since space wouldn't allow us to use a conveyor belt to lift cubes and a separate one to collect balls. Our robots are the heart and soul of the robotics team and we love them a lot.



Early Brainstorming



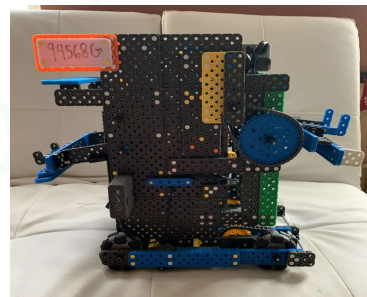
Building



Early Robot



Later Robot Named 'Cat'



Current Robot Named 'Two' Because Of Its Two Lifts

Aside from building, we also did programming. We had one program that we ran twice to get us 40 points (if it works). This program takes a green cube straight in front of the robot and puts it on the low platform. This only takes about 30–40 seconds. We are constantly working on better programs to get us more points.

Completely different from all aspects of driving, building, and autonomous is STEM. This year's topic for STEM was science. We brainstormed various ideas for our project and ended up choosing the insulin pump, because we want to help people with type 1 diabetes. After that, we researched our topic. Then, we decided on our setting. We decided we should do a news broadcast. We wanted to be creative and not something that was easy to do. News broadcasting was a fun way of displaying information without putting our audience to sleep. Not soon after, we started shooting our video. After we had all the footage, we used iMovie to edit and compile our footage, and then, presto, our video was done. Our STEM video has successfully won us an award and we hope our STEM video can raise awareness about how robotics can help people, with type 1 diabetes.



Snippet From Our STEM Video



STEM Award

PART FOUR: BIGGER THAN THE SETBACK

“This is our last tournament of 2019,” stated Sonya. “So cross your fingers we win an award that qualifies us to states.”

“Shhh!” my brother exclaimed. “They're giving out the awards!”

We held our breath as the awards were being dished out. Almost everyone on the bleachers had gone quiet in anticipation. The design award and the teamwork challenge awards were given out. We crossed our fingers..

“And the middle school excellence award goes to..” the announcer boomed.

Please, please, pleeeeeease.

“Team 94...56...8G, Vexotics-Curiosity!”

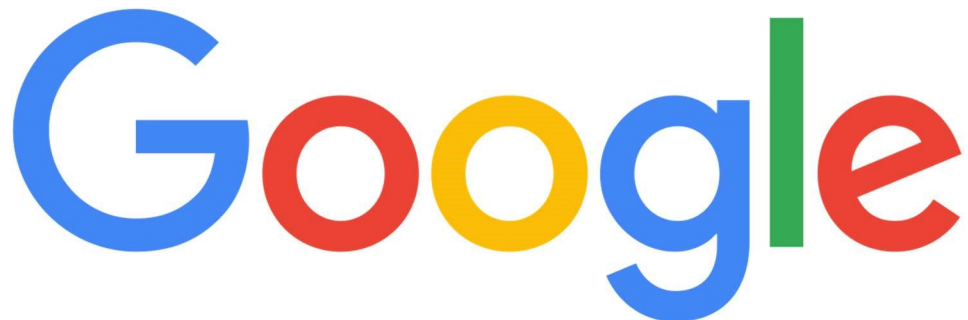
Our parents cheered enthusiastically as we ran to high-five the volunteers and claim the award. I was up in the clouds. After we had gotten our award and taken our pictures, I exclaimed, “We deserve a treat. Let's go get some ice cream!”



Excellence Award

PART FIVE: THE BEGINNING

Some might be sad that this wonderful tournament has ended. But we are not. Because the end is just the start of the beginning. The beginning of reflection and advancement. Of improvement. Of the future. And we are the future. Because us girls will get back up again, **STRONGER THAN EVER BEFORE!**



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to everyone that took the time and effort to read this essay. We are grateful for each other, being amazing friends who just happen to have the same hobby. Thanks to our families who have supported us through this amazing journey and will always be there for us. Especially to our moms, the amazing role models, who have helped us every step of the way. Most of all, we want to say thank you to Vex for providing us with this amazing platform for kids like us who are passionate about robotics and to Google for sponsoring this challenge. Thank you all!



Our Vexotics Family
94568B+94568G+Parents



Now

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