

The Story of Team 34107F

How three girls took a skilled team and made them rise above to excellence!

By Annelise, Carly & Tala

St. Joseph Catholic Grade School

34107F; Huntington, WV

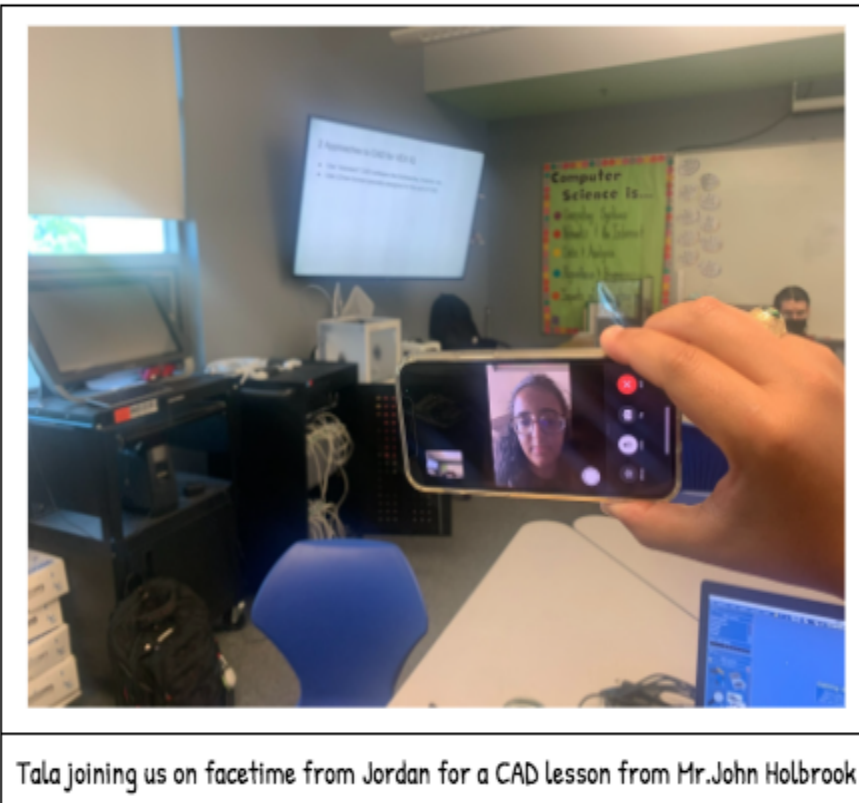
"Girl Power" is what we-Annelise, Tala and Carly-bring to Team 34107F, St. Joseph Darth Vexers. That phrase and our participation on the team proves that girls can do anything that boys can. Two years ago, Tala was the only girl on the team and they did a great job of winning the state championship in Skills. Then, last season, Carly and Annelise joined the team, evening up the team at three boys and three girls. The team welcomed us when we



Carly (left), Annelise (center), Tala (right), the girls that help power team 34107F. This picture was taken at the 2020 WV VEX state championship.

joined, which was not too surprising because Annelise's and Carly's brothers already were part of the team, and we all attend the same school. Carly and Annelise focused on the engineering notebook, which was a weakness of the team before. With our talents added to the team, we won the State Excellence Award last season!

At each of our practices, the coaches and team members all encourage each other to try new things and speak up with any ideas that they may have. Our



team is not six separate individuals; we are one unit that works together. Even over this past summer, while Tala was visiting her family in Jordan, our coaches made sure that she could participate in our practices through FaceTime.

All of us girls offer solutions and suggestions on a regular basis. Each of us has worked on design, building and coding, and we have all taken a turn at driving the robot and our autonomous programming runs. Through trying different roles, the team identified the strengths of each of its members, and we have taken



Tala is our autonomous driver and is an expert of lining the robot up perfectly for our runs. At this point all the boys could do is sit back, watch and pray. We hit our run for a season high in this run for Remote VEX Worlds.

primary roles to maximize our chances for success. For example, Annelise and Carly are the primary journalists due to our attention to detail and artistic creativity. We love to draw the parts of the field and robot, sketch out the team strategies, and make our engineering notebook colorful. Tala is a master at positioning the robot on the field to exactly where it needs to be for our autonomous program to succeed. Like Annelise and Carly, she also pays close attention to detail. (We think that the boys are not as detailed!)



Annelise documenting the day's practice in our Engineering Notebook

All of our team members bring diverse perspectives to the group. When not doing Vex and not in school, Annelise spends hours at her dance studio, Carly focuses on cheerleading and softball, and Tala plays tennis and piano. The boys participate in many sports, Boy Scouts, tae kwon do, drone racing and, of course, they love to play video games. Also, while all of us live in West Virginia, we have



Left: Carly delivers a pitch at softball; Center: Annelise stealing hearts at her dance performance; Right: Tala preparing for her tennis match

very diverse backgrounds: Tala and her family originally are from Jordan, Annelise's paternal grandparents are from Peru and Austria, and Carly's family hails from Ireland. These very different interests and backgrounds create a wide variety of points of view that have helped us in a bunch of ways, such as overcoming design issues like reinforcement of the base of the robot, coding complications, and noticing small items that may be getting in the way of the team's success. Also, we all are fierce competitors in each of our activities, and we push each other to be better at each Vex practice and competition.



Team 34107F with our STEM role model Mr. Sean Farrell (left) and our team mentor Mr. Bernard Vallejos (right)

Our STEM role model is our school's VEX Program Director: Mr. Sean Farrell, Mr. Farrell is Carly's dad. He pointed out after the first season that the team's engineering notebook needed a lot of improvement, and he encouraged Carly and Annelise to consider joining the team because of their love of drawing, photography and art. Our addition was a big reason the team winning the Excellence Award last year and earned a second invitation to the Vex World Championship. In our last competition, Mr. Farrell encouraged Tala and Annelise to take turns driving during the teamwork portion

and our team ended up winning the Teamwork Award. That belief in our abilities is why we look up to Mr. Farrell and we are so happy to be a part of this team and the program that he leads.