

Buchanan High part of team that won international robotics competition

By Carmen George

The Buchanan Bird Brains of Clovis won the international title of the *FIRST* Robotics Competition Saturday in St. Louis, Missouri in an alliance with three others teams.

It was an impressive feat for the team from Buchanan High School, which has never even won a regional competition. The Clovis team had been to the international competition four other times.

“I’m pretty speechless,” Andrew Nabors, Buchanan’s coach, said Saturday evening.

Buchanan was one of five high schools from the central San Joaquin Valley that went to the St. Louis competition, which drew 607 teams from across the U.S. as well as from Canada, China, Turkey, Mexico, Australia and Israel.

The other Valley teams were Edison High in Fresno, Clovis North, Madera High and El Diamante High in Visalia. Each school designed and built its own robot for the competition, which mainly involved scoring points by having robots collect and stack flip-top storage boxes on scoring platforms. Schools were part of a three-school alliance that competed against an alliance at the opposite end of the field.

The Buchanan Bird Brains competed in 24 matches over three days. The first two days were qualification matches. On Saturday morning, they were drafted to be part of an alliance with the No. 1 and No. 2 ranked teams from Texas and Davis, respectively.

Nabors said his team had worked with the Texas and Davis teams at a regional competition in Sacramento. The teams were impressed by Buchanan’s ability to compete. Nabors said the teams developed a camaraderie, trust and respect that inspired Texas and Davis to choose Buchanan for their alliance instead of another higher-ranked team. On Saturday morning, the Buchanan team was only ranked 25 of 76 teams in their division.

Of Buchanan’s 24 matches, 14 of them were played Saturday as a member of the winning alliance. A fourth team, from Palmdale, was also part of that alliance but did not actually compete the final day, Nabors said.

Nabors applauded his team for working hard and never giving up. The Buchanan Bird Brains brought 24 students to the competition but the team has more than 70 registered members. The team’s teacher/adviser is Paul Lake, and team mentors are Michael Stokes, Michael Adam and Ryan Pascual.

Nabors hopes their win inspires the creation of more robotics teams across the Valley, which he says helps students learn science, technology, engineering and math.

Contact Carmen George: cgeorge@fresnobee.com, (559) 441-6386 or [@CarmenGeorge](https://twitter.com/CarmenGeorge) on Twitter.