

BUCKS COUNTY Courier Times

Bensalem High robotics team captures top rookie seed in district competition

By **ANTHONY DIMATTIA** / Staff writer

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The Bensalem Fightin' Robotic Owls recently took home the top rookie seed in a district tournament.

The team of roughly 30 high school students finished 18th among 37 teams last week in the competition at Hatboro-Horsham High School, said Kevin McKay, a Bensalem school director and club mentor.

"I thought it was a great showing for a rookie," he said, adding that the next-highest seeded rookie team finished 24th.

The team participated for the first time in the "For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology Robotics" competition, which allows students to design, build and practice with a robot made to perform specific tasks. The object of this year's game, Recycle Rush, is to stack tote bins and recycle containers on designated spots on a playing field.

Students used their "Raptor robot" in the first round of competition with the goal of finishing high enough to join an "alliance partnership" with one of the top eight seeds, McKay said. But they weren't drafted.

"It's quite an accomplishment for the kids."

The group of mostly ninth- and 10th-graders will compete in their second tournament, another district matchup, March 28 and 29 at Upper Darby High School, with the goal of reaching the district championship in Lehigh County and then the national tournament in St. Louis, Missouri, McKay said.

Students spent several weekend hours since January designing and building their 3-foot-tall robot.

The team has raised roughly \$11,500 through fundraisers and numerous sponsorships to buy parts to make the robot. Monetary contributions can still be sent to FIRST Robotics at the district administrative office, 3000 Donallen Dr., Bensalem, PA 19020 or through the crowd-sourcing website, www.gofundme.com/BHSFIRST.

The goal of the competition is “to inspire young people to be science and technology leaders, by engaging them in exciting mentor-based programs that build science, engineering and technology skills, that inspire innovation, and that foster well-rounded life capabilities including self-confidence, communication and leadership,” according to www.usfirst.org/roboticsprograms/frc.

This year’s tournament is estimated to have included more than 38,700 teams that are made up of roughly 400,000 students worldwide.

For more information, visit www.bensalemsd.org/firstrobotics.

Anthony DiMattia: 215-949-4205; email: adimattia@calkins.com; Twitter: [@dailydimattia](https://twitter.com/dailydimattia)