



Dear Competitors and Guests,

Welcome!

The FIRST Robotics Competition is barely old enough to be in second grade. It started in 1992 in a New Hampshire high school gymnasium, but in the seven years since then it's grown into a thriving national institution. Last year, 199 teams participated from more than 30 states plus Canada and Puerto Rico. This year, we have nearly 300 teams participating. A few years ago when Disney World celebrated its own 25th anniversary they hosted, for the first time, our National Competition. On April 24th of this year we will set the record with the largest event ever hosted by Disney. Also, the competitions have expanded from a single New England event in 1992 to seven regional competitions spanning the country in 1999.

Without question, the Competition's growth and success is the result of all the support provided by our corporate sponsors, teachers, engineers, family, and volunteers.

It is, of course, the teams themselves that are the heart of the Competition. I hope that each team member will fully seize the opportunity this competition is designed to provide: experience the exhilarating thrill of stretching yourself to the utmost, discover how much you can do that you never imagined doing, and most of all - have fun!

FIRST is about science, engineering, learning, and partnerships - and through them, it's also about creativity, and the wondrous capacities of the human mind and spirit. To me, one of the endless fascinations of engineering is its capacity to pry open our minds and reveal the far reaches of what is possible. Engineering basically takes the laws of nature and puts them to an ever-expanding universe of human uses. It's not just about machines. It's about what, through the application of human ingenuity, an invention can accomplish.

Every year our game presents new challenges. This year's changes take strategy and the need for teamwork (alliances) to extraordinary levels. I am confident that once again you will all rise to these new challenges and despite the ever increasing pressure of competition, do so while achieving Woodie Flowers' high standards of professionalism.

As always, a key goal of FIRST is to share our enthusiasm with others so that we can open more eyes to the vital importance of science and the endless possibilities of technology. With your continued support, there will come a day, not far away, when every high school can have a FIRST team attend a regional without having to get on an airplane. Hopefully, you will all be able to say with pride, "I helped create the organization that made all this possible."

Growth, especially rapid growth, rarely comes without pain and lots of hard work. I would like to especially recognize the FIRST team of staff and volunteers for their enormous efforts throughout this year. I would also like to introduce David Brown, our new Executive Director. He comes to us with an impressive history of accomplishments in both the "not-for-profit" and corporate world. Dave has the capability, enthusiasm, and integrity to lead FIRST to an even more promising future. I hope you will each take the opportunity to personally welcome him.

Good to luck to each and every one of you!

Dean Kamen
Founder
FIRST



Folks,

Welcome to the 1999 FIRST Robotics Competition. From everyone at FIRST, we offer a sincere "Thank you!" Without you, FIRST simply would not be. We understand that. Your help in celebrating education is essential!

Confucius must have been an early FIRST junkie. He said:

"I hear and I forget.
I see and I remember.
I do and I understand."

As we all know, he could have added, with equal authority:

"Doing is very, very time consuming!"

The next few months will be intense. At times, you may want to hang us. If you feel overwhelmed, remind yourself that you are a member of the select few in our society engaged in this crazy form of enlightened self-interest. This is a win-win activity.

However, revitalizing interest in education is a big challenge. It is the "New Cold War." Celebrating learning and informed creative thinking are keys to rekindling our can-do spirit. Although the 1999 Competition is just one of many efforts to support the educational renaissance, it is potentially the most important! You have grabbed the end of a very long lever and have started dramatic changes. "So many young people behaving so graciously!" "Your most important muscle is in your head!" "The FIRST Team picture was first in the yearbook!" "The Woodstock of Robotics!"

As in the past, designing the competition has made our brains hurt for months. We have tried to:

- Create an exciting challenge which is new to all of us
- Make sure that we are ambivalent about potential ways to win
- Make sure that creativity and pursuit of excellence pays
- Make sure that a relatively simple design, operated skillfully, can be very competitive
- Insure that all participants will see levels of success rather than pass-fail tests

This year we have boldly redesigned the competition structure. Teams will compete as two-team alliances. During the qualification matches, these alliances will be ad hoc. Your current opponent may be your ally in the next match. "Gracious professionalism" will be essential. In many ways, the 1999 Competition is a microcosm of life. Not only will individuals depend on each other, but whole teams must have faith in other whole teams. Sharing. Empathy. Healthy competition. Effective communications and the ability to negotiate strategies quickly will be critical. We hope a delightful mix of understanding physics and understanding other people will prove to be the winning combination.

Again, thank you very much for being part of FIRST.

Let's make 1999 the best yet!

Woodie Flowers
FIRST Advisor