CyberSalam #26903

NAMCC Masjid Aisha

Newsletter & Updates
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Volume 2

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Coach's Corner

by: Coach Adeel Malik

What is FIRST?

FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) is the world's leading youth robotics community, founded in 1989 by Dean Kamen, the inventor of the Segway. Initially, FIRST focused on the FIRST Robotics Competition (FRC) for high school students.

In 2007, FIRST expanded its offerings with the introduction of the FIRST Tech Challenge (FTC), a mid-level robotics competition designed for younger students. Since then, FTC has grown into a global community, with over 7,000 teams around the world. Every year, FIRST hosts its World Championship in April, which for the past few years has been held in Houston.

Coach's Corner

What is FTC?

The FIRST Tech Challenge is an exciting robotics program for students in grades 7-12. It provides participants with the opportunity to design, build, and program dynamic robots to compete in a thrilling game, which is revealed every September. FTC helps students develop important STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) skills, promotes community outreach, and encourages engineering innovation.

Key features of the FTC program include:

- Teamwork & Leadership
- STEM Development
- Community Impact
- Robot Design

Robot Design

A typical FTC robot includes a chassis, hardware mechanisms for gameplay, an electrical system for powering the robot, and software to control it.

FTC in Texas

In Texas, every FTC team is part of a regional league. Austin, for example, is part of the FTC Central Texas Region, which includes over 200 teams stretching from Waco to Corpus Christi. These teams are split into seven leagues, with three leagues based in Austin.
Team Cyber Salam is proud to be part of the GEMS League, which is hosted at Westwood High School and includes around 36 teams.

Each league holds three official scrimmages between October and December. During these events, teams play five matches, and their scores are recorded. The season culminates in a Qualifier Event in January, where teams are judged not only on their robot's performance but also on their innovation, community outreach, and ability to inspire others.

Teams can earn awards in various categories, including the Connect Award, the Innovate Award, and the most prestigious: the Inspire Award. The top teams at the qualifier will advance to the Central Texas Semifinals or directly to the Central Texas Championship.

Beyond the Championship

While some teams may be eliminated during the season, they still have opportunities to continue participating in scrimmages and improving their robots. These additional scrimmages allow teams to keep innovating, testing new ideas, and enhancing their outreach efforts.

LM Recap

League Meet 2

by: Coach Adeel Malik

We took the same robot design from LM1. We played five matches and ended up with a 5-5 season thus far. Many teams were beginning to score points in autonomous, and this is expected compared to LM1. Consistent with that, we made improvements to be able to shoot three balls during the autonomous period. There were still challenges with our design. During practice and the competition, the intake was unable to consistently transfer balls to the magazine. During this transfer, drivers were unable to see inside the magazine without turning the robot each time, which cost us a lot of time. We could only shoot a maximum of seven balls in the 2-min Tele-Op. Other robots were shooting 15-20 balls during the Tele-Op, and we expect that teams will improve their robots to shoot even more in future competitions.
We certainly have work to do for our upcoming competitions.

League Meet 3

by: Hammad Malik

In this competition, we achieved the best results out of our 2 other meets. This meant a lot, as our countless hours of work during Thanksgiving break paid off. We finally got a chance to showcase our new robot. Once the qualification matches schedule was released, we immediately got together with our first alliance partner and strategized. In the first few games, we were confident as everything was going to plan. We made it to lunch break with only one loss, boosting our confidence for the rest of the day. In our first game after lunch, we encountered a problem with our robot. When the catapult would launch the balls, it would rub against one of the parts on our robot, slowing down the launch. Another problem was the overheating of the motor due to the constant resistance against the rubber bands. We couldn't do anything about our motors, but we cut off a part of the robot where the friction was happening. We did win our last game, which brought us to a new best record of 4-1 All thanks to the new design and countless hours of hard work and late-night meetings.

STATS

League Meet 2:

- 11/15/2025 - Westwood HS
- 36 teams total
- 3 wins, 2 losses (W-W-L-L-W)

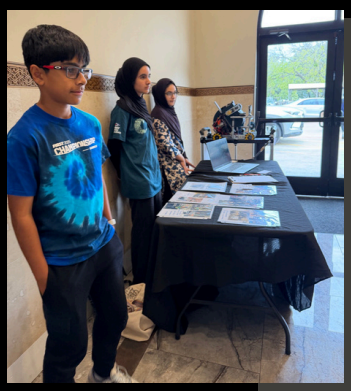
League Meet 3:

- 12/6/2025 - Westwood HS
- 36 teams total
- 4 wins, 1 loss

Outreach

POPUPS

In between League Meets 1 and 2, our team held a pop-up shop at our local mosque where we talked to people after the Friday congregation and explained what we do, our mission, and also explained how they can get into FIRST, by becoming an FLL mentor for our FLL teams, an FTC mentor for our team, or by enrolling their kids in these programs.



TIME TO DECODE

We're excited to launch a new initiative designed for every FTC team, whether you're a first-year rookie or a seasoned, award-winning veteran. Our goal is simple: we want to share insights, stories, and strategies that any team can learn from and take back to their own workspace. For our very first episode, we sat down with Daniyal Ali from Team Hazmat (13201), the student who led his team all the way to Worlds last season. Hazmat earned the Inspire Award at the Wisconsin State Championship and went on to win 2nd Place Inspire in the Edison Division at Worlds.

In this episode, we dive deep into:

- hardware–software collaboration
- team dynamics
- leadership lessons
- and Daniyal's own thoughts on what propelled Hazmat to the global stage

Stay tuned; you won't want to miss this one!

Team Spotlight

TEAM VOICE

After League Meet 2, I reflected on our performance and felt like we didn't do as well as we could have. While our robot works, its throughput is too slow, and the ball stays inside the robot for too long. This made it hard to score quickly, and it was frustrating because I felt we could have performed better if we had used a diffrent robot or had a better design. Over the past two league meets and the season overall, I've learned how important efficiency and speed are. Because of this, our team is now discussing building a new robot or making major improvements to reduce the time the ball stays inside and improve our performance so we could possibly score 3 balls at a time.

Shan

Taheem

TEAM VOICE

Hi! My name is Taheem, and I am in 8th grade. The 2026 DECODE Season is my first season in FTC. I have participated in robotics programs and competitions such as FLL over the past few years, but FTC is unique in that it allows for true innovation. The league meets were a fun and engaging experience, almost like a sports match. Many teams participated, some won, some lost, but all left with knowledge to improve. Through these experiences, I have gained new perspectives and skills, such as teamwork and resilience. I highly recommend that anyone interested in participating in FTC to shadow our team.

What's Next?

UPCOMING

GEMS Tournament, Saturday, Jan 24, 2026

If qualified:
Austin Semi Area
Saturday, Feb 14, 2026

If qualified:
Last Call Qualifier
Saturday, Feb 21, 2026

If qualified:
Central Area Champs
Saturday, Mar 7, 2026

HARDWARE

Teammates suggested eliminating the intake and allowing the human player to deposit balls directly into the magazine. This would overcome the intake challenges.

Another suggestion was to abandon this design and come up with a new design for the next league meet. With only three weeks before the next league meet this would require significant effort.

SOFTWARE

Team started using Pedro Pathing in League Meet 2. We were able to shoot 3 balls reliably by League Meet 3. The goal of software improvements is to have reliable robot movements in conjunction with intake and shooter. With these improvements, we should be able to shoot 9 or more balls in the 30-second autonmous period.

OUTREACH

As mentioned and planned in our first newsletter, we organized a pop-up. We plan to host more in other areas to engage the community and inspire future participants. We also plan to put out our first episode of Time to Decode, a fire-side chat that explores insights, stories, and strategies that any team can learn from.