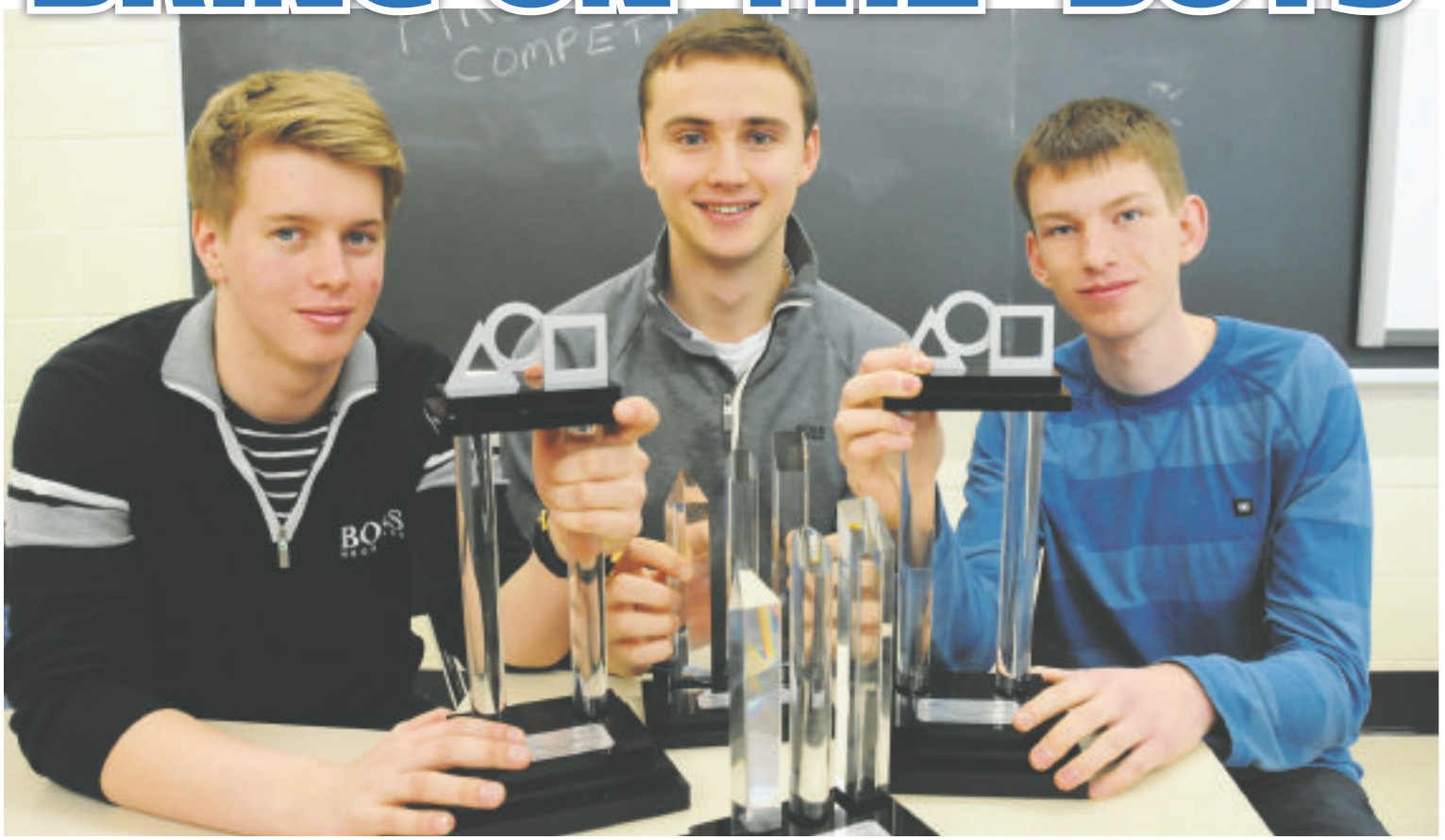
BRING ON THE 'BOTS



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Lo-Ellen Robotics – Team 4069 has already garnered several awards in FIRST Robotics competitions. The team is headed off to the world championships in St. Louis, Missouri later this month. From left are team leads Alex Bertrand, Cody Hartwick and Colin Roos.

Lo-Ellen battling the best at world robot competition

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Hyperion the robot speeds around the game arena, trying to find a good position to shoot frisbees through the goal posts. Other robots ram into it or try to block its path.

After sending numerous flying discs through the target at 130 km/h, the square, 150-pound robot ends the competition by hanging from the first rung of a 12-foot-tall metal pyramid.

While reviewing footage of Hyperion in competition with Northern Life, Grade 12 Lo-Ellen Park Secondary School students Colin Roos, Cody Hardwick and Alex Bertrand are clearly proud of the robot's success in the ring.

The senior high school students are the team leads for Lo-Ellen Robotics – Team 4069, which competes in the FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) competitions.

With the support of Lo-Ellen math teacher Dan Monti, who has a background in engineering, Roos started the team in September 2011 along with fellow student Matteo Neville.

They went on to win the Rookie All Star Award and the Highest Rookie Seed Award at regional competitions in southern Ontario. They qualified to attend the 2012 World Championships, where they had a strong showing, placing 20th out of 100 teams.

Despite the fact that Monti was unable to help them much this year because of an extracurricular activity boycott by English public high school teachers, Team 4069 has been even more successful this year.

> **We can shoot our frisbees at about 130 km/h, which makes us very, very accurate.**
>
> Colin Roos, member of Lo-Ellen Robotics – Team 4069

They won the gold medal at the Waterloo Regional, as well as a gracious professionalism award. At the Greater Toronto West Regional, which took place over the Easter weekend, they won an entrepreneurship award.

Team 4609 will also be competing in the world championships in St. Louis, Missouri April 24-27. Even though the competition will include about 400 teams, Roos said he's hoping for the best.

He explained the robotics teams form alliances in the competitions, taking on other teams of robots. Hyperion's ability to shoot frisbees at a high velocity makes it a a good alliance member, he said.

"As far as we know, I think we're the fastest shooter in the world," Roos said.

"We can shoot our frisbees at about 130 km/h, which makes us very, very accurate. I don't think I've ever seen another robot on the Internet this year that can do that. That puts us apart from the rest."

Other robots specialize in climbing the pyramid. For example, a team from St. Catherine's which formed an alliance with Lo-Ellen at one of the regional competitions this year can climb the entire pyramid in about 10 seconds.

"It's remarkable to watch," Roos said. "Every time I see it, I'm just astounded by it."

The students said they've really enjoyed participating in the FIRST Robotics events over the past few years. Roos jokes that FIRST calls its competitions "the hardest fun you'll ever have."

Bertrand said there's really nothing else for kids that are interested in the realm of science and engineering to do in high school.

"There's tons of sports. But for us, there's robots," he said.

Because of the extracurricular boycott, the students didn't have access to the same level of support from Lo-Ellen as they did last year. It forced them to reach further afield, garnering help from many businesses and organizations.

Laurentian University, for example, allowed them to use its 3D printer to fabricate pieces for the robot they'd designed. Stainless Steel Technology fabricated metal pieces.

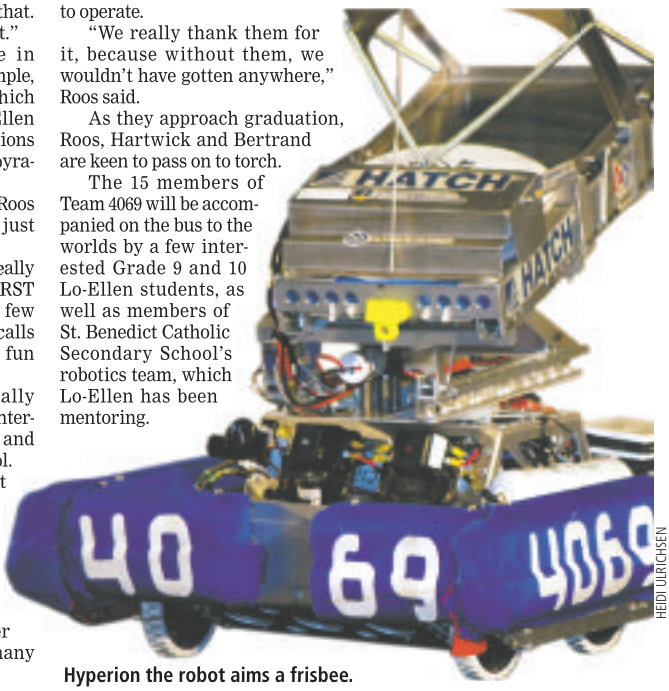
The team's title sponsor is Hatch Engineering, which provided them with enough financial resources to operate.

"We really thank them for it, because without them, we wouldn't have gotten anywhere," Roos said.

As they approach graduation, Roos, Hartwick and Bertrand are keen to pass on to torch.

The 15 members of Team 4069 will be accompanied on the bus to the worlds by a few interested Grade 9 and 10 Lo-Ellen students, as well as members of St. Benedict Catholic Secondary School's robotics team, which Lo-Ellen has been mentoring.

Roos said the team would appreciate any financial contributions people are willing to make to send them to the world championships. For more information, visit loellenrobotics.ca.



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Hyperion the robot aims a frisbee.