

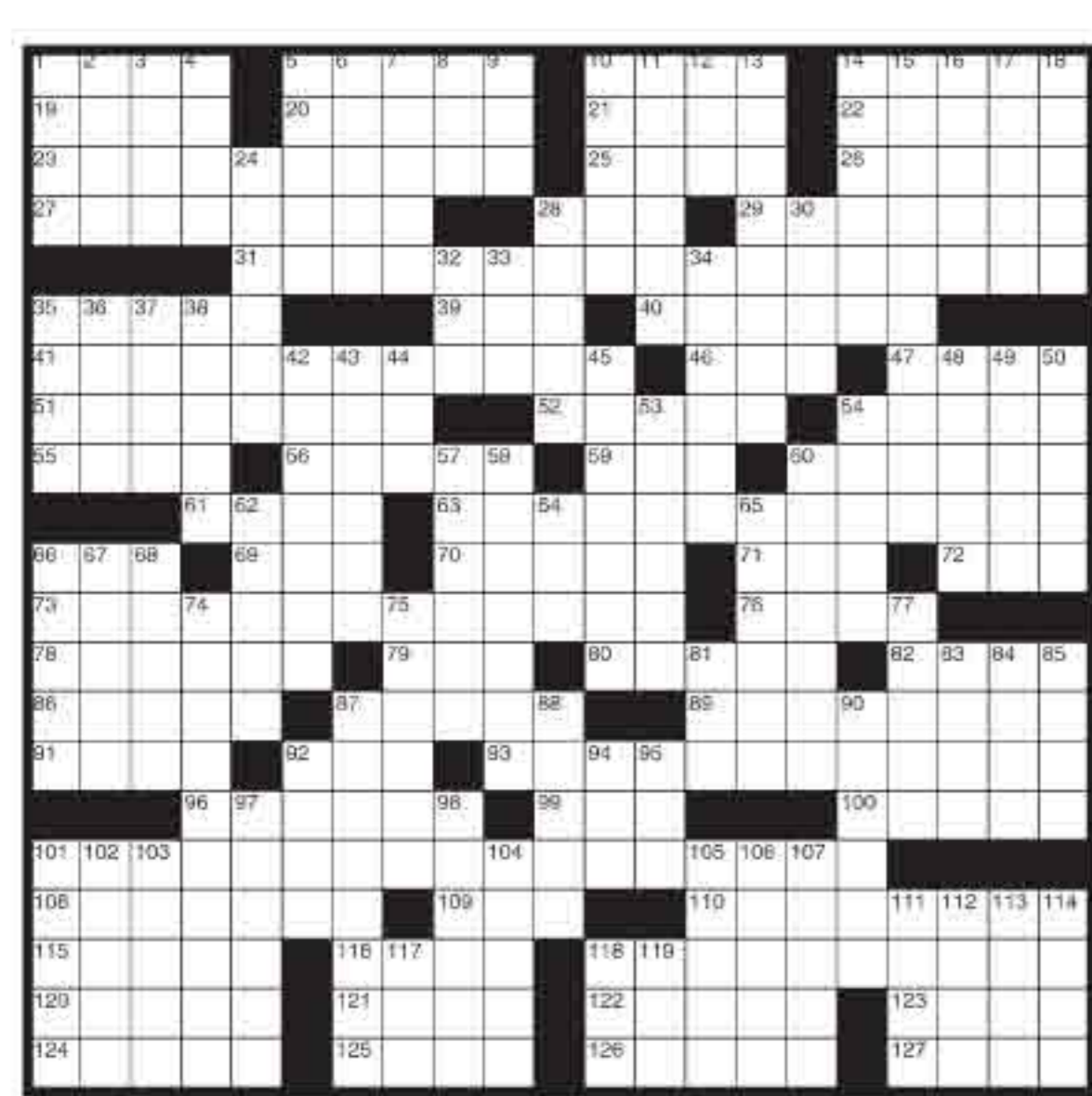
The Garden City weekend

February 19 - 25, 2014

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Lording Over The Lego League

Garden City Lego teams dominate qualifying tournaments

By **ALENA BUBNIAK**
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It was a successful rookie year for Garden City's Crazy Creators, one of several Garden City FIRST LEGO League (FLL) teams to snap up awards at the 10th annual Long Island FLL Qualifying Tournament, held on Feb. 1 in Central Islip. The Crazy Creators walked away with two of the 12 awards: First place for 'Robot Performance,' which is given to the team with the highest score in the tournament's robot game, and first place for 'Programming,' which is given for innovative programming of the robot used in the competition.



Julian Bubniak and Nicholas Stamidis prepare their robot for competition under the watchful eye of mentor Dino Stamidis.



The team was cheered on by family members that included parents Maria & Reed Sclafani, as well as Mentor Dino Stamidis.

Under the guidance of coach Ken Ambach and mentor Dino Stamidis, fourth-graders Charlie Ambach, Julian Bubniak, Max Sclafani and Nicholas Stamidis, who all attend Stratford Elementary, along with Riley Sanz, a student at St. Anne's, tackled this year's theme of 'Nature's Fury.' The teams were challenged to build, test and program a self-directed LEGO robot that could complete a series of missions on a specially-designed obstacle course dealing with a natural

disaster, and dream up and present an invention to help people in the event of a catastrophe.

For the project component of the competition, the Crazy Creators decided to focus on earthquakes, specifically the 125th Street fault line in Manhattan. After extensive research, the team invented a debris-clearing machine that would enable rescuers to help those trapped in rubble in

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densely populated areas, conditions that would exist if a New York earthquake were to occur. As the team discovered, it could very well happen in New York City, as it happened back in 1884, when a tremor struck Brooklyn's Coney Island.

The Crazy Creators brought their invention and robot to Central Islip Senior High School, site of this year's FLL Qualifying tournament, where 109 teams competed from across Long Island. In the robot game, teams operated their Lego NXT Robots in several matches against each other in the school's gymnasium. Divided into groups of two, they raced the clock to complete several tasks in two-and-a-half minutes, on tables containing the obstacle course. Points were awarded based on Lego pieces used for the project (no outside materials are allowed) as well as the successful completion of several pre-assigned



The Crazy Creators worked with the Bluepoint Robo Phantoms on a new 'Alliance' team competition this year.

tasks. A new 'alliance' match, introduced in this year's competition, required teams to double up to run the missions together.

In addition to the matches, each team also met with judges in breakout sessions to discuss their work and answer questions about their project, their robot and programs, and complete a teamwork challenge. The Crazy Creators presented a LEGO model of their invention, the Rubble Rescuer, and described how their invention featured an infrared sensor to help it detect humans in rubble, as well as a conveyor belt to help haul away debris.

Coach Ambach said of the day, "What an amazing morning. We are so proud of the team today. From our innovative project model and presentation to our simple yet highly effective robot, each boy contributed to the success of the team. As a young rookie team, they wildly exceeded all of our expectations and we are thrilled with the results."

The Crazy Creators weren't the only winning Garden City team on Saturday. The Thunder Chickens, under coach Kim DeMaro and assistant Martha Yasso, captured the tournament's highest honor, the first place 'Champion's Trophy,' while the Robotic Rebels, led by Coach Steve Giammona, rounded out the pack by winning the second-place 'Champion's Award.' In the afternoon



From left to right: Max Sclafani, Riley Sanz and Julian Bubniak take a quick break during the FLL Qualifying Tournament.



Julian Bubniak (left) and Nicholas Stamidis (right) prepare their robot for an ambulance run at the FLL Qualifying Tournament.

competition, the Garden City Middle School team, also in its first year of competition, won first place for 'Robot Performance' under the guidance of Coach Mike Stano.

With these wins, the teams advance to the next round, the SBPLI-LI FIRST Championship Tournament, to be held at Longwood High School on March 2. The teams invite you to come out and cheer on all of the Robotic League teams. Those interested in learning more about the Garden City Robotic League should contact Garden City Robotic League Director Trish Lynch at jandtlynch@verizon.net



The Crazy Creators celebrate after snapping up two awards at the FLL. Left to right: Coach Ken Ambach, Max Sclafani, Riley Sanz, Nicholas Stamidis, Charlie Ambach, Julian Bubniak and mentor Dino Stamidis



The Garden City teams celebrate a successful run at the FLL Qualifying tournaments.



The Crazy Creators prepare their robots for the team challenges in the Central Islip Senior High School gymnasium.