

TUESDAY NEWSLETTER – MAY 23 2023

Kudos Again

We wanted to take a moment to again congratulate the four teams that represented FTCNJ so well at this year's World Championship in Houston. Great job by Team #9889 Cruise Control, Team #7149 Enforcers, Team #14481 Don't Blink, and Team #207 Critical Mass!

Congratulations to Team #9889 Cruise Control for being one of three FTCNJ teams advancing to Semi-Finals, congratulations to #7149 Enforcers for earning the 2nd Place INSPIRE Award in their Division and congratulations to Team #14481 for being a member of the Championship Event WINNING ALLIANCE!

Not mentioned in our previous newsletter's note was the special assistance that several of our FTCNJ teams, including Team #207 Critical Mass, provided to an international team whose robot did not make it to the event intact. In addition to their own competition preparation needs, an outstanding effort was made to help that international team compete. A big effort, nicely done! Great Gracious Professionalism!

Highlights

Team Recruitment

It is during this off-season period when the formation and training of new teams is a very high focus. During the past week, with the help of the (North and South) New Jersey FIRST LEGO League Delivery Partners, we have reached out to FLL coaches with possible aging-out teams or aging-out students. They have been invited to the three Outreach Scrimmages that are discussed later in this document. Responses have begun to be received. As mentioned later, we need teams that are willing to help bring new team prospects and their new team members to the Outreach Scrimmage. Now is the time to continue to keep FTCNJ vibrant and growing.

School Outreach

FTCNJ has also reached out to all of the High Schools and Middle Schools in NJ that are not yet involved with FIRST Tech Challenge. The FTC Program was explained, as were the June Outreach Scrimmages. Great gains have been made in bringing our NJ team count back to the pre-COVID number of 200. Last season, there were 183 registered FTCNJ teams. Please help with our growth initiative. Is your team involved in outreach? Do you have prospects? Please let us know about the actions you may be taking. We'd love to share them with the community and help to bring more teams on board.

New Coaches Zoom Call – May 24th

Similar to last year, we have been inviting prospective coaches (including those mentioned above) to an informative Zoom Call with two of our very experienced coach/mentors, Bala K (Lead Head Ref – Central League) and Narmada K (Lead FTA – Central League). If you are a new Coach reading this note or a prospective Coach, you are cordially invited to attend the very helpful call at 7pm on Weds. The Registration Link is below:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZUldO6gqTMtEtVFyaB0S18-JCX3UQdkHSbW>

Off-Season Outreach Events

New Jersey Academy of Science Event – Accomplished May 20th

Special thanks to the three teams that supported last Saturday's event – Team #19447 "Bit by Bit" (Tenafly High School), Team #12968 "Bard Robo-Raptors" (Bard HS & Early College) and Team #3415 "Lancers" (Livingston High School).

These teams performed demonstration scrimmages of a modified PowerPlay Game throughout the long day at Kean University's STEM Facility. We appreciate their patience and efforts to make FIRST Tech Challenge known to more and more people. It is always great to see teams willing to step up to help. Thanks again to all.

Outreach Scrimmages – Extreme PowerPlay (June 3rd, 10th, 17th)

There is still time to register for the June Outreach Scrimmages. We need teams to bring their new members, their new sibling team, or any other prospects that their team’s outreach efforts are pursuing. This is your chance to help FTCNJ grow. More teams equates to more knowledge sharing, more fun, and more advancement opportunities. Students talk to your coaches. Coaches, register soon if you can help out.

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSd98FKnY-3OpWcnbw3SNI4iKA9Ax4I-OwG_Sk5JfKe8BJaZeA/viewform

Locations

June 3 rd	Southern NJ Teams	Egg Harbor (Atlantic County)	Host: Enforcers
June 10 th	Central NJ Teams	Highland Park (Middlesex County)	Hosts: HP OWLS & Don't Blink
June 17 th	Northern NJ Teams	Livingston (Essex County)	Host: Cruise Control

Reminder on Outreach Scrimmage Format

Veteran teams bring prospects, new members and tournament bots to the event.

Prospects and new members are organized into teams and loaned a jersey-bot for the day.

A veteran team and new member team are formed into a day-long alliance in the morning.

Throughout the day, veterans and new folks work together on slight modifications to the jersey-bot and strategizing how to best play the twisted version of the PowerPlay Game. Veteran teams' tournament bots are not modified.

The modified Challenge is revealed after alliance formation so that veterans and new members brainstorm their approach together.

Outreach Scrimmages are a fun way to inspire new folks to form a team, join a team, or just acclimate to FTC.

Extreme PowerPlay

Some may remember our “Extreme Game” post-season scrimmages that usually took place in May. In the morning, teams would compete the official FTC game of the season just ended. After lunch, a twisted version of the challenge would be unveiled. Similar to last year, elements of the Extreme Game approach will be introduced at the Outreach Scrimmages. Teams are not required to modify their tournament bot but will need to deal with special “double cones”, “negator cones”, and “short circuit” bonus opportunities. The role of the prospective-team alliance partner and their modified jersey-bot will be important. It adds another element of fun and excitement to the day.

Workshops

Multi-Track Workshops Days (Aug 19th, Sep 23rd)

Kean University is confirmed to reprise the Workshops Day there on Saturday, August 19th.

Moorestown Friends School is confirmed to reprise the Workshops Day there on Saturday, September 23rd.

Below are the 8 Tracks of offered at last season’s Workshops Day. The intent is to reprise and update the content.

Basic Robotics Hardware - Mechanical & Electrical	Robotics – Beyond Basics - Competitive Design
Basic Robot Control using JAVA	Advanced Programming Topics
Coach/ Mentor/ Parent Track	Blended Track - Sampling of FTC Topics
3D Printed Parts, CAD, Specialty Parts	Onshape - Introduction & Application to FTC

All Coach #1 and Coach #2, on record with FIRST from last season, have received a link to the “Pre-Registration Form”. It solicits interest in the Aug/Sep Workshop Days, asks for an estimate of attendees, and requests input on the proposed tracks. If you are coach or prospective coach who did not receive the link and are interested in participation, here it is.

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeHxgf2nqnPn4tcEypbjpCldGTGg0CbflNpsstKzAnNigXZtQ/viewform>

FTCNJ is looking for experienced teams and mentors to lend a hand. Contact us if you can help.

Other Potential Training

FTCNJ is considering additional training in the form of a possible mini-robo-camp in July, if there is enough interest to make such (2 day) events viable.

The events, if occurring, will be in the special targeted growth areas - - the southern counties of NJ where team population is sparse and the northeast where there is some latent effect of the COVID shutdown (preventing NE conferences from coming back to full strength).

Similar to the Outreach Scrimmages, teams can help by participating as a mentoring veteran team or (very importantly) by helping to bring new prospects to FTCNJ. Contact FTCNJ if you are interested.

Off-Season Event Planning – Team Events

STEAM Showcase – June 6th

Team 9848 GearView is hosting a STEAM Showcase on June 6, 2023 from 6:00 - 8:30 to highlight Clearview's STEM programs as well as FIRST Tech Challenge Teams in New Jersey. FTC Teams are invited to have a table to showcase their team as well as run informal scrimmages for participants. Please complete this form if your team is interested in participating: [FTC Team STEAM Showcase Interest Form](#)

FTCNJ will also be attending the STEAM Showcase. Their Information Table will include FIRST Tech Challenge literature and guidance about starting a team. This year, the far-south counties of NJ and the inner-city areas of northeast NJ are particularly targeted for growth initiatives. Team help is really needed and welcome.

Maryland Tech Invitational: June 23rd – 25th

Good luck to our three FTC New Jersey teams that are participating in this top-notch off-season event. Best wishes for a great competition ... #7149 Enforcers, #9889 Cruise Control, and #14481 Don't Blink. Have a safe and successful trip to the big annual event.

Others?

If your team is planning a friendly scrimmage or outreach and would like our FTCNJ community to know about it, please let us know. Happy to include events, as appropriate.

2023-2024 Season Events

Game Reveal (September 9th)

Per usual, FTCNJ will be holding two “live” day long “Kick Off Celebration” events on Saturday, Sept 9th. Morning features will include various forums, caucuses and auditorium programs leading up to the Reveal.

Raritan Valley Science & Technology Showcase! (Sep 30th & Oct 1st)

FIRST Tech Challenge has been invited to participate in this large Showcase event taking place at the Bridgewater Mall. All of the FIRST Programs will be featured and FTC will once again be given their own large area to display robots, demonstrate and engage mall goers. Last year, ~20 of our teams supported this event either on Saturday or Sunday. Thanks again to all of those who helped ...with displays, demos at the Freight Frenzy Field, demos on the PowerPlay Field, and facilitating the young people driving jersey-bots around our “FTC racetrack”. This year, the Showcase dates are September 30th and October 1st. More information about the event and guidance on how to register for it will be forthcoming in this Newsletter.

Other Items / News!

Coaches Caucus (June 2nd)

These voluntary monthly gatherings of take place on the 1st Friday of the month. The next Caucus is June 2nd. The Registration Link for Coaches: [https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZUrc-utqDirE9WWmWsKG71JTpDvegQBFLvS](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84481111111)

Captains Caucus (June 16th)

For those interested, the next third-Friday “Captains Caucus” will be Friday, June 16th at 8pm. Here’s the link: [https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZlzf-GoqzMpGtejInpNg4HZmJMi7Lh622g](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84481111111)

Registration for the Zoom caucuses has been low. We understand that some are tied up with school year end or simply need a break. If we do not have more than a handful of registrants, a postponement will simply occur.

Conferences and Leagues

The annual update and balancing of the Conferences and Leagues (to approach comparable quantity of teams in each) will be taking place soon. Coaches will be polled regarding their team re-registration and expansion plans for the coming season. Hoping that all will promptly reply to the request for information when sent. Sorry, not yet ready to being posting dates and venues, but coming soon.

Department of Defense Grants

Our FIRST Senior Mentor, Chris Nalbone has learned of an upcoming grant with the DoD STEM from a fellow FIRST Senior Mentor from California, and FSM contact for DoD STEM, Laura Larkin. He has passed it along for sharing with interested parties. Thanks, Chris! ...

The Department of Defense is the largest government employer of scientists and engineers and has an office and budget directed at STEM education.

DoD supported over 1600 teams and classrooms this season at all program levels around the globe. The grant application is accessed through a portal which typically opens mid-May and closes mid-June.

- To be eligible for DoD STEM funding, teams must have a DoDEA or DoD mentor or coach. This requirement provides a means for the DoD workforce - educators, scientists, and engineers - to achieve sustained engagement with students, parents, teachers, and the public in STEM initiatives.
- DoD STEM places an emphasis on supporting teams and communities with the following criteria (as well as geographic representation, rural areas, underrepresented students in STEM):
 - Teams affiliated with DoDEA schools.
 - Teams affiliated with military impacted schools or communities.
 - Teams affiliated with Title 1 schools or communities.

If teams meet these eligibility requirements and would like additional information, they should complete the DoD STEM FIRST Team Grant Inquiry. For additional information about DoD and FIRST, head on over to <https://dodstem.us/first/>

If you are curious about the myriad STEM efforts in the DoD portfolio, check out <https://dodstem.us>