Kids put robots FIRST

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CLEMSON — There's one simple rule to remember when down in the pit for the sixth annual FIRST Robotics Competition Palmetto Regional at Littlejohn Coliseum.

When you hear, "Watch out, robot coming through," you need to get out of the way.

Plenty of those warning calls were shouted out on Thursday as upward of 1,000 students, both national and international, converged at Littlejohn Coliseum to prepare for the robotics competition slated to begin at 9 a.m. today.

This year, 44 teams are participating, the furthest team venturing from Brazil while teams from West Virginia, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, Alabama, New Jersey and all over South Carolina will be vying for the top spot by the end of competition on Saturday.

Earlier this year, each team was given its robot "kits" to begin constructing the competitive team member.

Team 343, Oconee County, has placed high ever since it began competing, Melsheimer said. Almost 200 student supporters in Oconee County are primed to visit Littlejohn via school busses on Friday to cheer on their team, said Team 343 officials.

Each year, the competitor teams and their robots will be given the rules of the game along with their kits and this year, the game has a fresh spin.

Dubbed "Lunacy," the idea of the game is to get as many balls or "moon rocks" into the opposing trailers that each robot will be towing on the game court.

"The idea is to have the least amount of balls in your own trailer," Melsheimer said.

The event touches many angles of the world with competing students hailing from the Netherlands, Mexico, Israel and England, participating on 1,500 teams.

Throughout the entire annual competition, 127 tons of material will be utilized which is more than half the weight of the Statue of Liberty while 22 tons of batteries, 21,905 motors and 26 miles of wire will also be used.

"It's going to be very exciting. There is a lot of talent here," Melsheimer said.



Jessica Sibley/Staff

Students control their robots from the sidelines during a practice run for the sixth annual FIRST Robotics Competition Palmetto Regional at Littlejohn Coliseum. First rounds begin at 9:30 a.m. today.