

Battle of the Bots

By ReadWorks

Alex set down the screwdriver with a slam. “There! We’ve finished it!” he said. Alex looked around at his three teammates. The four of them had been working together to build a robot for the last three months. Now the robot was complete, and they had given it a name: Athena. Battle of the Bots was the state’s biggest robot competition, and it was starting in two days. The team had finished just in time.

“Are you sure?” Alyssa asked. “Don’t you think we could still improve some things?”

“No!” cried everyone else in unison. Alyssa always wanted to keep adding things to the robot. She had come up with some great ideas; the razor defense mechanism had been her suggestion. She had also figured out a way to attach the robot’s wheels so that it could roll over its opponent. But now there was no time left. They needed to stop building and prepare their strategy.

Each year the state put on Battle of the Bots. It was a showdown to see which school could build the competition’s winning robot. For a full day, the robots faced off in an arena. By the end of the day, the arena would be filled with mechanical arms and levers from the defeated robots. The team that built the winning robot would receive \$5,000.

Alex looked at his group. If they split the prize evenly, that would be \$1,250 each. What would everyone else do with \$1,250? He knew that he would save his for camp that summer. Alyssa would probably use hers to buy more tools—she was always building something. Alex shook himself. This was not the time to be daydreaming about the prize. They still needed to design a strategy so that they could win the competition.

“Alright, guys,” said Alex. “How are we going to beat the Cougars?” The Cougars had won the competition for the last two years. Last year their robot, “The Destroyer,” had won Battle of the Bots in record time. Large, scissor-like jaws had chomped down the competition.

“I have an idea,” said Kumar. “I’ve been watching videos from last year’s competition. I noticed something. The Cougars use the same strategy every year.”

Kumar’s brother Arif nodded and chimed in. “The Cougars always build a robot that is big and strong. It wins through force. But usually their robot isn’t very fast,” Arif explained.

“Our robot is fast,” Alyssa said, thoughtfully.

“Exactly!” Kumar said. “We need to use our speed to beat them. And I have a plan for how to do it.” Kumar explained his plan to the group and they began to prepare.

Two days later, the team gathered at Battle of the Bots. Alyssa was chewing on her nails. Alex was so nervous he felt sick. Arif was pacing back and forth. Only Kumar looked calm. “Don’t worry guys,” he said. “The plan will work. Athena will win.”

The competition began, and Athena was winning all of her battles. The team had designed her for speed, and she was able to outpace her opponents. Several of Alyssa’s secret weapon designs proved deadly for the competition. The bad news was that the Cougars’ robot was doing equally well. Once again the Cougars had built an enormous, powerful robot. This year they called the robot “The Avenger.” By the end of the day, The Avenger and Athena were the only two robots remaining.

“Finalists, could you please come to the main arena and prepare your robots?” said the announcer. “We will begin the Final Death Match in five minutes.” Alex and the team walked down to the main arena. Alex could feel his heart pounding in his chest. Athena was half the size of The Avenger—could their robot really win?

The match began, and the two robots moved towards each other. The Avenger lunged for Athena, but the small robot was too quick for him. Athena circled behind The Avenger and, before the larger robot had time to turn, Athena hit The Avenger from behind. There was the harsh sound of metal cutting metal and then silence. The Avenger lay on the ground. Athena had cut the wires connecting the body of the robot to its wheels. Not only had they won, but they had won in record time.

Alex, Alyssa, Kumar and Arif all hugged. “Now it’s time for the real question,” said Alex. “How will we spend that \$5,000?”