

## News

# Vernon brothers go global with robots

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The robots being built by Vernon brothers Hudson and Nelson Schier are taking them around the world.

Hudson, a Grade 7 student at Harwood Elementary and Nelson, a Grade 5 student at Silver Star Elementary, went to Robocup 2009 in Graz, Austria with a dancing robot they named Eddy 4.0.

In June of 2010, it's Singapore with their current robot, Cotton Eye Joe 3.0.

The brother team, who call themselves, the Robo Bros, won their way into the international competitions by placing at the top of their category at events held at UBC-Okanagan.

The categories robots can be entered into

*"They're going to be more prepared."*

— Verne Schier

include soccer, rescue and dance. The Schiers have chosen the latter for their two efforts so far and each robot has taken its name from the song they chose for their robot to dance to.

Last year, it was Eddy Grant's *Electric Avenue* (with the blessing of the artist himself) and this year it's *Cotton Eye Joe* by Swedish techno/folk group Rednex.

Cotton Eye Joe is about 45 centimetres tall, has a woolly brown beard, googly cotton ball eyes and even a miniature straw hat.

Hudson says he's a significantly more com-

plex entity than was Eddy 3.0.

"He's bigger than average. There's three computer bricks, four kinds of sensors and nine motors."

It was a TV feature on robotics the boys saw just before Christmas three years ago that got them interested.

A few days later, a set of Lego Mindstorms, (programmable toy blocks with sensors), appeared underneath the Christmas tree and they were hooked.

Now, when most kids ask to be taken to the mall or hockey rink, Hudson and Nelson ask

to go to the specialty electronics store to check out new gadgets.

Hudson now has a book on robotics and is self taught and by no means are mom and dad becoming experts in the field.

"We still don't know anything about it," says dad Verne, a teacher at Silver Star Elementary.

He and his wife Rebecca's role is merely to help their sons get organized.

Besides designing the robot, Hudson and Nelson also choreographed a dance they performed last year in front of a live audience in Graz. The feat was all the more remarkable because Nelson had broken his arm in a fall just after they arrived in Austria.

Of the two boys,

Hudson would be the technical expert while Nelson is more arts-inclined. It's a good tandem when making up a robot dance routine. This go-round, they've incorporated green-screen technology and videotaped their project.

They got a lot out of last year's competition where they met and learned from other competitors, some of university age, from all over the world. That should give them a head start this time.

"They're going to be more prepared. It will be simpler this year," says Verne.

Hudson and Nelson's classmates now know about the brothers' hobby and ask them lots of questions about it.

By taking it up and

having success, the Schiers are also getting some memorable family vacations.

"It's fun and we learn

things," says Hudson, who says he'd like to be an engineer one day.

"And we get to go on a trip," adds Nelson.

