

Robots take over college

■ **Robocup event challenges students to design, build and compete**

By **RON SEYMOUR**
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There's more scoring in robot soccer than there is in the real thing.

Matches had results such as 7-1 and 11-0 on Tuesday at the Western Canadian Robocup Junior championship at Okanagan College.

Mind you, sometimes the robots scored on themselves. And there was the odd malfunction on the participating contraptions.

"The RSS team had a problem with their robot's back sensor, so it didn't work too well," KSS Grade 10 student Andrew Moldovan said after his team's robot beat up on its crosstown rival.

The daylong competition featuring 17 teams of high school, middle and elementary students from the Kelowna area was designed to foster interest in science and engineering, while also promoting creativity and innovation.

"Many of the students are working from a kit as their basic design," said OC electronic engineering professor Nadir Ould-Khessal, "but there's still room for individuality in such things as where they place the sensors, which kind of gears they use on the robots, and how they choose to integrate the sensors with the software.

"There's a lot of problem-solving and engineering skills involved, it gets kids working with computers - and it's just a lot of fun," Ould-Khessal said.

The KSS students, for example, built their robot with a different kind of bumper than the standard claw-like one. "So it doesn't get caught up in as many things," said Moldovan, who's considering an eventual career in engineering.



KIP FRASZ/The Daily Courier

Anne McClymont Elementary School student Reid Kilburn readies Popcorn the robot to dance at the Western Canadian Junior Robocup held at Okanagan College on Tuesday.

Along with the soccer competition, won by KSS, there was one that tested students' ability to design a device that could manoeuvre quickly around an obstacle course, won by RSS.

There was also one for dancing robots, though only elementary students like the winners from Black Mountain seemed interested in entering that one, since they had to perform on stage with their electronic buddy.

"It's very hard," Ould-Khessal said with a laugh, "to get the older students to dance with a robot."