



Rockford Robotics

We think outside the 'bots

Rockford Robotics Families, Volunteers, Sponsors, and Friends,

The Rockford Robotics leadership team has designed a plan for our 2020-2021 season. With the ongoing complications and uncertainties that everyone has become acquainted with over the past several months, this season's activities will look somewhat different from Rockford Robotics seasons in the past. However, our goal is to deliver the best experience to our student participants while ensuring a safe environment and staying in compliance with FIRST, local, state, and federal regulations and guidelines. We are truly being asked to live up to our motto and "think outside the 'bots" this year.

Earlier in the summer FIRST announced we would be forgoing in-person tournaments and competitions for FLL and FTC this season and that the season would be extended to allow teams time to reorganize under the new guidelines. Being a community team, we traditionally meet outside of school hours in spaces generously provided to us by sponsors and community partners. In more normal years, this allows us to offer a unique experience with many benefits to our students. However, it also leaves us without access to the processes and resources (namely, contact tracing, enforceable quarantining protocols, etc) that the schools have at their disposal to ensure safe operation. Additionally, we traditionally rely on our FLL season concluding - or at least winding down - before the end of the calendar year. Having the extended season would require both FLL and FRC run in parallel, and make it difficult to provide a quality experience for both programs. In late August we made the difficult decision to suspend our Rockford Rovers FIRST LEGO League teams for the 2021 season, to return in 2022. We are encouraging our would-be-returning 7th and 8th graders to join Rockford Robotics as a "junior" member.

In September, we received word that FIRST had made the decision to forgo in-person tournaments and competitions for FRC as well. Previously, we had learned that 2021 would be a "re-play" of the shortened 2020 season "Infinite Recharge". The FRC experience - without in-personal tournaments such as Regionals and as a re-play of the prior game without the need to build a new robot - is shaping up to be very different from any year prior. However, the complement of activities that FIRST has designed for the FRC program is, in our opinion, both exciting and compatible with our current limited operating capacity. We have decided to register FRC 2039 for the FIRST Game Changers (2021) season. Invitations to the team's official roster will be sent shortly - in order to participate in any virtual activities with the team, students must be registered with FIRST and on our roster.

Due to the ongoing challenges with meeting in person, the altered content of the season, and the continued adjustments students, families, and mentors have been making to their daily lives, we have decided to postpone any robotics-related activities to the beginning of the New Year. We will, however, plan a few virtual social events over the upcoming holiday season to keep in touch and prepare to hit the ground running in January. Kickoff for the Game Changer's season of FRC is scheduled for January 9th, 2021. We will continue to evaluate the situation, review guidelines for operating, and make a determination regarding how much (if any) of the season will incorporate in person meetings. Please stay tuned for more information as it becomes available.

Thank you for your ongoing support of and participation in Rockford Robotics programs as we continue to, now more than ever, "think outside the 'bots" in our mission to inspire our community to explore Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics in fun, exciting, and challenging ways.

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