

Intro

Iron Reign has existed, in one form or another, for the past eight years. We have competed in FLL, Google Lunar X Prize Challenge, and now, FTC.

While our team originated at WB Travis Vanguard and Academy, we are now hosted by the School of Science and Engineering at Townview, in DISD. Despite our school being 66% economically disadvantaged and being Title 1, our school consistently ranks in the top 10 nationwide. As well, our school has numerous other award winning extracurricular, including CX Debate, Math/Science UIL, and more.

A History of Iron Reign

Iron Reign has been a team for eight years. We initially started as an FLL team, plateauing in regionals every year we competed. We also did Google's Lunar X Prize program every Summer, achieving finalist status in 2011 and 2012. Upon moving to high school, we started doing FTC, as FRC was too cost-prohibitive to be parent-run.

We have been an FTC team for 6 years, advancing further and further each year. Last year, we got to the South Super Regionals, qualifying by winning the North Texas Inspire Award. In Georgia, we were the first alternative for Worlds if another team dropped out due to cost.

Also in FTC, we compete in the Texas UIL State Championships. For those unfamiliar with UIL, it is the main organizational committee for all public school academic and athletic events. Through UIL, we helped compete in the first test program for the UIL Robotics program and since then have competed in every subsequent tournament.

Outreach

Iron Reign spends a large amount of time on outreach. This year alone, we have put in 500 man-hours and created 2800 individual connections to people in our community. Our goal of this outreach is to reach disadvantaged children who would not normally have the opportunity to participate in STEM programs in order to spark their interest in STEM for future learning. Some of our major outreach events include presenting at the National Science Teachers' Association Convention in Florida, hoping to inspire people in other regions to adopt our methods of outreach. We volunteered at a Microsoft youth convention to spread STEM awareness, as well as volunteering throughout our school district.

We also volunteer for FIRST. We have hosted a scrimmage for our entire school district, DISD (one of the largest school districts in the country), and are hosting a qualifier for the North Texas region in December. We also instruct parents and educators on how to start a FIRST team when volunteering, as Iron Reign itself was started by parents at WB Travis.

Our outreach stands out from other teams through our mode of presentation. Last year, we renovated a 90's Seaview Skyline RV, took out the "home" components, and turned it into a mobile tech lab to reach underprivileged demographics within our community. Our RV currently holds 4 3D Printers, 30+

computers, 3 widescreen TVs, and 1 microwave. Our current curriculum consists of teaching kids 3D modelling in the back of the RV, using Google Sketchup, as it is free and available to any family with a computer. We usually help them design keychains, as they are memorable, but don't take excessive time to print on our printers. In the front, we teach kids how to use EV3 robots and teach them how to use the EV3 programming language to compete in a sumo-bot competition. We also give advice to parents and educators on how to start FIRST teams. To fill and staff the RV, we have received grants from Best Buy to purchase the 3D printers and laptops, grants from non-profits such as BigThought and Dallas City of Learning to fund the building and upkeep of the RV, and staffing from BigThought and AmeriCorps, as well as our own team. The AmeriCorps staffing is especially notable, as it is a US Federal Government program to support civil service within communities.

When not in outreach service, we can transform our RV into tournament mode. We have taken numerous long-distance road trips aboard our RV, with locations such as Austin, Arkansas, and Florida. We substitute the laptops for bandsaws and drill presses, use the flat screens to program, and bring our higher-quality personal 3D printer. At tournaments, we encourage other teams to board our RV, not only to encourage them to start their own similar programs, but also to help them with mechanical and building issues.

Business and Funding

Normally, Iron Reign does not get major funding. However, this year, we have seen our funding, sponsorships, and grants increase exponentially. Currently, those include:

- BigThought - RV materials, staffing, and upkeep
- Dallas City of Learning (DCOL) – RV materials and upkeep
- Best Buy – 4x3D Printers, Laptops for RV
- AmeriCorps – RV staffing
- DISD STEM - \$3000 of REV parts and 2 full practice fields
- Dallas Makerspace – Access to machining tools
- DPRG – Robot assistance
- FIRST – Tournament fees
- Texas Workforce Commission – Grant

We are always seeking out new sources of funding. In the past, we have applied for prior grants by sending letters to STEM-curious companies in the Dallas area. For example, we have previously applied for a \$4000 Orix grant, a STEM foundation dedicated to spreading STEM to the underserved. Also, recently, we received an additional grant from Best Buy for our distinguished service to the underprivileged within the Dallas area.

In previous years, we have lacked the ability to get significant transportation funding to tournaments. However, through our partnership with DISD, we have solved that problem. And when DISD is unable to provide transportation due to short notice, we can provide our own transportation due to our building of the RV.

Reference Business Letter from Last Season

“Dear Orix,

Iron Reign Robotics, a robotics team of 7 years, is competing in the 2016/17 First Tech Challenge Velocity Vortex game. We are based out of the School of Science and Engineering (SEM) in Dallas which is a title one school.

The population of the public school is racially diverse and 68 percent of the students are on free-or-reduced lunch. In spite of our economic challenges, SEM is regularly considered the school that offers students the most growth in the entire district (highest effectiveness index) and is regularly in the top 10 in many national rankings. But as the second robotics team to be formed at this Dallas ISD Magnet, we are underfunded by the district and need to reach out to organizations that are investing in the long-term future of our community.

Each year we deepen our advanced robotics skills, improve our ability to organize around common team goals, and learn how to better communicate with technical professionals so that we will be prepared to make an impact as we continue through college and eventually join the workforce. Last year our team made it to the Regional Championship during the FTC season and then proceeded on to the UIL State Robotics Championship in Austin during the summer. This year, with your support, we are striving to make it to the 12-state super regional in Georgia and go from there to the World-wide competition in Houston.

Yet we spend a significant amount of our efforts investing in younger students outside the team. We work very hard to let young students in North Texas know about the opportunities in STEM education. We mentor students in elementary and middle schools. We regularly participate in a series of STEM outreach events to help younger students think of themselves as future scientists, engineers and technical professionals. This includes presenting at events like the Dallas Mayor’s Back to School Fair, Earth Day Texas, and Moon day at the Frontiers of Flight Museum just to name a few. Last year (2015/16) our outreach involvement amounted to 400 team person-hours in service to 2,200 people. We are unaware of any other FTC team in our region that does as much outreach as we do.

This year we’ve stepped those numbers up to over 500 person-hours serving over 2,000 people so far just this summer. This was because we took on a project to renovate an RV to create a mobile learning laboratory for the Dallas City of Learning. Not only did we turn the interior into a mobile technical classroom with 3D printers, but many team members volunteered to teach robotics and 3D modelling and printing on board while volunteering for AmeriCorps with Big Thought this summer. The team was featured as a “Class Act” on TV channel CW33 because of this effort.

Unfortunately, time is money and the time it takes us to contribute to each of these events costs us dollars we don’t have. We all love teaching young children who are interested in robotics and technology and we hope what they receive is beyond value. But we also need to raise our competitive game and new parts cost money. When jerry rigging and reusing parts unsuited for the job, we waste time that could be used to make more progress and continue the advancement of our robot. As we continuously refine our design, new parts are needed and some need to be replaced as we strive for an efficient and reliable entry. The other piece of the financial puzzle is transportation costs. This year we plan to take part in multiple competitions including out-of-state competitions in order to deepen our competitive potential

and improve our chances of advancing to the next level. Competition expenses beyond the standard local track are some of the hardest expenses to fund.

We are asking for \$4,000 to help us continue our journey into robotics and we hope that Orix can become a major supporter of our team while we continue to invest in the futures of many more students in North Texas. We would love a chance to visit with you, show you our robot in its current form, and discover together how much our mission and your focus areas have in common. Please let us know how to schedule that time. Until then, you can access much more information about Iron Reign on our team blog: <http://www.ironreignrobotics.com/>

Warmest Regards,

Iron Reign “

Looking Back, Moving Forward

In the past, sustainability has not been a major concern of Iron Reign's. We've essentially had the same team for seven years. This year, our eighth, we've finally lost members through graduation. As a result, we've had to substantially reconsider our approach to recruitment and how to manage our changing team.

We already have another team in our school, team 3734 Imperial Robotics. **3734 is an entirely different team, with different sponsors, members, robots, journal, outreach, and codebase.** That being said, we recruit the more accomplished members of that team. The teams' relationship is most similar to the difference between a Junior Varsity team and a Varsity team.

We tend to recruit based on robotics experience, but having robotics experience alone is not a guarantee of joining our team. Iron Reign has a specific culture, and we tend to recruit people whose personalities fit our culture. We also do not accept people who only want to join robotics as a resume booster. While robotics is indeed a resume booster, and we allow every member to claim co-captain on their college applications, members of Iron Reign ought to join out of their genuine passion for robotics, not because of it getting them ahead in the rat race of college applications.

Since this year was the first year in which we lost a substantial number of our teammates, we had to learn how to effectively transfer knowledge. First, we were losing our master of 3D modelling, Max, so we had two members, Abhi and Charlotte, learn under his wing throughout last season. Because of that effort, they have now designed a variety of parts on our robot. For the blog and engineering journal, Ethan learned under Caitlin's tutelage how to use Jekyll, Shopify, and manage the blog. This year, we face difficulties, as we will lose our lead programmer, Tycho, for next season. To combat that, our members Abhi and Janavi, are learning the intricacies of our codebase that we've kept since we first started using Java.

Game Strategy

This year, we were faced with a conundrum. The central question was this – “Should we focus on scoring the cryptoboxes, relic, or jewel?”. We settled on the order of Cryptobox > Relic > Jewel.

Our game strategy was based off of the fact that we could build a robot which could score one block initially, and easily score a column, giving us 40+ points right off the bat. As well, the cryptobox process is simplistic enough that we could get to the balance stone to gain even more points in the endgame, without doing any point-risky challenges such as the Relic.

When we finish the cryptobox designs and autonomous, our next goal is the Jewel. The Jewel challenge is simplistic enough that it could be done in 1-2 meetings without interfering with any other design processes. Our current planned design process is first to create an arm with a color sensor attached like most teams, but eventually we plan to remove that color sensor and identify the Jewel only by OpenCV.

Finally, our last area of focus is scoring the Relic. Scoring the Relic involves a high degree of difficulty, and the risk grows when you consider that you have to score the Relic upright in order to gain the most points. As well, building an arm that can score the Relic while still staying within the 18x18x18 size limits increases the design difficulty of the robot.

Building

This year, Iron Reign has drastically changed how it builds its parts. In previous years, we have relied on primary Tetrix parts, utilizing AndyMark parts for the drivetrain and other moving areas. However, we happened to gain access to a motherlode of REV parts, which drastically changes our designs from previous years.

The biggest change enabling innovation is our newfound use of REV rails within our robot. REV rails allow for basically unlimited mount points for parts so that we are afforded maximum flexibility in our designs, comparable to the flexibility of 3D printing.

As well, for this year's robot chassis, we have decided to take the use of REV parts even further, and use the REV Power Distribution Module and both Expansion Hubs. The reason for this change is twofold. First, we experienced significant connection and static issues last year with our robot, partially due to excess static buildup from our mecanum wheels. So far, we have not experienced any of those issues using REV modules, even though we are using the same base chassis. Second, the REV hubs allow us to add more features on to our robot, such as LED strips and extra servos, that allow us to signal our team as well as create more innovative components of our robot.

We also utilize a variety of 3D printed parts on our robot. While we use less 3D printed parts than previous years, that is due to the particular challenges of this year. Our parts are modelled in PTC Creo, and we have recently switched over from Creo V.3 to Creo V.4 so that we can use the more advanced features included in the new program. Our personal 3D printer can handle a variety of materials, and we have used nylon, ABS, Filoflex, and Ninjaflex in prior designs to fit various needs. In our current robot, we have settled on using nylon. Nylon has four qualities that make it more advantageous than other materials. First, nylon is less brittle and prone to breaking than materials such as ABS. Second, nylon achieves comparatively high print quality on our robot as compared to Filoflex and Ninjaflex. Third, nylon has enough give so that it doesn't break, but is strong enough to withstand the forces felt in everyday use of our robot. Finally, nylon can be dyed so that we can give our parts a distinguishing color, a quality that we have taken advantage of in prior seasons.

An example of these 3D printed parts are our wheel guards. In testing, our mecanum drive train tended to cut up the cryptoboxes when we drove up against them. As a result, we designed various wheel

guards and tested them. We also made mockups with various materials such as cardboard, to minimize design time and waste parts. We settled on a U-shaped design to prevent damage to the boxes and other field elements, while not sacrificing mobility. Then, to guarantee nothing went wrong, we iterated through various heights of the U-shape so that they would not cut into the mats or bump into other robots

Programming

Iron Reign has generated a substantial codebase over the years. Initially, Iron Reign programmed in RobotC. However, when robot phones started becoming the main form of control, we transferred our codebase into Java. We use the Android Studio IDE to code our robot.

Our most notable programming achievement has been the integration of machine vision and augmented reality libraries into our code. Currently, we use Vuforia in conjunction with OpenCV to identify and score field elements in autonomous, as well as assist in scoring elements during TeleOp. Both Vuforia and OpenCV are industrial-level technologies that we have integrated into our codebase. Vuforia in particular is currently owned by PTC, one of the sponsors of FIRST.

Another notable programming achievement is our Pose class. We use the class to determine our robot's current position on the field using trigonometric functions. While this class currently need updating for the new season, it can still be used for any small-scale operations on the field.

Design Process

Iron Reign uses two design processes in conjunction with each other to create efficient and reliable parts. First, we use the Kaizen design process, also used in industrial corporations such as Toyota. The philosophy behind Kaizen is the idea of continual improvement, that there is always some modification to each system on our robot that will make it more efficient or more reliable. As well, design competitions are a focal point of Iron Reign's design process. In these design competitions, team members choose their favored designs that all complete some field challenge, and build them individually. Upon completion of each mechanism, the designs are tested against each other, considering weight, maneuverability, reliability, and efficiency.

An example of these design processes working in conjunction is the process of designing our cryptobox intake system. Evan had the idea to build an arm-style grabber seen on many current competition robots. His design, however, included shorter arms for space's sake and a more compact lift system than normal. Austin decided to build a unique conveyor-belt system which used friction to hold blocks in space and move them vertically. Through the competition, we determined that Evan's design was more efficient and took up less space than Austin, so we settle on his design, adding in a linear slide for lifting at the end of the process. Then, Kaizen comes in. Through firsthand experience in scrimmages, we learned that the grabber system isn't as reliable as we thought when first testing. So, we have designed a new grabber system that moves like the arms did previously, but also rotate with soft spikes attached to hold blocks with friction better without damaging them.

Budget

Bought:

REV Minibot Kit	2	125	250
REV Slim Batteries	2	50	100
Axles	4	10	40
Drivers	2	5	10
Nyloc Parts	4	5	20
Step Drill	2	5	10
Shaft Collars	4	7	28
Tetrix Competition Set	1	580	580
Control and Communication	2	265	530
REV Hubs	4	150	600
Motors	14	28	392
Encoder Cables	14	5	70
Soft Tiles	28	5	140
Tile Bags	2	60	120
Full Field	2	480	960
Total			3850

Wishlist:

Per Team - 6832				
FTC Control and Communications Set	265	0	0	https://ftc.pitsco.com/Control_Set
Electronics Set	150	0	0	https://ftc.pitsco.com/Electronics_Set
Build System: Competition Set - Tetrix [not recommended]	580	0	0	https://ftc.pitsco.com/Competition_Set
Build System: FTC Starter Kit - REV	475	1	475	http://www.revrobotics.com/REV-45-1170/
2nd REV Robotics Expansion Hub	150	1	150	http://www.revrobotics.com/REV-31-1153/
Batteries	50	2	100	http://www.revrobotics.com/rev-31-1302/
Batteries, Tetrix form factor	50	0	0	https://www.tetrixrobotics.com/Controllers-and-Electrical/Power-Accessories/TETRIX-12-Volt-Rechargeable-NiMH-Battery-Pack

Servo Power Module	40	1	40	http://www.revrobotics.com/rev-11-1144/
HD Hex Motor	30	4	120	http://www.revrobotics.com/rev-41-1301/
NeverRest Motor	28	0	0	http://www.andymark.com/NeveRest-p/am-neverest.htm
Lexan - 3 x 4 sheet - 3/32	87	1	87	http://www.homedepot.com/p/LEXAN-48-in-x-36-in-x-093-in-Polycarbonate-Sheet-GE-38/202038065
FIRST Season Registration	275	0	0	https://my.firstinspires.org/Teams
Per School - Science and Engineering				
Game Set - Full Field	480	1	480	http://www.andymark.com/ProductDetails.asp?ProductCode=AM-3600
Game Set - Half Field	270	0	0	http://www.andymark.com/ProductDetails.asp?ProductCode=AM-3600
Game Set - Quarter Field	159	0	0	http://www.andymark.com/ProductDetails.asp?ProductCode=AM-3600
Soft Tiles Game Surface	230	1	230	http://www.andymark.com/product-p/am-softtiles.htm
Field Perimeter Kit	595	1	595	http://www.andymark.com/FTC-Perimeter-p/am-0481a.htm
Tape Set	50	1	50	http://www.andymark.com/product-p/am-3600_tape.htm