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Horizon Science Academy robotics team snags second-place win

By **Briana Contreras**

The Morning Journal

The Horizon Science Academy of Lorain's Robotics team, The Cyclones, finished second out of 40 teams Jan. 26 in the "Team Challenge" category at the Brookside Intermediate School Winter Tournament.

The Cyclones came out strong and were in first place for most of the competition, but then fell a few points short, ousting them from the top ranking, said Assistant Principal Jayson Bendik.

However, the Cyclones were paired against the number one team for the final match and were victorious; propelling them with enough points to advance to the State Championship Tournament on March 9.

"We were happy and jumping up and down," said Cyclones member Xzander Natal, a 13-year-old eighth-grader. "We were like fighting really hard and were trying to stay on top because we knew we were slacking off at some times, but knew we had to step up our game because we only had a few chances to make it."

Other Cyclones team members are Anthony Myrick, 14, Eddie Bowen, 14, and Jehiel Knight, 13.

The team coach is Semih Cetin, who also is a teacher at Horizon.

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The Brookside Winter Tournament included 40 elementary and middle school teams throughout Ohio that competed in VEX IQ challenges, which pertain to robotics teams, the Cyclones team said.

All of the teams fought through challenges with their robot, which tested their skills on teamwork and control.

The main challenge of the competition was called Next Level, where teams had to work to stack cones or hubs of certain colors and earn a certain number of points.

This challenge had to be completed in fewer than 60 seconds, Cetin said.

The Cyclones snagged their second place victory in the Teamwork or Team Challenge category by successfully working in alliance with other similar-ranked teams.

Xzander said their award inspires and pushes the team to do better in their next competition.



Briana Contreras — The Morning Journal

Horizon Science Academy of Lorain eighth-graders Eddie Bowen, left, Jehiel Knight, Xzander Natal and Coach Semih Cetin pose with their trophy. The Cyclones took second place out of 40 other Ohio middle school teams at the Brookside Intermediate School's Winter Tournament on Jan. 26.

He said he thought this year's Brookside Intermediate Winter Tournament, in particular, was tougher than last year, but they improved on their third place finish last year.

The Cyclones finished off last year by placing 50th out of about 400 teams from across the country at the World Championship in Louisville, Ky.

The Cyclones have participated in at least five competitions so far this year, and each member said they are looking forward to a few more in February until they compete in the state championship.

Eddie said the team is focused on winning.

Xzander said he believes the team and program has grown in the past few years after transitioning from First Lego League competitions to competing in VEX programs.

Horizon's program is improving with the help of more and better equipment, as well as support from Horizon staff and families, he said.

"The support has helped us," he said. "Our coach is wonderful. He does everything for us (and) helps us whenever

something is wrong. (Staff, teachers and family) make it feel like home when they support us."

Cetin, in his first year as head coach, said his players have enough experience that helps them adjust to new robots that can hold particular skills and help them create new goals for the season.

"Their success motivates them to do more the following year," he said.

Jehiel and Eddie said they enjoy the robotics program at Horizon because it's challenging and it's a great time.

Jehiel said this year is his first on a robotics team after participating in a LEGO league as a student at Open Door Christian School.

He said he loves being on the Cyclones because he enjoys the challenge, and is given enough flexibility to play basketball.

The Cyclones work extremely hard Monday through Friday after school, and on weekends, Bendik said.

"They put a lot of extra time and effort into this," Bendik said. "They all have unique skill sets they contribute to their team to make them successful."