

KHS pupils prepare for Hexagon Havoc

National competition tests design skills

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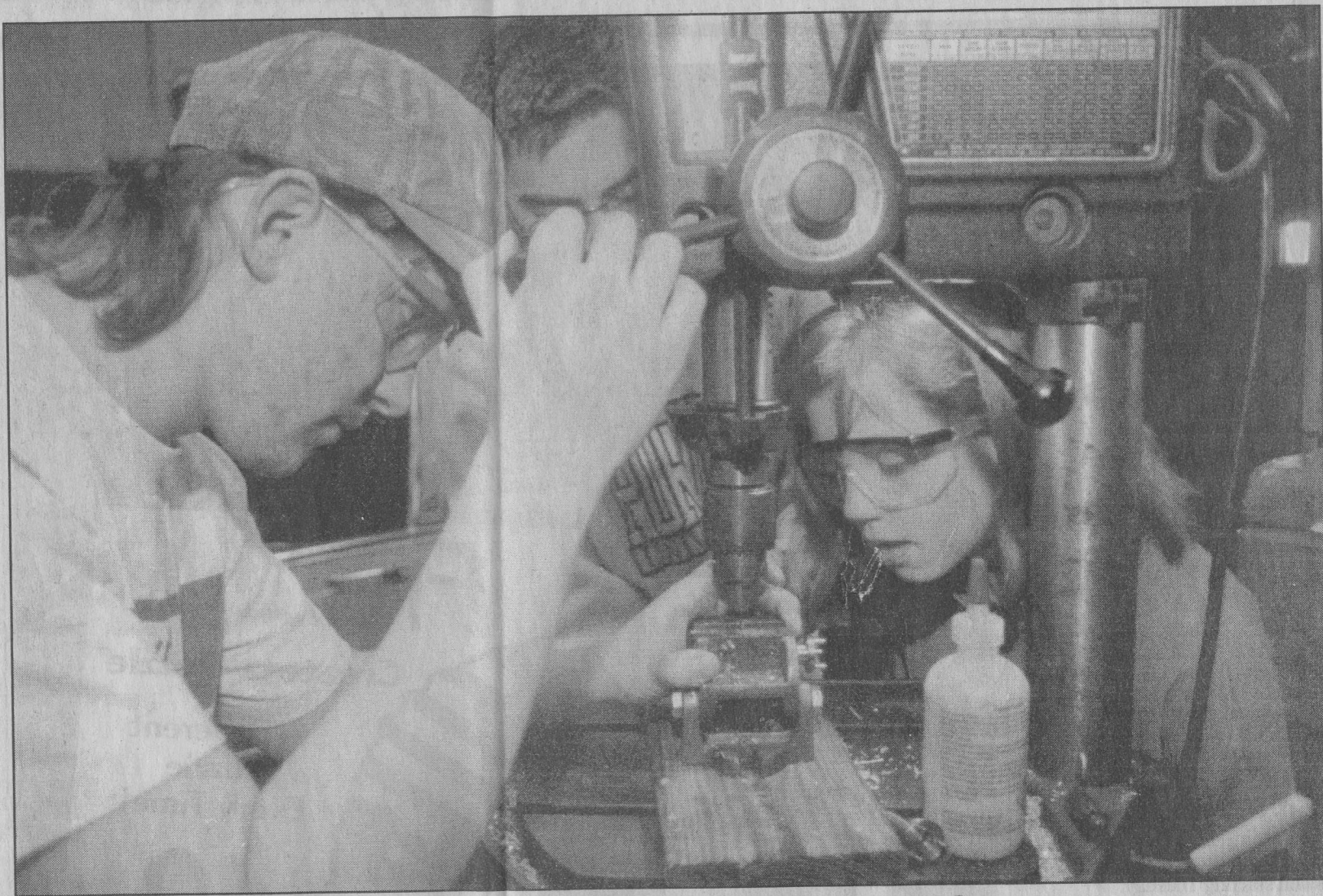
For the fifth consecutive year, Kokomo High School students, teachers and Delco Electronics engineers are joining together to test robotics skills against other groups throughout the U.S.

The team is currently preparing for the U.S. FIRST (For the Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) national championships April 19-20 at Walt Disney World's EPCOTt Center in Florida.

The theme for the competition is "Hexagon Havoc," named after the hexagon-shaped playing field.

Twenty-six KHS students, four teachers and two Delco engineers make up the team, sponsored by KHS FIRST.

This year's competition will be played on a carpeted field and pits radio-controlled "Robo-gladiators" against each other in elimination matches. Three teams participate at one time. The robots are designed to collect, transport and lift 8-inch and/or a 24-inch balls and place them in a center goal. There are 12 small balls and two large ones. A twist to this year's competition is that there will be human participation, as a student will be on a ramp outside of the hexagon and will be able to shoot the balls into the goal, according to Judy Godeke, a Delco mechanical



Steve Sensel, left-right, Brian Hipp and Jennifer Love, work on a piece of the drill motor for the team robot. (KT photo by Clint Keller)

engineer and team member.

"This gets more students involved and adds more elements to the competition," Godeke said.

KHS student Jason Goughnour has been practicing shooting the ball in hopes of being the first student participant for the local team.

Three students will actually be participating as one will operate the remote control for the robot, one will be shooting or gathering

balls and one will be in the pit area for any possible repairs or maintenance during the competition.

The student in charge of repairs, Steve Sensel, said he enjoys working with engines mainly and got involved in the competition, "to have fun and learn more about the machines."

The team and idea to compete nationally stemmed from DEKCS (Delco Electronics/Kokomo Center

Schools business-education partnership), which has existed for seven years. KHS teacher and four-year member of the Delco-KHS team, Jack Davidson, said the program has expanded since its beginning five years ago.

"When it first started there were 20 entries, this year there are 96," he said. The DELCO-KHS team and a team from Hammond School District are the only two Indiana

representatives for the event. The Delco-KHS team's best showing was in 1992's "Maize Craze" event. The team took third place among 17 teams that year. Mechanical problems caused the team to be eliminated after the second round of competition last year.

The public can get a preview of the KHS project at an open house from 2-5 p.m. March 24 at Lincoln School.