

# 1995 US First Regional Competition

Day One Feb. 24

Practice: Arrived ~12:30 to witness practice sessions

First Observations:

- Traction is critical for battles on the top platform. Even in the limited contact of the practice rounds this was evident
- Outriggers were a definite benefit when trying to score multiple times and fend off attackers
- Be Careful when judging whether you think you have scored or not. Don't trust the practice judges they are not the judges of the actual event. Contact with the goal posts was judged more critically in the main event than in practice.
- Scoring is much easier in practice when it doesn't matter which ball you get. Getting the correct ball seemed to be one of the more difficult things to do.
- The best strategy seemed to be that if you were in the middle (blue) go hard to the pile but do not disrupt it. Grab the front (small) blue ball and go back and score as many as you can, then play defense. If you are on one of the outside lanes, wait for a clearing before entering the ball area. By tangling with the other teams many cars got sideways and lost time. If the blue team disrupted the ball pile teams weren't sure which way to go. Get the big ball on your side and move it into the scoring area this will be an advantage in the early rounds where tie-breakers for second were most prevalent and meaningful. In any event being the first to score was always an advantage. It didn't matter which ball you used. If you want to score a bunch of points and make yourself a target, use the big ball. Scoring was difficult and defense of the platform played a big role. The big ball tie-breaker was a factor in MANY of the rounds. Traffic was tight and many teams did not score at all.

Day Two: Feb. 25 - The Competition

Following good performances in the practice rounds, teams such as Honeywell and the P&G Teams were strong in the seeding rounds. Both Procter and Gamble teams scored over One hundred points in a round during the early rounds. However, a team that was rarely seen during the practice sessions took the number one seed into the double-elimination rounds. Hometown Sylvania Osram / Central High School captured the valuable top seed. The seeding rounds were pretty sedate as the usual scenario was one team would get a ball - usually the small blue one - and score. The other teams would struggle to get a ball or would just try to get their big ball in better tie- break position. With some exceptions, there was not as much contact during the seeding rounds as teams did their best to protect their machines.

In the Double elimination rounds several upsets occurred early as lesser teams played spoiler to the powerhouse teams. Nashua H.S. was defeated in the first round and faced elimination in their next round, Lockheed Sanders / Daniel Webster was a powerful machine but had difficulty scoring. They had also lost in the first round. In a

brilliant tactical move Lockheed Sanders was the first to retrieve their large ball and took a defensive position in the middle of the wall area. By keeping the other two teams penned into the ball area they were able to eliminate Nashua and move on.

E-Systems had a new team this year and a strong machine (probably one of the most durable and strongest machines in the competition). Even so they couldn't overcome weaker teams that were willing to sacrifice themselves to make sure a strong team was eliminated.

Jabs had one of the smoothest running and best controlled machines in the competition. This smooth running and precision driving had made their mark. They lost their first round but came back moving their way through the losers bracket. JABS Downfall was that their machine was slightly undersized. When there was no traffic in the scoring area this was not a problem. As the rounds moved on and the competition got tougher they had to move too close to the goal and often wound up leaning against it. While the ball moved easily back and forth through the goal, no points were scored as interference with the goal was often called. (My interpretation of this rule and the way I believe it was explained to the teams will follow) Several Complaints to the referees in previous rounds I'm sure did not help either. Still, By scoring every once in a while and controlling the top platform they were able to move on.

In the final double-elimination round before the semifinals JABS went up against the brightly multicolored Stratus machine. Competition was fierce as the winner would move on to the semi-finals. The pressure got to one of the stratus drivers as their car went to the top platform. The driver overshot the top and momentum threatened to tip the machine over and roll it down the other side. In a desperation move one of the stratus team members reached out to stop the machine. The match continued with the crowd unaware of the infraction. The local crowd erupted when the judges failed to award scoring points to the JABS team for leaning onto the goal and awarded the victory to stratus. A ten minute break was given for teams to make repairs before the semi-finals. The Stratus machine had been damaged during the event and even Dean Kaman tried to help repair the machine. During the break the officials conferred about the preceding round. They determined that the infraction had occurred and awarded the victory to JABS.

The two best of three semi-finals were JABS versus Honeywell/Cortez, and Sylvania Osram / Central High School versus Harris. The first semi-final was delayed so that Harris could repair a broken drive. So JABS faced off against Honeywell.

This match proved that controlling the ball was essential as Honeywell was repeatedly close to scoring in the first match when JABS would bump them and knock the ball loose. In the second match Honeywell broke the chain on their lift and could only push their big ball into tie break position and watch hopelessly as JABS scored easily. JABS won in two rounds.

The other semi-final pitted the little seen (due to their seed and proficiency at winning) Sylvania/osram machine versus Harris. The first match was a runaway as the drive chain on the Harris machine broke at the start. Harris repaired their machine in record time in order to make it in time for the second tilt. Their jubilation after making it back in time was short-lived as sylvan moved into position to score before Harris could

counter attack. Sylvania won both matches. The final would be hometown Sylvania Osram / Central High School versus JABS.

The final after this rules explanation on scoring and uses of the goal. As I understand the rule to be you are not allowed to use the goal in any manner. This includes if you bang into the crossbar when scoring and it appears that you were out of control and would have tipped over had the bar not been there. Also if the machine comes in contact with the bar during a scoring move, such as a beam rolling over the bar (hard to explain), the points will not be allowed. (Bear mechanics and Sunny Delight both had this problem). If, however, you are involved in a shoving match and are pushed into the goal and are still able to score these points will be allowed. As soon as you are able you must move away from the goal or points will no longer be counted. Now, back to the action!

The Sylvania / Central team was basically undefeated all day. The machine was nothing spectacular but was quick and able to retrieve either small or large ball quickly and score from the top or the bottom of the goal. JABS had won on smooth performance and precision driving but was only able to score from the top side of the goal.

I was apparent to JABS that the only way to beat Sylvania was to pack it into a corner and hope that their ball wound up closer to the top platform. In the first round JABS managed to tip Sylvania over and entangle them in the cables around the track. The crowd was not impressed at this flagrant attempt to destroy the spirit of the contest. All of the unaligned crowd members were now squarely on Sylvania's side. JABS was unable to score and the match ended in a tie. Both of the big balls were still in the ball zone and measurements had to be taken from the top platform to determine the winner. After several minutes JABS was announced to be the winner. A chorus of boos reigned down from the crowd.

The second match began the same way as the first with JABS following Sylvania into the corner with no intention of going for their own ball. Sylvania this time was more cautious and ready for the attack. They avoided being flipped over and were able to break free and score to even the match.

The third and deciding match began with a handshake between the two teams in a sincere (even though prompted by Woody) gesture of sportsmanship that may not have been shared by the crowd. The competition began the same pattern took shape and again Sylvania was able to grab their big ball and break free. JABS also retrieved their big ball and followed. Sylvania moved into scoring position when JABS reached up and knocked the ball loose and Sylvania went tumbling down the ramp. JABS wisely moved the large ball of Sylvania back away from the goal and moved its ball towards the top. JABS made a move to score with only seconds left on the clock and they dropped their own ball. It went bouncing disastrously towards the edge of the field and as time expired the ball fell to the floor outside the field. The ball was replaced on the field closer than Sylvania's to the top platform. Dean Kaman grabbed his head with both hands in disbelief at the decision they were going to have to make.

Woody Flowers Came to the microphone with an explanation that: the situation was covered by the rules and that a winner had been determined. However due to the critical nature of the round both teams were asked if they wanted to play the round over again before being told what the ruling was. If both teams had said yes the round would have been replayed but a split decision was reached. In the ruling a ball that is out of

bounds when time expires is out of play and therefor the victory and the championship went to Sylvania Osram / Central HS