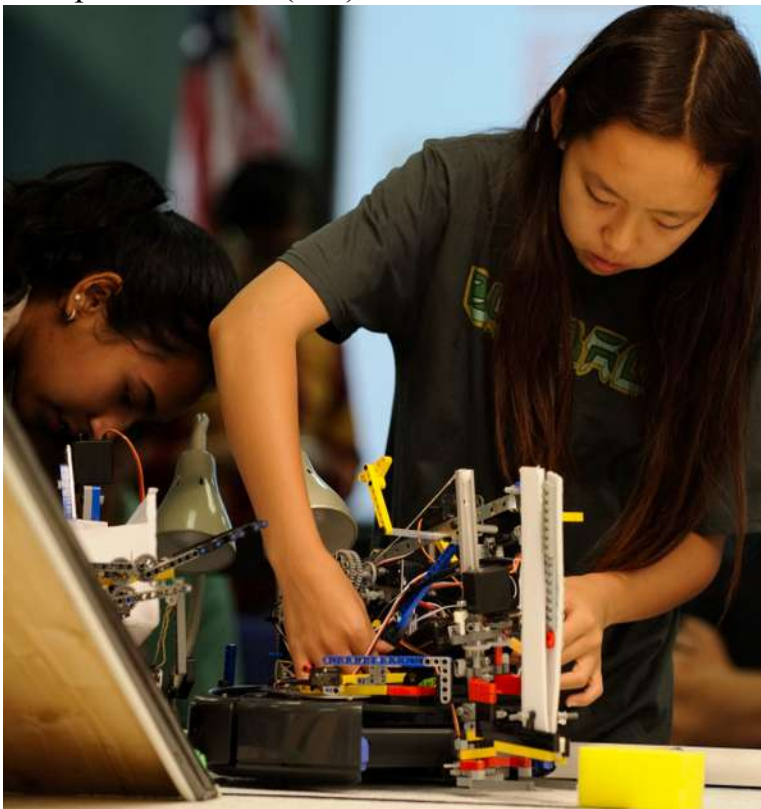# Los Altos Community Botball Team Announcement
for 2023 Season
Michael Schuh

Summary

Botball is a robotics sports program that is made up of teams that use a robot controller, motors, switches, analog sensors, digital sensors, and LEGO pieces to construct a robot. The teams use their robots to compete against other teams in a game that takes place on an 8' x 8' playing field. The robots score points by moving and placing playing field objects into scoring positions. Through the last twenty years, hundreds of students have benefited from the program, and the Los Altos Community Botball Teams have won many awards at the Northern California Botball tournaments and the International Botball tournaments. For the 2023 season, we are looking for highly motivated and interested Junior High and High School students to join the teams. We also need parents to support the teams. For more information, contact me at Michael@Boardsailor.com or at my home phone number (650) 965-8037.

Botball Competition

The goal of the KISS Institute Botball program is to interest and excite high school and middle school students in the areas of science and engineering as they design, construct, and program autonomous robots. The Botball program gives teenagers a fun competitive environment where they learn engineering and programming skills through hands-on experience with robots. This year's Botball Northern California Competition will be held on a Saturday in April at a High School in San Jose. The challenge will be announced in January of 2023. More information about Botball can be found at www.botball.org and www.kipr.org.

Time Commitment

We have found that robot team members oftentimes quickly grow to love the Botball robotics program and want to spend as much time on it as they can. Teams usually schedule five hours of meeting time a week, but we have learned that the most enthusiastic members will spend much more time working on the robots. This will of course be at the discretion of the team members. Some teams meet on Fridays after dinner and on Saturdays or Sundays Others meet at other times. Typically, most parents spend most of their time with regards to the teams transporting their children to and from the meetings and cheering them on at the competitions. Some parents spend a lot more time as coaches and assistant coaches.

Preseason Meetings

We will be holding meetings before the competition is released to teach new members how to program and to bring returning members back up to speed. These meetings are important because we have found that once the challenge is released, most fundamental robotics learning stops and team members focus on building robots for the game. **It is very important that new team members attend all of the training meetings.**

Botball preseason training meeting

Coaching Style

Michael was a head coach of local Botball teams for eleven years starting in 2002. He developed a coaching style that has been embraced by other coaches and will likely be continued by this year's coaches. He thinks the team members benefit the most from the robotics programs if they do all the designing, building, and programming. He encouraged team members, stayed out of the way, and as needed, requested that other parents do the same. He made sure that all of the materials were available and that the team members understood the tasks. Then he stepped back and helped only when needed. The teams that he coached have had fun, learned a lot, and done well in competitions. The teams this year will be run by a team captain selected by the team members and the coach. We will have several returning coaches this year and will recruit coaches for the other teams as needed.

Cost

The cost of a team is estimated to be $2,800 of which $2,500 is the team registration fee. We have some funds available from last year for registering the few teams. In 2018, we had a total of 81 team members for eight teams and spent $250 per team member. This amount varies each year based on the number of team members per team and playing field expenses. I think the optimal size of a team is six students and the maximum reasonable team size is eight to ten students. The main organization is the KISS Institute for Practical Robotics (KIPR). It is a public charity under IRS code 501(c)(3). All contributions to KIPR for the teams are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law and will defray the

expenses for all the team members of the Los Altos Community Teams. Since donations are tax deductible and fees are not, we encourage all parents to make a tax deductible donation in the $100 to $150 range to cover the team registration. Anyone who drops by February 3 will have their donation returned to them. Any extra funds raised this season will be saved for use for the next year's teams and/or for helping team members attend the International Botball Competition. Botball qualifies for some company donation matching programs, so please consider this if one of these is available for you. Botball is not an educational institution so company donation matching programs that require the organization to be an educational institution will likely not work.

If your family is having a tough year financially or this is more than your family can afford, feel free to donate whatever amount you want or even skip a year until your conditions improve. I have noticed a correlation between donation amount and team member participation. There have been bigger donations from families where their child has spent a lot of time working on Botball and smaller donations from those less active. This makes a lot of sense and is fine. We organize Botball teams to benefit the kids and somehow all of the funding thankfully works out.

Meeting Locations

Preseason training meetings will take place in Edwards Hall at St. Timothy's Episcopal Church located at 2094 Grant Rd in Mountain View. Regular season team meetings take place at the homes of team member host parents. We need more team member parents to volunteered to host teams. The team meeting location needs to have room for an 8' x 8' playing field and several laptop computers. If you are willing to host a team, please let me know. You don't have to coach to host a team.

Los Altos Community Botball teams, coaches, parents, and Botball staff at the 2018 Global Conference on Educational Robotics (GCER) competition held in Indian Wells, California.

Teams

Being on a team and learning how to be a good team member and a good team leader are some of the major benefits of the Botball program. Many team members form long lasting friendships with their teammates.

Once the application deadline has passed, the Los Altos Community Teams Board of Directors will meet and assign students to the teams. While they will try to keep friends together, five or more friends might be split onto two different teams. The talented returning team members are distributed among the teams. While we want experienced team members on each team, the team member talent and experience does not have to be equally distributed among the teams. It is okay to have younger teams with one or two experienced team members and a team or two with a high concentration of long time Botball team members. High School juniors and seniors should not be put on a team filled with Jr. High students. We try to avoid creating rookie teams made up of first time team members and one year veterans. We try to place team members on teams which meet close to their homes whenever possible. Ideally, team members will be able to bike or walk to the meetings and attend the same school as their team mates. Coaches and hosts will be on the same team as their children.

To form teams with these objectives in mind, the team organizers work to organize teams with 6 to 8 team members by
- Recruiting coaches and hosts
- Combining friends into groups independent of teams
- Putting these groups onto the geographically closest team
- Placing the rest of the prospective members onto the closest team
- Paying attention to allergies when placing team members

Hopefully we will have enough coaches and hosts so that we do not have to turn down any students if we have too many students sign up to reasonably place all of them on teams.

Many people like the idea of having High School and Middle School teams for the summer GCER international competition in St. Augustine, Florida. It is okay for team leaders and team members change teams for the international competition. As needed, the team members reorganize the teams in May for the summer GCER international competition.

Schedule

January 10 from 7:30 pm until 9 pm	Informational Meeting for potential team members and their parents at Mountain View High School in room 806
December - January 13	Identify potential team members
January 13	Applications due
January 31	Team assignments announced
February 3	Last day to drop and receive a full refund. Must tell Michael before the 7 pm training meeting start time.
January 13 – Feb 3	Team training meetings from 7:00 pm until 9:30 pm in Edwards Hall at St. Timothy's Episcopal Church located at 2094 Grant Rd in Mountain View. **Required for new team members.** Meetings will cover 1/13 – Programming the robots in KISS C 1/20 – Using a Drive Base and More Programming 1/27 – Using the iRobot Create 2/03 – Advanced Topics
February 11 – 12 (est)	Botball training workshop – 2 new team members per team can attend. Estimated date for when the workshop will take place.
February – April	Build, design, program, and prepare for the competition. Minimum of two weekly meetings will likely be Friday evenings and Saturday or Sunday afternoons.
April	Northern California Tournament at a High School in San Jose
May 12 (date may change)	All team end of season pot-luck dinner in Los Altos area
July 16 – 21	International Competition Tournament in St. Augustine, Florida

Assistance is Needed

We currently have two teams registered for the 2023 Botball season. There will likely be enough interest to form seven or more teams so we need more coaches and team meeting hosts. Coaching and hosting teams can be rewarding and fun. Contact Michael if you are willing to coach or host a team. While helpful, technical knowledge is not necessary to be a coach. New coaches and hosts are encouraged to attend the coaches training session that will take place in January. Several veteran coaches and hosts will be available as on-going resources and for mentoring new coaches and hosts.

Expectations/Rules

All team member participants are expected to help design, build, and program the robots. Team members can specialize or work on a variety of tasks. In order to be an effective team, members who are disruptive or disrespectful inside or outside of the team meetings will be warned and then removed from their team. The coach will have final say in who is accepted, removed or kept on the teams. The coaches have yet to remove a team member but reserve the right to do so if the need arises. Most of the team meetings are lots of fun with some great camaraderie. Coaches can also replace the captain.

Other Options for being on a Botball Team

If you want to be on a Botball team other than one of the Los Altos Community Teams or you didn't make our deadlines, you can find all of the information you need to form a team at Botball.org or you can talk with us about it. If you missed the application deadline and are still interested, check with us to see if we have room for you.

How to Apply

Complete the web team registration form (also available at boardsailor.com/botball) and complete and sign the *Application Information* requested below and give the signed form and your donation to Michael Schuh. The check will not be cashed until applicants are notified that they are on a team. Applicants can request their money back and remove their name from the list at any time before February 3. Please donate to "KISS Institute for Practical Robotics" in the $100 to $150 range to support the team. If this is more than you can contribute, please include a check for what you are able to contribute. Botball qualifies for some company donation matching programs so please consider this if one of these is available for you. Botball is not an educational institution so company donation matching programs that require the organization to be an educational institution will likely not work.

Application Information

Name: _____

Grade: _____ Age: _____ School: _____

Phone number: _____

Parent's Name(s): _____

Check Amount (Made out to the **KISS Institute for Practical Robotics**): _____

Are you planning on asking for matching funds for your donation? (Yes/No): _____
If yes, please tell me your company's name _____

I have read the cost and expectations/rules sections of the announcement and understand that that the team coach makes all decisions as to who will be on a team and reserves the right to remove a member after one warning for unacceptable behavior.

_____ Student's Signature

_____ Parent's Signature

Mail your signed application form (this page is all that is needed) and check to Michael Schuh at 1630 Elmhurst Drive, Los Altos, CA 94024 or bring it to the January 10 informational meeting at Mountain View High School in room 806 or to the first day of training on January 13.

Be sure and also complete the web form available here and at http://boardsailor.com/botball.
This application is also available at http://boardsailor.com/botball.

If we don't have enough coaches and meeting places, we will have to turn away applicants. Fortunately, we have not had to do this yet. If needed, the Los Altos Community Botball Teams Board of Directors will decide who is accepted or not.

Call (650) 965-8037 or email Michael@Boardsailor.com if you have any questions or need more information.