

FEEDBACK FROM COACHES FROM VOI 2020

Out of **something tragic came something hopeful and full of purpose**. A time of frightening change and uncertainty was transformed into **a beautiful hodgepodge of learning new skills and never giving up. Truly inspiring. Creativity renewed, innovative ideas abound, and a display of the very living embodiment of core values** from all involved. I can only think the creators of FLL are proud of the creators, contributors, volunteers and teams involved in this event. Thank you for letting us be a part of something so new and amazing.

I felt like my whole life was canceled for the near future and it was rough. **This personally gave me hope again and a desire to keep going when I felt lost, alone, and in a pretty dark place**. It was so wonderful to have a project to work on, to connect with my team in a new meaningful way. It was so lovely to see them try new things and get creative and I got to witness that beautiful experience first hand.

I am so thankful for this VOI and **what life and happiness it's brought back to my own life, the students on my team, and their families, our community** and even the Utah FLL community! They were all cheering us on leading up to the event and during it. Just how that felt cannot accurately be expressed into words. It was such a blessing. It changed the current state of my life into something wonderful and hopeful. I truly appreciate the opportunity you created for my team and so sooooo many others. This was an opportunity for me too!

It couldn't have been easy to pull this off. I was amazed at the way the event happened - all the volunteers coming together to create something so meaningful to so many was beautiful. You were truly inspired with this idea and I'm so glad you found the support you needed to execute it so brilliantly. It was so wonderful to be a part of. So all I can say is thank you, and that doesn't seem enough but thank you anyway.

Our team cannot Thank you and all the volunteers of this amazing event enough for providing our team a wonderful ending to our FLL season this year!

The event went so smoothly, it is almost like you have been doing this forever. We have gotten to know most of the teams now due to their amazing videos and this experience has been truly AMAZING!!!! This is our final FLL season, but we hope you continue this tradition in the future.

... want to thank all the organizers, volunteers and teams from around the world to bring us this wonderful opportunity. We had a lot fun participating and learning new skills to adapt to the virtual platform. We were all glued to our screens this weekend watching all the amazing teams and getting inspired! Thanks again for taking us on this historic journey!

... would like to thank and commend everyone involved with the virtual open. This event was **truly one of a kind and connected the FIRST community in an unprecedented manner**. From concept to execution, it was so very well done with FIRST touches all along the way. It brought the FIRST community closer together and gave us a goal, presented such creative challenges and allowed us to have so much fun!

The pilot was such a great success, I hope the virtual open becomes an official annual event as I do believe it will create opportunities for so many more teams that would otherwise not be able to attend global events.

Congratulations and thank you to all teams, volunteers, judges and organizers!

A big thank to all judges, volunteers and teams for this wonderful event. Sadly the FLL competition was cancelled worldwide. But thanks to the opportunity to join VOI, our first season can be continued and our team have had chances to experience the FIRST friendly atmosphere. The games were amazingly fun, so were the meetings. And we just hope to have more chances in the future to share, play and learn with you all again.

Thank you all, once again, for this fantastic event. We wish you all safety and good health.

I must admit, we are not ready for this to be over haha!!! That event was WAY too much fun!!! What an incredible

couple weeks this has been and the last 2 days were icing on the cake! **We learned so much from such amazing and talented teams and are so very blessed to be part of an amazing FLL Community!** Thank you to all the volunteers for the countless hours you've put into this event for all of these kids! And **congrats** to all of the award winners! We have enjoyed getting to know all of you and hope to see you all in person again sometime! Maybe next year, if the stars align

... would like to extend their **sincere appreciation to all of the volunteers who made this event possible and the dedication and care it took to pull it off.** Getting to be a part of this event **helped us to feel less isolated and furthered our continued commitment to this amazing community.** They had so much fun getting creative to put together their videos and making sure the entire team still had a chance to help finalize robot performance. We had a blast getting to be a part of the live robot runs. It felt just like being a part of Worlds. We LOVED getting to watch all of the robot runs all weekend. There were so many inspiring teams! Thank you...truly!

I would like to thank you so much for putting on the VOI event. **I think that it's incredible enough that you pulled it off and it turned out to be a really great experience.** Everything was well organized and the kids really enjoyed it. Hats off to all the announcers and refs that worked all weekend long to pull off the live stream!

There were some really cool aspects that I think honestly were better than a live tournament

1. Having a talent show online. Lots of participants and a real opportunity to get to know and appreciate individual team members.
2. The online Discord server brought together some students who were ready to participate with that. They had a whole month of interaction instead of a few days. Also they have a default way to stay connected afterward.
3. Having to learn so many new software & meeting skills. Social distancing made it difficult but this aspect is unique to VOI and has great potential to be a competition element in and of itself.
4. Getting to see each teams local region showcased as part of the tournament. This really enhanced the whole experience of watching robot runs.
5. I think the robot runs were better attended and watched than actual tournament runs (well over 100 people watching each run). The chatting adds a neat element where people can feel connected while they cheer and encourage. This led to a very real sense of international connection. In a live tournament few people can actually stand close enough to the table to see what is going on and I don't often find that tournament cameras help much with that.
6. Relaxed refereeing with the kids being held accountable for their own honesty. This was unique and had a really great feel to it.

Thanks to the organizers and volunteers to bring this amazing event to our home. We are very grateful and we appreciate the hours and ideas you all have put in to make this a **mindblowing memorable experience.**

A huge thank you to everyone who so selflessly gave their time and talents to put together this event. We loved traveling around the world to meet so many incredibly talented teams. We hope you all continue to develop your passions through perseverance, collaboration, integrity, determination and most importantly... FUN! Until we meet again! **#bethechange #morethanrobots #FIRSTfamily** 🌍💙💚💛💙🌍

A big thank you from ...! This was a wonderful experience. Virtual high fives to all the amazing teams and volunteers. Hope to see you in person some day!

Thank you to the organizers for this wonderful event. It has been a delight to learn and participate along with all of the teams involved. Everyone did a fantastic job!

We are so grateful for being a part of such a great community. A big high-5 for all the volunteers that made this Open come true. The first virtual Open!!!! Ouaaaaaouuu!

Thank you very much to all the volunteers and participating teams, **thank you for allowing us to see the world differently, fill us with hope and desire to continue building the future. Together, we are more!!**

I would like to thank all the volunteers who made this event. This work was extremely important for the quarantine here in Brazil to be more peaceful together with my students. Regardless of the result, I am extremely grateful to see my students discover new skills (and difficulties, especially with the English language). For all the technicians and students, judges, video operators, sponsors and organizers our THANK YOU and my team

Where do we begin?!?! I honestly feel that while it was disappointing for Worlds Houston to be cancelled, we have gotten to learn and do so many things with the VOI we wouldn't have gotten to do otherwise. Our team had never really made video presentations before or had been as "involved" online as they are now. Our team is generally quite shy in person but online, they have been able to make more connections with others in the FLL World. We can't thank the volunteer team enough for putting this all together. **Its a tremendous amount of work and we are so grateful! It's made every member of our team have something to hope for, in this otherwise difficult situation we are facing. Thank you!!** 🥰🥰

This event is a blessing and inspiration. My kids are excited to get the opportunity to interact with each other on zoom. The season ended even before we could celebrate our regionals and recap all we have done. They were excited for learning video merger and editing for their presentation. The show & tell and Around the world were like icing on the cake. My little one learnt how to help her brother for the robot run. That was like a big surprise to me. **Overall we didn't feel the season has ended, couldn't have imagined all this from home. Thank you for doing so much.** 💕💕

Adding to what everyone has already said, in most FLL teams, the kids end up becoming the best of friends; with the season going into an abrupt end there was that silent sadness which got amplified due to COVID as well . The announcement of the Virtual tournament brought back those precious smiles, Google hangouts went on overdrive and yes I dropped off favorite snacks on their porches so they could munch on it too.

Just very thankful. We felt like we had the rug taken out from underneath us, with the cancelling of Worlds. We are so thankful our season didn't abruptly end like it is did for so many in our precious robo FIRST family. This has also been a welcomed distraction to the stressful situation going on around us. A sense of normalcy in a world that has be completely changed.

So very VERY thankful. It was such a let down when Razorback was canceled since we only had this last year to achieve and experience it. We had worked towards that goal for 3+ years; finally achieving it in our last grand attempt. It was a rough letdown to know we'd never get to see what it was like. **But this tournament gave us a much needed reason to keep going with our robot and project goals and to keep working. It stretched our abilities and creativity to get the videos accomplished and still social distance with families. It gave my team a sense of "family" again and words cannot express how thankful as a coach I am for that.** I'm so happy they get to end their season and yes, their FLL careers with this experience. Thank you to all who managed to put this event together. It has meant so much to us. 💕💕💕💕

My team is so thankful to have this opportunity. They were absolutely heartbroken when Worlds Houston was cancelled and it was such a relief for me to be able to tell them about VOI. I am blown away by the effort all of the volunteers have put into this. You all saw a need and stepped right in without hesitation. **The effort, responsiveness, kindness, and encouragement, all during a time when I am sure things aren't easy for a lot of you, is really remarkable.** No "problem" has gone unaddressed...your kids want to connect with other teams but don't like Discord, no problem, here's a Zoom meetup...your kids want to see the Around the World videos but are too young for FB, no problem, here's a place we compiled them for you, the examples go on an on. Thank you, thank you, THANK YOU!

Thank you again for the vision and initiative to do this tournament. It inspired our team.

This is experience, concentration training, working with emotions, the ability to show your best capabilities, to cope with excitement. This is test of will and self-discipline. This event is a place where our teamcan meet like-minded people. VOI helped us set a new goal, learn something new and all of this is really important. Virtual Open Invitation is a great organisation, with a warm and friendly atmosphere, positive emotions, inspiration and aspiration. Motivation, unforgettable impressions for a long time and the list can go on forever. 😊❤️

Despite all the problems and the quarantine, all of you volunteers gave us the opportunity to work in a different way (virtually) in order to present our work. Kids love all the preparation. You show them that when you want something you can bypass any given obstacle. We are looking forward for this weekend

It is very gratifying to be able to participate in this championship and an incredible experience. We are grateful to all volunteers for their dedication and for the opportunity that even in difficult times like this, we are stronger when we work together!

We are loving it...love learning about the places the other teams are from; learning about their projects; and seeing their robots. So thankful that some had a vision of how to overcome an obstacle. It is such a great example for us all. Resiliency is a necessary life skill.

To be participating in the VOI is an opportunity to live different and have hope at this times in the world tragedy. Our children are learning that always there is a positive option, always there is a solution, always is possible to share with others and together believe in a different world. At home caring others we have shared with children around the world and this opportunity has made keep us creating, devising and thinking that FIRST and robotics is the future for a better world for this generation. Thanks for this opportunity.

This was playing full volume in my home all day long today as we did our regular family Saturday things and it was magical. All my kids took turns watching the robot runs, listening to presenters, and having a great time. It really did Enhance our day and brought back laughter and excitement that we had been sorely missing. We were texting members of our team as we marveled at all the high scores and innovative ways to tackle missions. We received texts from friends wishing our team good luck and commenting on our state video. Our FLL state event coordinators commented on our posts and cheered us on. It was like life was normal again for a moment. Thank you for that. (A happy mom and coach)

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""This has also been a welcomed distraction to the stressful situation going on around us. A sense of normalcy in a world that has been completely changed."

"The effort, responsiveness, kindness, and encouragement, all during a time when I am sure things aren't easy for a lot of you, is really remarkable."

"You show them that when you want something you can bypass any given obstacle."

"Working on this tournament has lifted my students' spirits so much."

"This will be such a positive distraction for the kids from all the chaos and anxiety our current situation has unfolded on us."

"With shelter-in-place, this has been a refreshing break for the kids and coaches alike."

"Regardless of outcome, this has been a very positive experience for our kids. They are learning new skills and learning to overcome

"In this time of uncertainty, it gives them something to look forward to; a connection to something so much greater:

"Never give up - that's one Core Value to learn from you and so many others who chipped in!!"

"The Show & Tell and Around the World were like icing on the cake."

"They were excited for learning video merger and editing for their presentation"

"Give a FIRST team adversity, and they'll find a clever technical solution to it..."

"The whole VOI experience has been so uplifting for our team and has helped us get through the social isolation with new goals, new skills and new experiences."

"My kids are excited to get the opportunity to interact with each other on zoom."

Awesome job. This competition far exceeded my expectations. It was so much fun, even being a small part of it. I really hope it's just the beginning, I am looking forward to many more!

Hello teams! I was one of the Innovation Project judges and I wanted to give EVERYONE - teams, coaches, parents, fellow judges, volunteers and our organizers a BIG HIGH 5!!!! You were all amazing and adapted to this virtual tournament with the best display of Core Values! So proud to have been a part of this tournament! Teams, you ROCKED!!!! Every one of you were wonderful to watch. I know your future holds big things! S

As a volunteer (along with my fiancée), we can safely say this event has been the highlight of the last few months for us! We are so proud of how these teams came together to problem solve the virtual medium and get creative in showcasing their team, robot, and many accomplishments from the season! Great job to all the teams, but also all the organizers and other volunteers! We're really looking forward to seeing the culmination of everyone's hard work this weekend!!

No smoke or pretense, I think whatever magic Tyler whipped up - was very impressive. Like ABC couldn't do a better show

This has been FUN. kinda feel like we should collectively achieve something else next week...

Discord has a nice set of features to let folks work independently, but give the coordinators an overview of what's going on, too

You know what -- the timings and flow of this CRAZY online virtual tournament shenanigans -- are better than in real life with everyone in the same room

What a fantastic experience for us all and for those families. Incredible idea and executed brilliantly. Was a genuine pleasure to be involved with.

All of you who planned and executed this virtual tournament must be exhausted!?! We watched over the last two days and it was so amazing. So many highlights, each of my kids had a favorite team and cheered them on from our coach. We enjoyed the videos of the home country or state, We loved seeing the robot board strategy and builds. However, what really put it over the top for my kids was Marble on System game!! Oh so fun!!! AND For the record, family nicBuchanan won a race!! (You would have thought we won the championship award with all the screaming and celebrating going on in my living room!) From my spectator view, job well done. I can't imagine how grateful participants were for this opportunity.

I am still into the FLL mode. I can't imagine the level of planning, co-ordination and time the organizers and volunteers have put it to make it at this level. It was just too good. 🎉👏. Thanks for bringing the FLL community together at this time.

Again this community proves to be top notch. What a way to turn a bad situation into something memorable and giving a once in a life time experience for these teams. A-MAZING!

This was SUCH an amazing event. I had it running most of the afternoon here and would head to the TV every time I heard "3-2-1 LEGO!" (I watched some of the cool robot demos, too!)