



Don Knight / The Herald Bulletin

From left, Brandon Heath, Stephen Carl and Adam Scott work to rebuild Anderson High School's Rube Goldberg machine after school on Wednesday. The team was hauling its machine back to Anderson on Saturday after capturing first place in state competition when the trailer carrying the machine was in an accident. A video of their project can be viewed at theheraldbulletin.com.

AHS must rebuild machine to compete

Original machine destroyed in car crash

By Melanie D. Hayes
The Herald Bulletin

ANDERSON — The Anderson High School Rube Goldberg team started building a machine on Tuesday for the national competition.

But team members have less than three weeks to complete the complex contraption.

It took them three months to build their first machine, which on Saturday won first place at the state competition. But the machine was destroyed in a traffic accident that same day.

The team of 11 students, though, did not let that ruin

their plans. They have decided to rebuild the machine in time for the national high school Rube Goldberg Machine Contest on March 17.

"I think it's been such an investment of both time and energy and there was such a feeling of accomplishment and pride at winning at the state level, that the students felt like it was the right thing to do to go on and display it and compete again," said David Perrel, an AHS physics teacher and Rube Goldberg team sponsor.

A Rube Goldberg machine is a contraption built to perform a simple task in a complicated way.

AHS competed against four other teams at the state competition held at Purdue University. They all had the same

To help the team

To help the Anderson High School Rube Goldberg team purchase materials to rebuild its destroyed machine and to help fund the trip to the national competition, donations can be made out to Anderson High School, and mailed to the high school at 4610 S. Madison Ave., in care of David Perrel for the Rube Goldberg team.

challenge — to build a machine that would inflate and pop a balloon in at least 20 steps, Perrel said. The AHS team's machine had a Sherlock Holmes theme using items like a compass and magnifying glass.

That win earned the Anderson team an invitation to compete at the national level.

But on Saturday, as the team was returning to Anderson, the vehicles and trailer carrying the machine crashed on Interstate 65.

Senior Brandon Heath was riding and sleeping in that vehicle, which his father was driving.

"The tire blew on the trailer," the senior said. "I woke up and saw the trailer swinging behind our car and then we wrecked."

"The whole machine was scattered across the highway," he said. "It was a sad feeling. We put all that work into it and it was laying in pieces on the

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highway.”

Several people, including strangers who pulled over to help, gathered the salvageable pieces and brought them back to the high school.

“The students went from the high of winning and being excited about going to nationals and perhaps placing there, to bringing in these fractured pieces of the project they worked on for three months,” Perrel said. “There were a lot of emotions that evening.

“I was so proud of the kids. They were very determined at that moment to continue forward with it,” he said. “But I wanted to give everyone time to realize the task at hand — three months of work would be done in three weeks. But on Tuesday, when we met, the motivation hadn’t dropped.”

The team will be meeting almost every day after school and during week-

ends, for several hours at a time, to rebuild the machine. They have a design, and a Sherlock Holmes theme, they can follow, but need to search for and purchase several new materials.

And the machine has to be completed by March 15 because the team will have to leave for Michigan the next day. The national competition will be March 17 at Ferris State University in Big Rapids.

Robyn Dyer, 17, said that there’s no way the team would have just given up. It would have frustrated them not to know how they would have fared at nationals with the machine they are so proud of.

“We certainly have a new challenge ahead of us,” the junior said. “With everybody working together, we will get it done. We really want to go to national, so that is our motivation.”

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