

**FIRST
TECH
CHALLENGE**
UK & IRELAND

More
Than
Robots

CENTERSTAGE



CREATED Academy's mighty duo has the edge for pushing boundaries

Small in number but big in ambition

Earth, Wind & Wire from CREATED Academy, an alternative provider, is pushing boundaries and expectations in robotics for young people outside mainstream education. This year, the mighty duo team were awarded both regionally and nationally for their relentless hard work and approach to the programme.

Proudly fuelled by



Qualcomm

[XTX]
MARKETS

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arm

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**Earth, Wind
& Wire**

**2 team members,
aged 14-16**

**CREATED
Academy, Hanley,
Stoke-on-Trent**

CREATED Academy has been involved in *FIRST* Tech Challenge UK since its inception and has brought out the best in its students through the programme.

With no prior robotic experience to lean on, the team has stayed committed to succeed, influenced by their new-found love for engineering, design and strategy.



CREATED Academy's two-man band

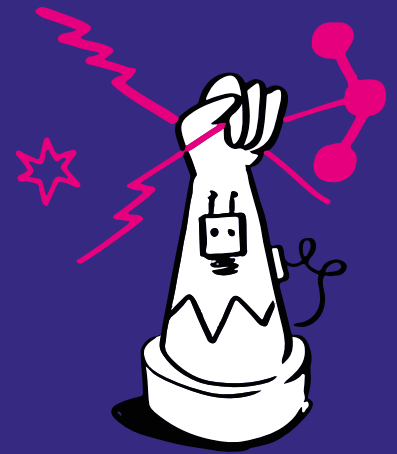
The Earth, Wind & Wire team was reborn for season 2023-24, with two new team members, T-Jay and Tom.

An unlikely pair who've since become great friends, the challenge was exactly what they'd (unknowingly) been waiting for.

“Our team ultimately comes down to two very invested young people. They want to build robots. They want to tackle the problems that are in front of them.”

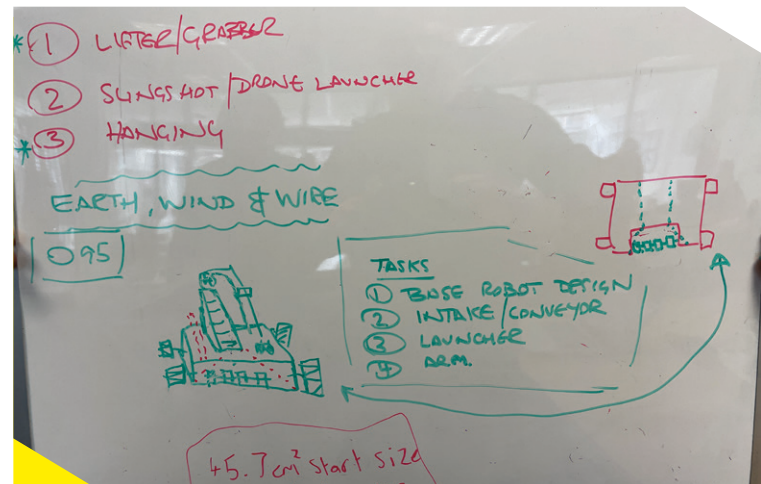
John Simmonds, Head of
Technology, CREATED Academy

With Tom's natural building abilities and T-Jay's clear design and engineering vision, the team have used their determination and inspiration from the everyday to model their ideas.

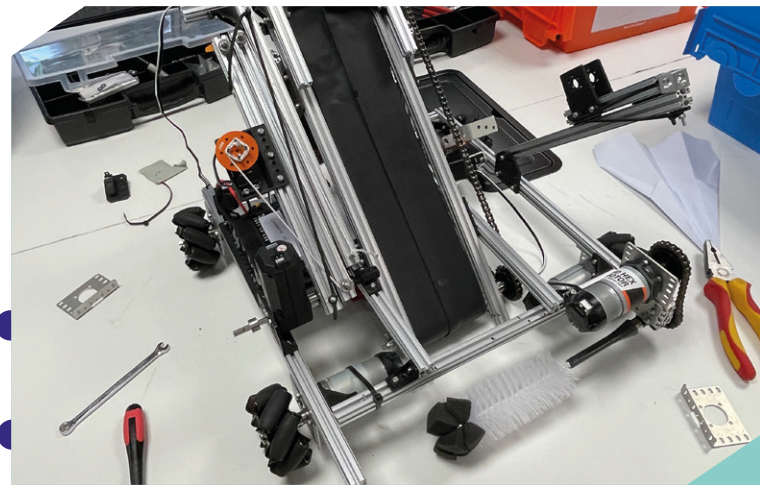


While accustomed to learning independently, the pair have thrived working as a team with months of bouncing around ideas and a dash of “inane banter.”

“They were made to be in a room together. They’re riffing off each other; they’re understanding each other. There’s this side of T-Jay I’ve never seen before. Putting that mix of personalities together has worked wonders on both of them,” John Simmonds, their Head of Technology says.



Earth, Wind & Wire's initial designs.



The team's robot, featuring their innovative use of a bottle brush.

“Alternative provision settings are beset with student placements being short-term...”

To have these students commit to being part of a team is a real win for a school such as ours, and the amount of effort and energy they have put into the design and construction of their robot has been outstanding.”

John Simmonds,
Head of Technology,
CREATED Academy



Building More Than Robots, building a community

At CREATED Academy, John explains that many students have a mistrust of traditional education environments, or have previously felt excluded in them. However, by connecting with other teams at events, the two boys have made friends with students from local schools. Reintroducing these young people to mainstream schools has been a true success thanks to the programme.

Highlighting the friendships the team has made, John calls this season **“a real feel-good, heartwarming story in more ways than one”**.

Tom, planning to leave CREATED Academy at the end of year 11, has hopes to join a local sixth-form's team or return to CREATED Academy as a mentor, leaving the door open on his continued *FIRST* Tech Challenge UK journey.

“It gave me more confidence knowing that the teams know we can perform now. Everyone's like a big community doing the same thing and having fun.”

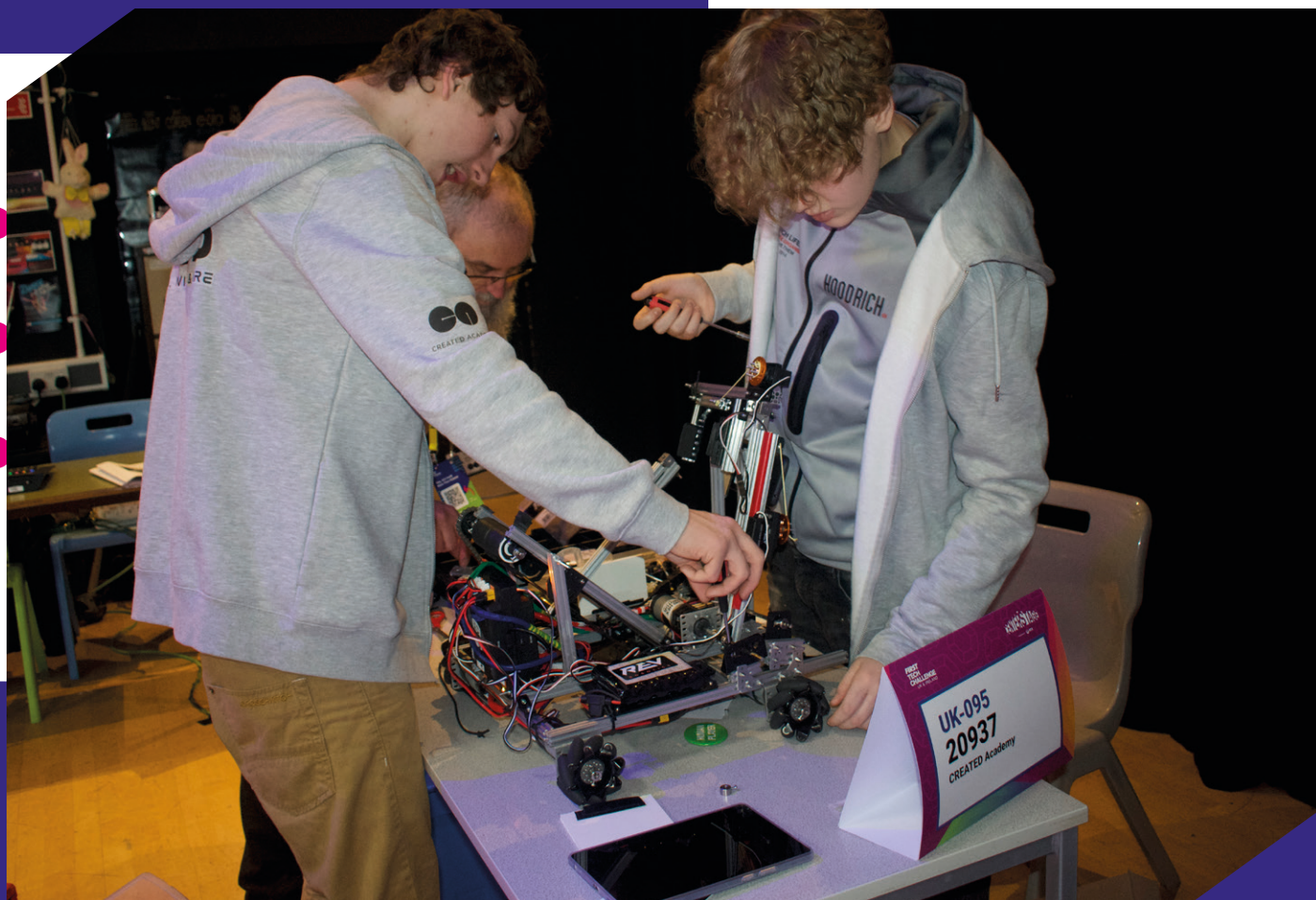
Tom, Year 11 at
CREATED Academy.



FIRST alumni are **2-3 times** more likely to study computer science or engineering at university, and **2-5 times** more likely to work in a STEM field.

T-Jay is also looking to apply his building skills, with the ultimate goal of setting up his own motorcycle repair and customisation shop. Engineering is firmly on the horizon for these two – *FIRST* Tech Challenge UK is only the beginning.





Not to mention CREATED Academy's big plans for the future as they prepare to introduce students who have become "enamoured" with the challenge and want to get involved next season.

Having met other schools in the Stoke-on-Trent area at various events, there is a definite sense of community between CREATED Academy, St John Fisher Catholic College and St Margaret Ward Catholic Academy, who act as Champion Organisations supporting the growing mix of teams in the West Midlands.

Collaboration between schools and youth groups like this is what makes the programme so rich in progression opportunities for young people, with shared skills, resources and connections.

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impact in action**