

Japan's humanoids scoop 1-0 win at RoboCup

A team from Japan have won the child-sized humanoid football final at the RoboCup World Championships in China.

The Brains Kids, from the Chiba Institute of Technology, beat rivals ZJUDancer, from China's Zhejiang University, 1-0.

The division contained England's only team of custom-built robots to qualify for the humanoid football play-offs.

But the University of Hertfordshire's Bold Hearts were defeated 2-0 in the second round by a French side.

The Robocup had a variety of categories to cater for different kinds of robot footballer.

China's Team Water was victorious in the Middle league for non-humanoid robots, beating Tech United, from the University of Eindhoven in the Netherlands.

'Stability challenges'

Many of the humanoid competition's rules had been changed for 2015, to make the game more difficult.

This year, the humanoids had to chase a white ball - harder to spot than the previous red one, and the playing surface had been changed to soft artificial turf, which caused stability problems for some of the teams.

The UK's Bold Hearts had hoped to improve their ranking after coming second in their division at the 2014 competition in Brazil.

The team blamed their goalless exit on "the aforementioned stability challenges, rather than high level defensive tactics", in a post on their blog.

Robocup has been running since 1997, and now more than 40 countries take part. The competition is designed to drive innovation in the robotics industry, with the ultimate aim to hold a humans-versus-robots football match by 2050.

RoboCup 2015 - First Game Day

A year has gone by already since we became vice world champion in Brazil, so it's time for another RoboCup World Championship! This time in Hefei, China, and it will not be easy at all to reproduce the achievements!

After traveling for more than 24 hours from the United Kingdom to China, we had a day to recover from jet lag and the humid heat, followed by 2 days of set up and getting our team ready to play football.

As mentioned in a previous post, this year much has changed in the Humanoid League: our robots have to play on artificial grass, and with a ball without colour markings that is half their size. This causes them to struggle a lot with stability, even more than already usually is the case for humanoid robots (something the BBC also experienced during their recent visit to our robot lab).

Today we played the first matches in the first round of the competition, where we again found out that this is certainly not just a challenge for our team. Never before in a major event have robots had to operate in such an environment, which forces research into a new domain, which is exactly the idea behind RoboCup.

We were automatically seeded in our group as one of the top teams last year, and with drawing of lots it was determined that the Hamburg Bit Bots and the Robopatriots joined us. The fourth place was taken by a 'blank' team, due to there being 15 teams in total, split up in 4 groups of 4.

As documented on the official schedule and results page, we managed to keep both the Bit Bots and team 'blank' from scoring against us! Unfortunately the 0-0 scores were mostly due to the aforementioned stability challenges, rather than high level defensive tactics.

As the results show, there were quite a few more matches following the same theme, but there have also been teams whose robots were able to deal with the harsh conditions and get the ball into the goal! This is a great achievement for the league, and our bots are training hard to try and join those teams in the next few days of competition.