

Robotics Team Driver Excels in Engineering and Filmmaking

Ariel Desler, 17, has been an integral part of University School's robotics team since he joined and became a robot driver in 9th grade. After learning the ropes, Ariel advanced to head engineer in 10th grade and since then, he has enjoyed a leadership role on the top-ranked team.



During the world championship last year, which was held in Anaheim, Calif., Ariel says, his skills were put to the test and he rose to the challenge. "There was lots of pressure. Our (robot piece) arm broke in half. I learned how to work with people. We had to overcome to bounce back from mechanical issues. You have to think outside the box." The University School Suns Robotics team (USSR) placed an impressive 53rd out of 470 in the prestigious competition last year. And this year, the team continues to dominate the competition, winning three tournaments and earning a "Best Design" award.

While earning accolades in robotics, Ariel has worked simultaneously in Film and TV Production, which is his other passion. "I've been taking film since 9th grade," he said. His 10th-grade TV Production class taught him the fundamentals and sparked his interest. "I learned editing, technical, setup. I loved live directing the Winter band show, and the Tarzan concert." During that time, he created his first video, an animated music video on YouTube, which went viral. "Currently it has 5,700,000 views," he said. So he decided to make another video, which garnered over 2 million views. Ariel says YouTube pays him for views, which changed his perspective on Film and TV Production. "I thought maybe this could be a career."

Ariel plans to major in Film and TV Production when he goes to college next year. "I'm still split on what I want to do. Film or engineering." He says his dream job would be to work as a director for action or comedy films. He has already been acknowledged for his filmmaking talent this year, winning third place in the Jim Harbin Awards state competition and earning the bronze medal at the Fort Lauderdale International Film Festival for his documentary on the USchool crew team.

Ariel says he's even managed to combine both his passions, by creating a documentary recently about Robotics. "I just like succeeding in both," he said.