

Irre: Touareg ohne Fahrer fährt über Offroad-Piste!

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Entries named for robot race

Let the battle of the machines begin again.

Forty self-navigating robots were chosen Monday to compete in the Oct. 8 sequel to last year's first-ever robot race across the Mojave Desert.

Only half of the semifinalists will qualify for a spot on the starting line, based on how they maneuver without human help through a series of obstacle courses.

The stakes are higher this time around: Organizers of the Pentagon-sponsored race doubled the prize money after none of the 15 contestants finished the rugged desert course last year.

A converted Humvee by Carnegie Mellon University was the best performer last year despite traveling only 71/2 miles before breaking down. The Red Team that designed the Humvee, nicknamed Sandstorm, is back for another shot with an improved version and is entering a second robot in the competition.

"This year is a dogfight. It's going to be a real rumble," said William "Red" Whittaker, a robotics professor at Carnegie Mellon University who leads the Red Team.

The semifinalists will compete head-to-head at the California Speedway in Fontana in September and October in a series of trials designed to test their self-navigation skills. The robotic vehicles cannot be controlled remotely and must rely on global positioning satellites and various sensors, lasers, radar and cameras to orient themselves and detect and avoid barriers.

Based on the robots' performance, the field will be further whittled down and 20 robots will be chosen to race in October.

The first robot to make it across 150 miles of desert between Los Angeles and Las Vegas in less than 10 hours wins. The exact course will be revealed two hours before race time.

This year's semifinalists include most of last year's participants vying for a second chance. The teams, which come from 16 states and Canada, include individuals, universities, corporations and a high school. Nearly 200 teams applied for this year's race.

Among the newcomers is the Stanford Racing Team, which is entering a converted Volkswagen Touareg nicknamed Stanley. Team leader Sebastian Thrun, a computer science professor at Stanford University, said his focus is to try to perfect Stanley's computerized navigation system so that it can overcome any obstacle. "It's all about building a mind for the machine," Thrun said. "We believe it's a software race, not a

hardware race.'

The so-called Grand Challenge contest is sponsored by the research and development arm of the Pentagon known as the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency to foster the development of unmanned vehicles that could be used in combat. The race is part of the Pentagon's efforts to have one-third of all ground vehicles unmanned by 2015.

On the Net:

DARPA Grand Challenge: <http://www.darpa.mil/grandchallenge> html

[URL=<http://www.pasadenastarnews.com/Stories/0,1413...2907297,00.html>]Quelle[/URL]