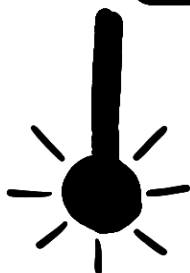


Volume 0



A ROBOTICS ZINE

Space Cats

May 15th 2023

TX: James Bloom

RX: Thomas Carroll

~Begin Transmission~

Thomas: Today I have James Bloom from Spacecat Brewing Company. How long have you been in the brewing industry?

James: I have only been in this since 2019, this business is my first venture into it. I made sure when we were doing this to pull in people who had significant brewing experience. Our head brewer, Rodger, was from Two Roads. He started there in 2013 and he has been the massive beer value add for us.

Thomas: Is this is something you were just interested in and wanted to give it a shot?

James: It was a motivation of wanting to get into an industry I respected and something I thought was a positive energy industry. The goal is for people to come here and not feel pressured to purchase or that they are buying something they are questioning. I just wanted to come up with a product that was all good and very little bad.

Thomas: What were you doing before Space Cat?

James: I worked at a company called Remedy Partners, that was my first major job out of college. I started out as an operational analyst just doing day to day spreadsheets and emails.

Thomas: That's pretty funny because Austin McChord was doing something very similar and also quit in 2019 to start something new.

James: There must have been something in the air because I loved learning how to work hard and that's what that job did for me. I really thought I was interested in the healthcare sector, and I was, I was passionate about it. Working with the people I was working with then, their passion was like ten times what mine could have ever been. The knowledge I gained, the-

contacts, the people skills, I would not have had that if I had not had that job.

Thomas: How did you get involved with NHRL?

James: I was put in touch with Katie Powers. At the time she was working for events with Datto and I met her through a mutual business connection, John Pepper, from Lakota Oaks. He introduced me to Katie who wanted to do more events and happy hours. We did something with Datto and then she mentioned “Hey, we have this robot league, I’m switching to that. We should do something” And I’m like “yeah”. It just kind of organically happened.

Thomas: When was your first event at NHRL?

James: The league had been doing events for a while before we started, it was about a year ago. We were definitely feeling it out, expectations and costs. It just turned out the customers liked the beer, and the people going to NHRL resonate with the product we are bringing. It just naturally works.

Thomas: What is it like being at the events? Do you get to see a lot of fights?

James: Oh, I do. Well, the first couple times I went I was the one serving the beer, but now I have someone serving the beer so I get to walk around and see the fights. Yeah the space is cool and the arenas are awesome, but I tell this to everybody when they ask about NHRL, the quality and the production quality is outrageous. They spared no expense, it is so high quality. That’s the difference. You have four to five battle arenas, and the commentators, you look at the stream and you are watching BattleBots, honestly.

Thomas: If you didn’t have to work the event would you come as a spectator or a competitor?

James: Spectator, until I can partner up with somebody with some combat experience. I would love for there to be a Space Cat robot. I would love that, we have worked a lot with ASML, we do happy hours with them and go back and forth with them.

My goal is to reach out to their team and make a Space Cat robot. We found this niche that works with the two companies and having a robot like that would be awesome.

Thomas: For this robot, do you know what kind of weapon you would want?

James: I like the spinners better, I honestly think they have a higher success rate. But that's just my perspective. I used to watch BattleBots religiously as a kid. It was that and WWE wrestling. It would be awesome, even if it was a little three-pounder.

Thomas: How did you decide the taste for the Tap Out collaboration?

James: We had been serving at the robot league a few times, and we realized the New England IPA had been doing really well so we thought we would take that and make a variation and have it be unique for the robot league.

Thomas: What do you do outside of brewing and watching combat robots?

James: I used to have so many more hobbies before I started this business. I was a competitive runner for a long time. Sometimes I would have considered that a hobby and sometimes it was a job but I enjoyed it a lot. I play a lot of video games, that's what I enjoy doing. It keeps me connected with friends who don't live near me. I also like to cook a lot, and the business is a lot of what I do now which I'm happy about. I think it's going really well and I enjoy coming to work every day.

Thomas: If you have all the ingredients in the world and three hours, what is your go to meal to cook?

James: Macaroni and cheese. Every few months I do a really stupid and insane macaroni and cheese recipe. For my birthday three years ago I went to Eately and bought truffle, handmade pasta, and the best cheese and it was like \$200, but it was the best thing I ever made.

Thomas: Thank you very much for your time, I'll be on the lookout for your robot entry in the future.



James Bloom; Space Cat Brewery June, 2023

~End Transmission~

The HUGE wave of East Coast ants

July 29th 2023

TX: Jonathan Schultz

RX: Thomas Carroll

~Begin Transmission~

Thomas: I have Jonathan Schultz here, builder of Drinky Bird and third place finisher at the July Maker Battle in Hartford Connecticut. How did this event come back after being dormant so long?

Jonathan: Makerspace CT held an event in 2021, it was pretty much a one off so they had to put the arena together. It had some growing pains and some learning stuff so they shelved it for a bit. When I got involved again with Norwalk after a couple year break, I ended up getting the money to donate from the December finals. Makerspace CT was a nearby charity because they operate as a non-profit and they had hosted robot events before. They seemed like a good fit for my donation. From there it's the people who are part of Makerspace CT who were very energetic and when they saw an opportunity like this, they thought "Let's bring Makerbattle back". They made a series of three tournaments in the year. They pivoted from three pounds to one pound to kind of get out from Norwalk's shadow and be their own thing. It's the first way to play with one-pounders in New England in years. I think it's all-in-all just a really good thing that's back, the event is very laid back and fun, it's just a great day for builders.

Thomas: For the first event in April you were here as the celebrity guest but for this event you built your own robot. I know you have built small robots before but is this your first ant weight?

Jonathan: Yeah, there were a lot of firsts. I had never built a one pound robot before so that was a whole new learning curve. I hadn't built anything from scratch below 250 pounds since 2019, at all. Just in general first control bot, and I guess first ground game robot. Drinky bird is kind of wading back into the waters that I so wholly rejected many years ago saying "I don't want to play this game I want to do other stuff". Big learning curve, gears don't want to line up. The first time I put the forks-

on the robot the way the wedge was setup, the tips were not sitting on the ground, they were up in the air. I might have been taking for granted how hard this was. It's a big process, having to redesign the hammer gear system in the last two days, reprint the wedgelets because they didn't touch the ground. There were many revisions to get it to be what I considered functional. It's crazy to go totally back to square one on something.

Thomas: How do you envision the future of east coast ants? Do you see it growing? What would you like it to be?

Jonathan: It's an interesting question. I think that hyper competitive events absolutely have their place, but in the last couple years there has been less opportunity for the casual events. I think right now Makerbattle is very approachable. At Norwalk, you are going to fight the best of the best robots. Something like Makerbattle, it fills a great niche if it stays an event that is a bit more casual and oriented towards newbies. Will it stay there? I don't know because people always want to win and there are a lot of great designs out there. They do so many programs for the children and teenagers in the local area and the cage is set up permanently so they have the power to do a kids league, plastic ants, 150 gram. I think that if it gets to the point where it is an overly competitive place they could diverge.

Thomas: Do you think there is room for other events on the east coast?

Jonathan: I think so. I think there are enough people in the New Hampshire, Vermont, Maine area. It's very possible, you gotta design the arena, if there are open source designs that would help, you have to get the material which is not cheap, and have the room.

Thomas: How do you spend your free time when not building robots?

Jonathan: There is a lot of talking about robots and a lot of thinking about robots. It's definitely somewhat of a deeper question. Building robots for a long time was something I was doing twenty-four-seven and got super burned out. It has to be-

more intentional. In the last couple of years, the pandemic kind of spurred this. Focus on the heavyweight because right now that's what matters, that's what everyone sees, and take the rest of the time to sit on the porch with a coffee and relax a little bit. Most of my best friends are involved with robots and we talk about it all the time, I watch every Norwalk. At the June Norwalk I was on four different teams by the end. I kept getting asked by people if I could help and I was like "Well, really no". I'm half driving Kablooey Tango, fixing Huge, and helping to fix 30lb Claw Viper which I didn't really help fix because I was too busy. It's neat after being in the community so long to be able to show up at events, know a lot of people, have a great time. It's not the months long slog of work. Right now it's time to slow down a bit and get out of the crazy robot cycle, it gets stressful after a while.

Thomas: You are not from Connecticut originally correct? What is your favorite local food since moving to Connecticut?

Jonathan: Yes, I am a filthy transplant. I'm from New Hampshire originally. Honestly I think that is one of my favorite things about moving here. I have definitely expanded a lot to try different stuff. New Haven pizza is the classic, but I love the ability to find and try any kind of different food. I used to live near a Lebanese food place, I never had that before and it was amazing. Last Makerbattle we had a Peruvian place cater and it was amazing. I think because it's a denser state than New Hampshire, the ability to try so many things is easier and a major highlight. I think when it comes down to and you really want one thing to show people when they come to visit, it's always the New Haven pizza, it's so classic. When you have a food type that has a Wikipedia page, that's the one.

Thomas: Any last shout-outs or remarks you want to throw in the article?

Jonathan: Honestly, it's cliché, but the whole team I have. We are not like a lot of teams where everyone is in the same place. I'm here, my teammate Peter is in Connecticut, my teammate Maddie who is also my girlfriend is in Connecticut and puts up with the robot all the time. But this year they all flew to Connecticut to work on the robot. When I couldn't help pack-

up for filming they all stepped up to do that. In general once we get to filming I am always really worn down so they all take over the robot and keep it alive. Also everyone at Makerspace CT, I can't put on an event like this. They are really the ones who took the ball and said "We got this donation, let's make the most of it" and now we have this amazing one pound series It's awesome. The Boston Red Sox don't own every baseball field in New England, having other places to play matters so much. There is no better place to get into robotics than Connecticut, and there is no better time.



Jonathan Schultz soldering Drinky Bird; July, 2023

~End Transmission~

Recipes with Shea “Cookie” Johns

TX: Shea Johns

RX: Thomas Carroll

~Begin Transmission~

The Recipe: Pasta Salad

Dressing: Mix well + Let Set with red onion

- 0.333c Olive oil
- 2 Tbs Red wine vinegar
- 2 Tbs Italian seasoning (dressing)
- 1 Tbs Fresh chopped parsley
- Dash red pepper/salt/fresh pepper
- Dash garlic (minced)

Pasta:

- 16oz Cooked pasta
- 8oz Mozzarella (cut up)
- 4oz Thick cut salami
- 4oz Cherry tomatoes (halved)
- 1c Artichoke hearts (cut up)
- 0.5c Red onion (finely sliced, half diced)
- Dash parsley
- Cucumber (to taste)

Thomas: Is this a common recipe you cook? Is it for robotic occasions or whenever you feel like making it?

Shea: I make this recipe for almost any potluck style event, and it's great for easy meals throughout the week. I make it for Orchid Society meetings, work potlucks, hosting a watch party or when I have a busy week coming up and need to have something on tap in the fridge to keep me alive.

Thomas: What are your favorite substitutions?

Shea: The best thing about this recipe is that really, it's just a structure that you can fill in with your favorite ingredients. A 1:1 ratio of protein to plant matter that has at least a few different colors, textures and flavors, and toss it in with whatever noodle texture (or textures) you want. I usually use

the multi color rotini noodles, but I've been known to put 3-5 different shaped pastas in a batch at a time. I'll boil the pastas all together, in salted water, just adding each different shape in when the cook time is right. If the bow ties take 12 minutes, add those first, rotini takes 9 minutes so add that 3 minutes later once it's back to a boil, etc. I don't rinse the pasta after draining it, but toss it often in the strainer to keep it cooling evenly without drying out. Once it's pretty cool I mix the dressing into it. Meat/cheese, artichokes, bell pepper or whatever ingredients stay pretty fresh go in once it's cold. I usually slice and add the cucumbers and heirloom medley cherry tomatoes closer to the time of serving since I like them to be crisper. They're still good in there by the end of the week, but they won't be as perky.

I hate olives so I don't put olives, but if you love olives throw em in there! The store didn't have good cucumbers today? Put in cauliflower! Feeling fancy? Feta time! I often use shallot instead of red onion so it's a little more garlicky, but it's milder so I might add more vinegar or a dash of lemon if that's the case.

Thomas: Have you considered a pasta salad themed robot if you have not yet made one already?

Shea: I've never thought about pasta themed robot, but I think having some kind of rotini worm gear locomotion would be very cool (albeit impractical).

Thomas: If the robots turn against you, would you consider moving to cooking full time?

Shea: When the robots rise up, I'm not sure how useful cooking will be for appeasing them, but this recipe would definitely help me structure some apocalypse meals. I've worked in a few restaurants but always front of house, so maybe I need to get more knife time!

~End Transmission~

The Great Boston Robot Fiasco

December 9th 2023

TX: Eric Novick

RX: Thomas Carroll

~Begin Transmission~

Thomas: I am here with Eric Novick, creator of the Boston Area Robot Fiasco. How did BARF come into existence?

Eric: About a year ago there was an open house at Cambridge Hackspace where I go and work on my robots. I invited my friends Anna and Austin from team RIPperoni and they hung out for the night. During this we were thinking about how we wished there was an event in Boston. Instead of saying there should be an event we decided should make an event. It took about three months to find a venue and six months to organize everything.

Thomas: How did you decide on capture the flag instead of combat or a different freestyle event?

Eric: For the first several months I was trying to do combat, but because so many places said no I decided to look for an alternative. When I was at NHRL in March I believe, you were running capture the flag and that got me thinking about alternative competitions. I met a couple of people who were also doing capture the flag such as Cutthroat Cuttles, Uh-Oh Oreo, and a flamethrower bot there. A few months later in the summer we played capture the flag again just to have fun and talk about robots. It worked well enough then so I thought I could make some actual rules and it worked out.

Thomas: Will this event return?

Eric: I hope so. I have been talking with the event coordinator Alex at Artisans Asylum and he is very interested in it returning. Additionally he would be interested in running combat robotics if we can get a cage so we are definitely going to do this again but we don't know when yet. We will be having a meeting after new years so hopefully we can get something going again soon.

Thomas: How did the event go and would you change any of the rules from today?

Eric: The event went pretty well, I don't think I have any major complaints. There was a little bit of a kerfuffle with the bracket because some people dropped out and some were on a team but didn't show up. Field-wise I would definitely want to get rid of those corners because I don't like there being stalemates, that was a big issue I think. Additionally I would want to make pinning and stalemates more clear and add it in the rules, I had to make that up in the first match. Everyone was understanding, I asked around and we went with that for the rest of the day.

Thomas: Who picked the acronym BARF?

Eric: Initially I was thinking of picking the Boston Area Robotics Federation because I was talking with Robert Rund, Brandon Zalinski, and Justin Marple about running events and making boxes so we could all share resources. We talked a bit about it but never really came to any decisions.

Thomas: As for the cage you were using today, is that owned by you? Could you bring it to other locations?

Eric: The cage I built myself with my dad so I own it. If the revenue from this event pays it off then I have paid it off. I am taking it apart at five and bring it home so then I can bring it wherever I want.

Thomas: How do you think capture the flag and freestyle games will change robotics in the New England area?

Eric: I am hoping this isn't the only capture the cube style event. I very much enjoy combat robotics but it can get very expensive, especially if you are replacing multiple parts an event. I do want other events, not just combat, not just capture the flag. I was thinking at the next fiasco or the final fiasco we will do many different events. I was listening to a podcast that you were being interviewed on and I heard some people talking about other kinds of events such as combat derby or a race and other events. We have a lot of options, but it would definitely need a lot more volunteers.

Thomas: This was a fantastic event and I appreciate your time. I am very much looking forward to more events in the future.



The final match, the inaugural BARF event. December, 2023

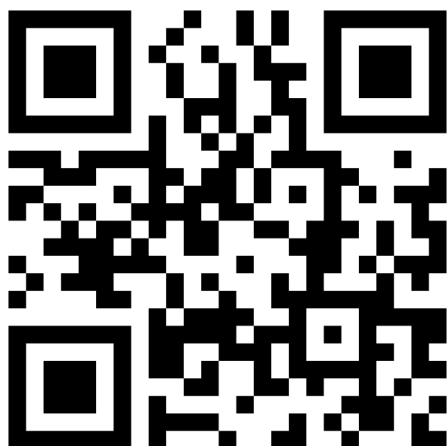
-Editor's note: After the conclusion of the event, I was informed that the arena used had fallen onto the highway and will have to be rebuilt.

~End Transmission~

Thank you for checking out the first issue of TX/RX, my goal for this zine is to share the underground world of smaller robotics events and the personalities around them. If you have an idea for an interview or would like to be interviewed about your event, you can contact me at Thomas@tt3d.xyz and it could be included in the next issue.

Interviews are minimally edited and condensed for print and clarity.

Printing of TX/RX is all on a laser printer and stapled by hand so runs are very limited. If you would like to print yourself a copy or share it with someone else, the digital version can be found at tt3d.xyz/txrx, or by scanning the QR code below.



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