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TTU Baja SAE Completes Most Successful Season in Its History

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Tennessee Tech University's Baja SAE team, the most decorated Baja SAE team in the

world, just completed its most successful season ever in 2011 by adding another championship at the competition near Cullman, Ala., and a second place finish at the most recent competition in Pittsburg, Kansas.

Following April's torrential rains at the Stony Lonesome Off-Highway Vehicle Park in Cullman County, Ala., Tennessee Tech's Baja SAE team made a strong showing in the preliminary events of design, water maneuverability, acceleration, hill climb, land maneuverability, and suspension/traction before running off and leaving the competition in the four-hour, mud-filled endurance race. The combined scores in all of the events resulted in the championship for Tennessee Tech.

On Memorial Day weekend, Tennessee Tech competed at Pittsburg State University in Pittsburg, Kansas. Once again, they demonstrated their talent with a second-place overall finish. They won the design competition and scored well in acceleration, sled-pull, land maneuverability, and suspension/traction before another muddy, four-hour endurance race.

"It just looks like a complete package," said Andy Schleif, head design judge about TTU's win in the design competition. "It looks like you could buy it off the showroom floor."

The Society of Automotive Engineers hosts collegiate design competitions and the Baja SAE consists of competitions that simulate real-world engineering design projects and related challenges. Engineering students design and build an off-road vehicle that will survive the severe punishment of rough terrain and sometimes even water. These competitions typically include up to 100 teams from around the world.

The object of the competition is to provide SAE student members with a challenging project that involves the planning and manufacturing tasks found when introducing a new product to the consumer industrial market. Teams compete against one another to have their design accepted for manufacture by a fictitious firm. Students must function as a team to not only design, build, test, promote, and race a vehicle within the limits of the rules, but also to generate financial support for their project and manage their educational priorities.

The 2011 Tennessee Tech Baja SAE team was guided by co-captains Amy Newton and Bob Matthews, along with lead designer Chris Reedy and lead fabricator Jed Peterson. The faculty adviser is Dale A. Wilson.

Tennessee Tech has been competing in the Baja SAE competitions for more than 30 years. In that time, the team has earned 12 championships, double the number of championships for any other school. TTU's Baja SAE team has finished in the Top 10 overall in more than 80 percent of the competitions.

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