

Backfill

World's Smallest Tract Homes?

by David Frane

No, you're not seeing double, triple, or even quadruple — you're seeing the TeamWorks competition that took place in June at the SkillsUSA leadership conference in Kansas City, Mo. SkillsUSA, an organization that promotes trade and technical training at high schools and technical colleges, holds the national competition each year. To qualify, students must first win at the state and local levels.

There are individual contests in carpentry, masonry, plumbing, and hvac. But the main event is the TeamWorks championship, in which teams of four grapple with a variety of trades. This year, 32 teams received plans for a 7-foot-by-7-foot structure con-

taining a bathroom; they had two days to build it. Corporate sponsors donated the necessary tools and materials. Volunteer judges, many of them contractors, roamed the floor during construction and graded teams on various aspects of their work. As in the real world, each phase of the job had to pass inspection. Unlike in the real world, the inspector usually showed up right on time.

Teams began by laying brick-veneer block foundation walls [1]. Next they framed wood floors with I-joists, and walls with a combination of wood and steel studs. Participants had to install an electrical service panel and wire a specified number of receptacles, switches, and fixtures [2]; install, flash, and case a window; and paper and side a wall [3]. They also ran PVC drains and copper supply lines to a sink, shower, and toilet. There wasn't time to tape the interior, but enough drywall was hung that a pedestal sink and medicine cabinet could be installed [4].

Only seven teams finished in the allotted time. Points were deducted for errors, so the winning team was the one that made the fewest mistakes. One contractor attending the event told *JLC*, "Man, I wish some of the contestants lived in my area — I'd hire them as soon as they got out of school."

For more information, go to the SkillsUSA Web site at www.skillsusa.org.



All photos by Sam Baker except where noted



Courtesy Bosch Power Tools