Driving the Future

As a high school senior at Intel ISEF 2007, Ben Gulak—along with fellow members of Team Canada—won the Second Place Grand Award in Team Projects for the Uno, an environmentally-friendly electric street vehicle that rides like a motorcycle.

Gulak's inspiration for the Uno came during a 2006 family trip to Beijing. Troubled by the smog and pollution emanating from thousands of motor scooters filling the traffic-clogged city streets, Gulak envisioned a solution: an alternative that would retain the agility and maneuverability of a motorbike, but run on electricity. Further, Gulak was determined that his Uno look good. Having spent a summer studying art abroad, Gulak says he was committed to form as well as function.

Since the prototype's unveiling at Intel ISEF, both product and inventor have garnered much attention. In 2008, Popular Science magazine selected the Uno as one of the top 10 inventions of the year and featured the bike on the cover of its June issue. The Uno also appeared on the Discovery Channel and has been the subject of articles in numerous newspapers, including the *Chicago Tribune* and the *New York Times*.

This media attention worked in Gulak's favor when he appeared as a contestant on *Dragon's Den,* a Canadian reality television show where entrepreneurs pitch their ideas to a panel of venture capitalists in order to secure investment funding. On that episode, Gulak successfully convinced the show's "dragons" to invest USD 1.25 million in his start-up company, BPG Werks.

These days, outside of his work on the Uno and classes at MIT, Gulak is moving forward with another ground-breaking invention: the DTV Shredder, an all-season, all-terrain vehicle that looks something like a scooter on serious steroids. It is ridden like a skateboard and travels at extreme speeds, but traverses earth, sand, snow, and even mountainsides on tank treads. Already, the extreme sports and military markets are abuzz in anticipation of the product's release. BPW Werks has been working with the U.S. Air Force Academy to develop the militarized version.