Apex 2015 – The Tournament that Almost Wasn’t

Like them, hate them, never heard of them, or think they’re dumb: no matter what you think, you can’t deny that e-sports are becoming a bigger and bigger thing every year. Who could have guessed that, as competitive video games got more and more popular, people would want to watch people who were very good at playing them, just like we watch people who are good at sports play them?

Apex 2015 is one of the biggest annual fighting game tournaments in the Northeast United States. It stars Marvel vs. Capcom, Pokemon, and, most prominently, Super Smash Bros. This year, three iterations of Smash Bros were put on display: Super Smash Bros. Melee, Super Smash Bros. Brawl, and Super Smash Bros. For Wii U. Nintendo was actually one of the sponsors for the event. With over 1,000 entries for Super Smash Bros. Melee alone, Apex 2015 was poised to be the biggest Smash tournament ever seen in the US.

The day finally came, and not 2 hours into the event, a fire alarm was pulled. Everyone was kicked out, and the fire department came. It turned out that a recent storm had caused the floor of the ballroom to collapse, and the building was deemed unsafe for the large number of participants, so the tournament had to be moved, short notice.

A lot of scrambling happened, and people thought the event was gonna be entirely cancelled. Twitch.tv, another sponsor, stepped in and managed to rent out the Garden State Convention Center, and the event was crammed into the following two days instead of the planned three days. It was a very exciting tournament and, though it had its fair share of issues after the first big one, could overall be considered a huge success.

This sort of a “fight against all odds” is what the e-sports community has dealt with for a long time. Most people don’t take it seriously, but I personally hope that starts to change over time. My friends and I started a Smash Crew of our own and are competing in something called The Melee Games, an intercollegiate Smash League in the Tri-State area. We’re competing against a bunch of NYC colleges (like Columbia, NYU, etc). I’d bet half of the people who just read that thought we were total nerds or something similar. If that’s true, it proves my point. Having tried to play these games at a competitive level, I can promise the people who are on live streams during big name tournaments have definitely put tons of time into perfecting a skill, just like someone perfecting their talent on a musical instrument, or even practicing a sport or physical activity.

I need to tie this into our class somehow, so an interesting discussion point to bring up is the blossoming pervasiveness of e-sport, and other forms of entertainment that would only be possible with technology we have today. Are we better or worse off for it? Has it earned its place with the other forms of entertainment people consume now? I personally think so, but I’m sure there are some contrasting opinions out there.