Collin Wong

Professor Kurashige

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Rise of eSports

Electronic sports or eSports is competitive gaming that exists in different genres,

including first-person shooters, fighter games, massive online battle arenas, and online

collectible card games. Competitive gaming is very similar to team sports (football, basketball,

etc.), where players on a team must work together to achieve a specific goal. eSports and sports

have common characteristics: they both have athletes, fans, prize pools, large international

tournaments, and a competitive drive. Dreams of being picked up by the NBA and starting are

about 1.3% for NCAA seniors, comparable to competing in an international eSports tournament.

The viewership that eSports acquire is on par with regular sports. eSports is on an upwards spiral

to popularity, so it should be recognized as its own category like traditional sports. eSports needs

more recognition as an option for students to pursue by implementing more competitive gaming

opportunities such as high school tournaments and college scholarships.

Sports are split into different categories including team play and individual performance.

eSports have their own unique competitive gaming genres. Team play is represented by MOBAs

(massive online battle arena) and FPS (first-person shooters). MOBA games are played in an

arena that consists of ten players, 5 players per team. Each player gets to choose a unique hero to

play in their specific role. All MOBAs have five roles: top, jungle, mid, attack damage carry

(ADC), and support. The goal is for all MOBAs is to destroy the enemy's central base by

accruing advantages by killing other heroes and objectives (Zoltan-Johan). The most popular

FPS game in the past five years is Counter-Strike (CS) developed by Valve. In competitive

games, CS is a 5v5 game where one team plays as terrorists, while the other plays as

counter-terrorists. The goal of CS is to build up an economy (virtual money) to buy weapons and

tools to defeat the opposing team. Terrorists are in charge of placing the bomb in a secure

location whereas the counter-terrorists need to find a way to disarm it (Valkyrie). MOBA and

FPS games resemble basketball or football where there is only one objective to score the most

points or to destroy the enemy's central base. Both sports involve pre-planning and proper

strategy that has to be executed properly to not fall behind.

As a new spectator to League of Legends, Counter-Strike, or any other eSports game, the

information that one needs to comprehend is complicated. There are many different game

mechanics that are not "new player friendly", but it is important to understand at least the basics

of the game to further one's game knowledge later. When spectating a traditional sport such as

basketball or football, the rules have been established for decades, while eSports have their own

developed metas (how the game is played) that will change over the course of a year. New

spectators will see this as an errand to relearn the game again as fundamentals of the game will

change. Although most eSport's player base enjoy new ideas being introduced in the game

because, unlike football and basketball, eSports are constantly evolving. Players have to adapt to

new metas every year to stay competitive which is why eSports is a risky path for any young

player to take. A young player could perform well for one year, then lose their job in the next

because a specific meta is not suited for them. Schools should hire professional speakers to talk

about the job security that eSports have, so young adults don't have to explore this career on their own.

American football is similar to the format of a MOBA where both teams are trying to get ahead through offensive and defensive plays. Football had its first collegiate game in 1869, followed by its first professional game and paid player, Pudge Heffelfinger in 1892. The NFL was established in 1920, followed by the first Super Bowl in 1967. Now there are contracts, more teams, and a huge impact on western culture (Aaron). In comparison, League of Legends has been around since 2009 and had its first international tournament known as Season 1 Worlds. In 2013, at Season 3 Worlds, it attracted 32 million online viewers from multiple streaming sites such as Twitch and Azubu (Casselman). League of Legends has only been around for about seven years but is evolving twice as fast as football did. This is because fewer people are using their television for entertainment, as all eSports tournaments are streamed on Twitch or Youtube Gaming. Others question why people would watch other people play games when they can play it themselves. The general community response is the same for the traditional sports audience, fans want to watch their teams play, even if they don't play the sport themselves. Teams are treating eSports as an actual sport, one that needs coaches and analysts that support the team. Gaming is a growing trend that is already massive in Asian countries but has yet to see more recognition in the states.

Although there have been many competitions for professional gamers all over the world, gaming is not recognized in most schools in America. Outside of America, Sweden implemented their first eSports program in the year 2015-2016 (Wynne). By having an eSports program, they are keeping kids interested in school as kids get to embrace their hobbies in a healthy

environment where they won't get ridiculed for the time they spend playing video games. Even colleges are slowly becoming interested in the idea of having an eSports program. Robert Morris University was one of the first to have their own professional League of Legends team (Mueller). The players go to school on an eSports scholarship by being high up on the league ladder. These students go to classes, do homework, take midterms like any other college student, but they participate in the League of Legends Collegiate Series, where colleges all over the country compete with each other for the Collegiate Cup. RMU is not the only school offering an eSports scholarships, as Columbia College President Scott Dalrymple stated "Esports aren't the future, they're the present." eSports is a huge form of entertainment for young gamers who dream of being in the competitive scene. By promoting eSports through scholarships, RMU wants to show that investing in eSports now is a smart idea that other schools have not picked up on yet.

Competitive gaming is a real opportunity for certain people, but others see it as an excuse for kids or teenagers to spend all their time playing video games. Colin Cowherd, an American sports broadcaster, views eSports as a waste of time which caused a backlash from the gaming community. Cowherd can't comprehend the idea of other people watching other people playing video games, as he believes that kids and young adults should spend their free time outside, enjoying the world, living life (Cowherd, 0:38). Although I disagree with him about his eSports beliefs, I agree that kids should spend time outside, with friends and families. However, not everyone enjoys going outside and playing sports, some may prefer to stay inside next to a computer, talking with their friends. Gaming has already shown many competitive aspects of normal sports that include: coaches, analysts, psychologists, etc. Cowherd assumes that pro-gamers don't have a life outside of their careers but Gordon Hayward, an NBA player, came

on to his show to explains that the stereotypes are false. He shared his experience in a gaming house and saw that pro gamers are hard workers who play the game over 12 hours a day, more than 60 hours a week, with the drive of an actual athlete. Other gamers may see the competitive life as a dream, yet the constant pressure causes early burnout that destroys careers.

High schools and colleges should provide more opportunities for competitive gaming by giving brand name games like League of Legends, Counter Strike, Street Fighter, etc more recognition through tournaments. An ideal solution to spread eSports in schools is to develop an eSports season like what they do with school sports like basketball, volleyball, football, etc. During the fall season, schools could implement an eSports league that consists of many games, where students would form teams within their respective circles and competes against other schools in a regular season. After the regular season is where teams can qualify for playoffs and go head to head against other schools. After the winning the state qualifier, teams could participate in a national tournament where teams across the state will compete for their state's honor. Having leagues means that schools can develop clubs that are associated with eSports where teams can practice together and build their own community. Using school computers for gaming practice is an option, but schools already lack the resources to provide enough computer usage for the entire student body. After school when labs are closed, an advisor could reserve a specific lab time once a week to use school computers for competitive gaming practice. This allows fair use for students who need to use computers for school work while after school, students can use it for competitive purposes.

Gaming is no longer just a hobby that people can enjoy with their friends. It should not be an escape for people who are unathletic or socially awkward. Young players in high school that

who have an eSports background should opt to make a high school league to develop an eSports legacy in one's school. People need to realize to the fact that professional gaming is a real thing. When people see eSports they should think of big team names, star players, collegiate teams that they can cheer for. Pro gamers should look to play for their favorite college teams, hoping to become a pro and play in a grand final. eSports are the future of competition and entertainment that has shown a huge growth in the past decade.

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