Texas A&M University- Corpus Christi Esports Team is Ready for the Next Level

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Esports had its start in 1978 when Atari hosted the first ever major Esports tournament.

Since then, the industry has grown into large, live-streamed competitions with teams from around the world competing with one another. It has even gone into the collegiate level, where we see different universities compete with one another in their own established teams.

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At Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi (TAMU-CC), Islander Esports is hoping to take their name to the next level. What originally started as a love for watching collegiate and professional players has turned into an actual team that now gets to compete with other colleges around the country.

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Their schedule varies but stays consistent with competitions being hosted throughout the semesters. The team competes against other colleges that have also registered for a variety of tournaments, but also compete in tournaments hosted by the North American Collegiate Championship (NACC).

According to Wangler, the NACC hosts multiple tournaments that place college teams in brackets. Teams rise through the ranks to earn their spot to finals where they can win money or scholarships that go directly to the students or their organizations.

Islander Esports managed to get to the second round during the Red Bull Campus Clutch, a "Valorant" tournament but were beaten by the University of Houston's team Premiere.

"We took that loss in stride, because [Premiere] is number one in the country," Wangler said. The "Valorant" team also managed to make it up to finals during the NACC tournaments, which put them against some of the best collegiate esports programs.

Wangler is proud of how the team performed during those competitions due to only being an established competitive team for a short amount of time. The other universities that the Islanders have gone against are about

Two Islander Esports substitutes competing in a "Valorant" match.

Photo courtesy of Islander Esports.

five to six years ahead of them regarding the time they were established as an organization. Wangler, who is also the captain of the "Overwatch" team, says that they have acquired six wins throughout the competitions they have competed in.

According to Emmanuel Josue Rivera, a TAMU-CC junior and one of the team captains, he had been competing in esports before but this was his first time competing with an organization. He expressed that it had been somewhat discouraging watching other universities compete with their respective team when the organization originally did not have the opportunity to do so.

"With Islander Esports further expanding and growing, I've had more opportunities to attend events and even a large tournament in Austin where multiple university teams from all around Texas attended," said Rivera.

Currently, TAMU-CC does not have a facility equipped with computers that can run the games that are played for competitions, but that does not stop the team from practicing. They hold their practices by utilizing their own equipment and practicing from the comfort of their own dorms. According to Wangler, the only game that is played competitively over consoles is Super Smash Bros Ultimate. He and his fellow members are currently working with faculty and the university to get an area created for them. It would include computers that have the proper specifications for gaming that the current school computers do not.

They are hoping to expand their organization by gaining a following through social media. The team wants to generate content and reach out not only to students on campus but also to the community outside the campus.

The organization is accepting anyone to join them and there are no restrictions regarding majors. Wangler stresses that there are plenty of opportunities for all

students to gain experience in the gaming industry through their club and through their sponsorships.

"Being a part of the organization has been an amazing experience, I have had the chance to make new friends and meet other players from outside the university by competing," said Rivera.

He has also mentioned that alumni of the university are allowed to participate in the tournaments even after they have graduated.

"Esports is incredibly inclusive, we can have anybody," said Wangler.

These sponsorships can lead to internships for students that are a part of the organization and also help the club with learning how to expand their program. The team also has a small merchandise store where anyone can purchase Islander esports clothing and accessories to show their support for the team.

For now, the organization is hosting events around the university and preparing for their next tournaments where they could possibly take their name to the finals once more.

Islander Esports substitute holding a site at the start of the round.

Photo courtesy of Islander Esports.