

LET'S GAME!



TWCA Enters the E-Sports World By Matt Reese

WELCOME TO THE NEW ERA OF HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS.

TAPPS, in partnership with Play Versus ("PlayVS"), has aspired to "take video gaming to another level with organized competitive gameplay." Esports has arrived at TWCA.

Head coach and program leader Xavier Eldridge introduced the idea of a Warrior E-sports team back in the Fall of 2020. Over 20 students signed up for the team and it was game on.

The season was split into two halves. In the fall, students competed in Overwatch and League of Legends

competitions. The spring saw the introduction of Rocket League to competition, which quickly became the go-to game for the Warriors.

Rocket League can be played with up to eight members per side but is 3 v. 3 in TAPPS competition. It has been described as "soccer, but with rocket-powered cars" and can be played "cross-platform," meaning that competitors can play on PlayStation, Xbox or PCs at the same time.

Though it was only the first year of the program, TWCA finished ninth in the TAPPS league of 26 teams, just missing the playoffs by one spot. Senior

Cedric Cook, junior Keaton Harvey and sophomore Cameron Davis became one of TWCA's best rotations throughout the regular season.

"This was the first time I competed for my school outside of other sports," Harvey said. "It was fun and it helped me meet other people at TWCA that like to game."

"It was different," Davis added. "Usually, you play games just for fun, but playing for your school, it gives you a little different mindset. You really want to win and move forward with your teammates."

This comradery is one of the major benefits TAPPS hopes to achieve by adding esports to its competition. Other benefits include "character development, increased participation, STEM engagement and college scholarship opportunities."

According to TAPPS, "more than 200 colleges and universities [are] offering almost tens of millions of dollars in scholarships" for esports athletes.

With one season under their belt, Eldridge and the other athletes are focused on growing the program for next year, with the hope that 2021-2022 will allow for practices and competitions to be held on campus, rather than remotely as was the case this past year.

Davis believes the competitive nature of the Warriors will encourage that growth.

"You're playing for your school," he said. "It gives you motivation to do your absolute best rather than just playing for fun. Of course, it's still fun to play, but there's that little extra behind representing the Warriors."

With the "Warrior Way" driving them, don't be surprised if TWCA Esports is next in line for a championship.

