

My Experience as a Collegiate Esports Player

BY AIDAN FARLEY

For as long as I can remember, I have been an avid video game player. I spent most of my childhood playing console games on the original Xbox and free Flash games on my parents' PC. I have fond memories of competing against my brother and friends in local multiplayer games, and eventually of competing against other players online. My years of video game experience finally culminated in an achievement most players can only dream of: I made it onto Concordia Saint Paul University's inaugural esports team.

As far as I know, the first-semester roster consisted of three players on scholarship and the rest being walk-ons. I was a walk-on who tried out for the games League of Legends and Overwatch. I doubted that I would be able to get on because of my lack of skill. Apparently, that idea permeates the video game playing portion of Concordia students because I got onto the team mostly through there being a lack of players trying out. I ended up playing League of Legends as a backup player for the first half of the semester before switching to Overwatch when they needed another player to fill the roster.

Concordia's esports team consisted of several smaller teams dedicated to playing one specific game. The list of games included League of Legends, Overwatch, Rocket League, and Hearthstone. The entire program, around 20 players making four teams, was managed by one coach, a former collegiate esports player. He had a significant amount of work to do with having to manage so many unique games, but the program seemed to run relatively smoothly, especially considering it was the first semester since it had been created.

Practice for the team took place in Concordia's esports "arena," which is a small room just large enough to fit two sets of five computers facing each other on long, connected desks. The university spared no expense in regard to the quality of the hardware we played on; based on the parts within the PCs, each was worth a minimum of \$1000 and was more than capable of running the games we were recruited to play. Each computer station also had various gaming equipment such as a headset with a microphone, a mechanical gaming keyboard (the keys are made with metal switches instead of plastic to allow for more precise input), a gaming mouse (which comes with extra buttons and other customizable features), and a gaming chair. The idea was to allow every aspect of the environment to be customizable to the players' liking. That way, every player would have their needs met and would be able to perform to the best of their ability.

We were required to practice a minimum of eleven hours per week in three scheduled team sessions. The players were also encouraged to set

meetings with the coach in order to work on individual skills, and it was a given that we would be playing the game outside of official practice as well. Altogether, I averaged around 26 hours of playtime per week. My coursework this semester was relatively light, so when I wasn't practicing for the team or doing readings for class, I was studying practice methods for the game using online resources. I would frequently watch footage of professional games and study my own replays to see how to improve.

Devoting so much time and effort to playing one specific video game led me to a conclusion: being on the esports team was not as enjoyable of an experience as I had hoped it would be. I found that always being required to play to the best of my ability and being required to spend a tremendous amount of time practicing soured the fun that I would normally have playing video games. My favorite hobby became a frustrating job that I wasn't being paid for. While it is the dream of many video game players to be on an esports team, I was not at the right point in time of my life to be on a team and be successful. If I had been a freshman and less worried about what is to come after graduation, I would gladly have continued to play on the esports team. I might have been able to take my experience after graduation and use it in the esports industry, but at my current skill level, that is not really an option. The idea of being on an esports team is an attractive one; however, it does not seem to be the correct fit for me.

Stay Home or Get Lost

BY HALLE MARTIN

At the beginning of the year, we were in much simpler times, when my peers only had fears of getting drafted. My, how far we've come. Now, all they're being asked to do is stay home for a few weeks, but apparently, that's too much. Friends continue to gather in masses to binge drink at house parties, and their pure idiocracy does not end there. Not only are they stupid enough to so selfishly defy shelter-in-place orders, but they post about it on social media without a second thought. This isn't just spring breakers and viral pranksters, but people I know, people I'm friends with. This whole ordeal has had me rethinking a lot of things, and now I have to factor in who I associate myself with too.

I keep seeing videos of "devout Christians" disobeying shelter-in-place orders to go to church services because reading the Bible and praying at home is absurd! The lunacy doesn't end; from megachurch Pastor Rodney Howard Browne holding mass services, claiming to cure his churchgoers with virus-killing machines, to that crazy lady spouting that she's covered in Jesus' blood and therefore can't get sick. If these people are so inclined to gather together and worship, I vote we

start sacrificing them to the gods. Maybe a vaccine will come pouring down on us. With their logic, I'd say it's a surefire plan.

Before getting laid off, the shoe store I supervised closed to the public, but managers were still going in to do internal work. Despite the shelter-in-place order, the empty parking lot, and the closed sign on the door, customers continued to show up. I guess nothing says "time to buy some shoes" like a pandemic. Not only were these people stupid enough to get into their cars and drive to the store thinking it might be open, but once they arrived, they'd walk up, stare blankly at the closed sign, and then decide to give the locked door a good yank (just in case).

Most of us had no idea the effects this virus would cause, myself included. I wish I had taken it more seriously sooner. How anyone can continue to take this lightly is beyond me. Then again, with people like this, it's easy to understand how this virus got so out of hand.

To put your own frivolous needs ahead of everyone else's health, finances, and plans for the future is despicable. Defying shelter-in-place orders to hang out with friends, shop for unnecessary items, go to church, or whatever else you deem worth exposing yourself and others to the virus, is a direct slap in the face to those who are risking their lives to support us during these times. It's a punch in the gut to everyone wondering where their next meal is coming from or if they're still going to have a roof over their head at the end of the month.

There are people watching their loved ones die through windows. Bodies are being buried faster than they can be identified. Meanwhile, these selfish clowns think that the rules don't apply to them or that they are somehow immune. To the people ignoring shelter-in-place orders, please do us all a favor and just stay home and don't bother coming back out once this order has been lifted. If you don't, you have proven yourself to be a useless member of society.