Top 10 Retro Games to Revive in a new Era of Esports

One year ago, in the February 2018 edition of 4th Coast, I wrote about the emerging Esports scene. In just one year the growth has been phenomenal, with profits in the industry at large more than doubling from 2017 to an estimated 900 million in 2018. Projections are for 2 billion plus for 2021, with no end in sight. In the North Country we have seen the incredible efforts of SUNY Canton launching full force into Esports, capped by the opening of a $500,000 state of the art arena. SUNY Potsdam is also getting into the game, although more modestly, hosting its first Esports competition (FIFA 19) in December, 2018, with Potsdam student Dillon Murphy coming out on top (https://reslifegaming.wordpress.com/). For the event, I organized a side-tournament using an original Sears home "*Pong*" system, played on a CRT TV with original controls. This proved very successful, with intense competition using the "Hockey" variant of the game under a double-elimination format. T*he Pong Hockey* tournament was won by Potsdam graduate student Nicole D'Angelo. Potsdam will be hosting and participating a number of Esports tournaments in the Spring 2019 semester, with hopes of learning how it best fits into the campus community. One conclusion from our initial tournament was that the side-tournament was extremely useful in keeping the competitors engaged between games in the primary tournament, and as a legitimately competitive event in its own right. Moving forward we intend to highlight at least one "retro" game event at each of our Esports competitions. To that end, I created a "top 10" list of retro games to include alongside the primary Esports competition. My criteria were that the game must be a) fun to play, even by today's standards, b) suited for Esports viewing, and c) at least 10 years old. The list is a mix of different game types, some solo games, others team-based, with a mix of arcade, pc, and home console platforms. Without further ado, here are the top 10 retro games to include in modern Esports competitions.

1) Mario Kart (1996)
2) Street Fighter II: Champion Edition (1993)
3) Starcraft (1998)
4) Quake (1996)
5) Pong (1972)
6) Ms. Pacman (1982)
7) Halo (2001)
8) Super Mario Brothers (1985)
9) Unreal Tournament 2004 (2004)
10) Space War (1962) *Note, Game played in the first ever Esport tournament (1972)

Honorable Mention: Tetris (1984), Space Invaders (1978), Marathon (1994), Warlords (1980), Donkey Kong (1981), Doom (1993), SEGA Bass Fishing (1997), Typing of the Dead (1999), Warcraft III: DOTA Mod (2002), Rampart (1990),. Guitar Hero (2005)

Most of these games were part of the competitive gaming scene before it was branded Esports and in my opinion all will hold up well. My sincere hope is that groups hosting Esports events, both at the professional and collegiate levels, begins integrating more retro games, either as side-tournaments like we held at SUNY Potsdam, or even as primary tournaments of their own.

And if we need inspiration for how do conduct these retro tournaments, we need only look as far as the highly successful *Video Games Live* tour. They manage to work in nods to a cross-section of games both new and old and play the nostalgia chord about as well as it can be played. For new generations of gamers, what's old is new, and based on my experience, fun games are appreciated by gamers of all ages. And what better way to preserve the culture than to relive it.

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