

SUNY Potsdam's Top Athlete: Rosario "Darktooth" Fuschetto



SUNY Potsdam's Rosario "Darktooth" Fuschetto is a graduate student in the Crane School of Music, and will complete his studies in May 2019. While at Potsdam Rosario was the President of the Video Gaming club, as well as a professional Esports athlete playing the Nintendo game *Super Smash Brothers Melee*, or *Melee* for short. He is currently ranked number 59 in the world by the Red Bull MPGR (Melee Panda Global Ranking). *Melee* came out in 2001 for the Nintendo Gamecube, and even though Nintendo has released successors, including *Super Smash Brothers Brawl* and recently *Super Smash Brothers Ultimate*, there remains a strong grassroots movement of support for *Melee*, so much so that it is still represented at major national tournaments, including *Genesis*, *Smash Con*, *Shine*, and *The Big House*. From 2016 to 2018 he was sponsored by *Team Ascension*, and is recently independent, looking for a major sponsor.

Rosario cites his background as a musician as a primary reason that he has excelled at the game. In particular, his ability to be critical of his own performance in very fine detail and then to improve based on that analysis is critical to his success. His musician skills have also given him excellent eye-hand coordination, helping him to be mechanically sound at the game. He is also good at the strategy side of the game, and likes the appeal of match-ups with different characters, and the need to be creative in your approach to different play styles. Overall he likens his attraction to *Melee* as similar to a musician's attraction to Jazz. In fact a number of professionals like him are also musicians as well.

Rosario got into gaming as the youngest child in his family, always competing against his much older siblings. Before too long he found himself watching *YouTube* videos of professional tournaments, and analyzing out how the best players performed. He tried to emulate their moves, as well as come up with his own. As a teenager, after a particularly detailed analysis of the game using a debugging mode of an emulator, as a teenager, he found a new mechanic that nobody else had found, the "shine mines" technique, a highly technical and precise move that is still used by the *Fox* character in competition (*Fox* is his primary character).

At the recent Genesis tournament, he placed 65th out of 1100+ players in the one-on-one competition, and 5th out of 440 teams in the two-player team competition, even though he was paired with a competitor that he had never played with. He has won and placed high in a number of tournaments both as a solo and team player, although he says that he typically outperforms expectations in team tournaments, largely because of his ability to be creative with his game partner, as skill he also gives partial credit to his experience in musical performance. Even though he placed very high in the solo-tournament, it was actually a bit of a letdown for him, as he said his focus on school has not allowed him to practice and scrimmage as much as he would like. He plans to take some time off after graduation to pursue professional *Melee* full time, as he feels he is still improving, and would like to see how high up the ranks he can go. The ultimate goal would be to get into the top 10, which is where the invitational tournaments and larger sponsor money comes in.

The higher he goes in the ranking, the higher his credibility in the community goes, which is important if he were to transition into shoutcasting, a form of color commentary and game analysis that we are familiar with from traditional sports broadcasts. Another option would be to become a coach or *Twitch* streamer, which are also other business options in the Esports area after his competitive career ends. You can follow him and watch him play on his *Twitch* channel, DarktoothVG which hosts a number of videos of him in competition. And if all of this falls through, he has a Bachelor's and Master's degree in Music Education, and a bright future as a music educator.

As a gimmick, when I finished my conversation with Rosario, I did something that I've seen in shows like *Pros vs. Joes*, and I ask him to compete against me in a game that I've played for quite some time, *Robotron*. I enjoy this game because it has an easy game mechanic to pick up, but it has an extremely high skill ceiling, much like *Melee*. I recently achieved the high score on my arcade emulator machine in my office, and gave him 30 minutes to play the game to beat my high score. Keep in mind that it took me about two weeks of intense play for me to achieve my score, and I wanted to see if he could--having never played the game before-- beat my score in short order. Sure enough, as I was finishing up this article in my office, I heard the unique sound that the game emits when someone achieves the high score. I stepped out to confirm, and sure enough, he had done it, and it took him all of 15 minutes. Make no mistake about it, Esports athletes are on par with traditional athletes in terms of their skill levels, and Rosario "Darktooth" Fuschetto is currently the top ranked athlete at SUNY Potsdam, in any sport.

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