

Hong Kong eSports festival a knockout for gaming fans

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Fans attend the eSports and Music Festival in Hong Kong on August 4, 2017. Hundreds of youthful fans on August 4 cheered on video game players as they competed in a cyber battleground in Hong Kong's first ever large scale eSports festival

Hundreds of youthful fans cheered on some of the world's best-known video game players as they competed in a cyber battle during Hong Kong's first ever large-scale eSports festival Friday.

The event comes at a time when [professional gaming](#) is gaining global traction as an official international sport.

It will be a medal-sport at the 2022 Asian Games to be held in China, the world's second largest sporting event behind the Olympics.

Gaming veterans got a rock star introduction as they were welcomed on stage at the indoor Hong Kong Coliseum Friday with a booming pyrotechnic display, as fans went wild.

The three-day tournament pits teams of ex-professional players from Spain, Germany, China, the United States and Hong Kong against each

other in "League of Legends" matches.

Players competing in the massively popular online game control characters with different fighting abilities as they take down defensive units and opponents while trying to destroy each others' bases.

Fans cheered for the players seated on stage, whose images were also beamed onto large screens to the stadium crowd at the event, dubbed the eSports and Music Festival.

Leading players, many of whom have gruelling training regimens, can make mega bucks playing in tournaments which can offer more than US\$1,000,000 in prize money.



Team Hong Kong, Taiwan and Macau (C) play on stage in the League of Legends gaming tournament during the eSports and Music Festival in Hong Kong on August 4, 2017

"You pretty much have no free time, your free time is League of Legends as well so you're playing the whole time and thinking about the game and watching replays," well known League of Legends

player Enrique Cedeño Martinez, known by his handle xPeke, told AFP.

Despite his team's loss to players from Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan in the three hour opening match of the tournament, a queue of fans formed to take selfies with the 25-year-old Spaniard who has won multiple tournaments around the world.

"In the end it's not that physical but it is as mentally demanding as a sport is," Martinez's teammate Lauri Happonen, from Finland, known as Cyanide, said.

Video [game](#) fan and student Gabriella Leung, 20, who was at the event said the competitive element in professional gaming made it a sport, but that people may have misconceptions about it.

"What is important is that people get to know eSports and that people won't assume that those playing games are useless youths or can't study," she said.

The festival, which ends on Sunday and is expected to draw up to 50,000 people, will also be featuring performances by Korean pop stars including bands EXO and SUPER JUNIOR.

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Members of team Hong Kong, Taiwan and Macau (centre R) and team Europe (centre L) compete on stage during the League of Legends gaming tournament during the eSports and Music Festival in Hong Kong on August 4, 2017

"Stripping away these concepts is more important than recognising it as a sport."

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