



THE BIGGEST HIGH SCHOOL ESPORTS TOURNAMENT IN SAN ANTONIO HISTORY

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SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS — The area's top gamers recently converged at the Boeing Center at Tech Port — located in the heart of the Port's tech innovation campus — as they showcased their skills in front of hundreds of attendees during the R20 Premier League Grand Finals — the largest high school esports tournament in San Antonio history.

Among the participating school districts at the event were the Harlandale, San Antonio, South San Antonio, Northside, North East, Judson and Schertz-Cibolo Unified independent school districts.

Organized by the San Antonio Museum of Science and Technology (SAMSAT), the event saw seven finalist teams vie for top honors in the region as they were cheered on by fellow students, their friends and their families. The top four teams will advance to the State Championship on May 3-4, organized by the Texas Scholastic Esports Federation (TexSEF). Additionally, the top eight competing students will advance to individual play competition at the State Championship.

"We started R20 Premier in the Spring of 2021 with 84 students total," said SAMSAT Director of Esports Josh Martinez. "Today, we have students competing in Rocket League, Super Smash Bros. and Valorant. At stake is the right to say that you're the best in San Antonio."

"I'm just really grateful for this opportunity," said South San High School student Mason Martinez. "Growing up, I always loved video games. I always saw the people on the main stage competing like this, and I never thought that was possible at all."

"It's a new experience; I've never had anything like this before," remarked fellow classmate Esperanza Hernandez. "I've played games, but just in my room. Playing here is really nice."

"It's fun going against other people because it also teaches you new experiences and makes you a better player,"



Students from CAST Tech hoist the championship trophy for the Valorant competition. Both CAST Tech and second-place Texas Military Institute qualified for the State Championship on May 3-4. Photo credit: Hope Trinidad.



San Antonio City Councilwoman Dr. Adriana Rocha Garcia addresses gamers ahead of the competition. Photo credit: Port San Antonio.

added Harlandale High School senior Gavin Guerrero. "I've grown as a person and I've met more people. Overall, it's really fun."

Valorant Bracket Winners	Rocket League Bracket Winners
1st – CAST Tech	1st – McCollum High School
2nd – Texas Military Institute	2nd – Warren High School
Super Smash Bros. Bracket Winner	Middle School Bracket Winner
1st – Steele High School (Toast)	1st – Folks Middle School (Judgement)

The event marked the conclusion of the 2023-24 season of the R20 Premier Esports League, which has steadily grown to engage hundreds of students across the region. Teams are organized by the respective schools which, for the 2023-24 school year, hailed from 17 different school districts in and near San Antonio.



Winners from the Rocket League bracket. Photo credit: Hope Trinidad.

The Port is the region's largest and fastest-growing technology hub. Today, the campus is home to over 80 employers and 18,000 careers in sectors that include aerospace, cybersecurity, robotics, space science and national defense. Video gaming and esports are an important part of the Port's growth strategy and an exciting gateway to attract and engage students, introduce them to technologies in their own back yard, and show them future educational and career pathways in these fields.



A Family Affair: The first and second place finishes in the Middle School bracket were awarded to Judgement (left) and Nightmare (right), respectively. The siblings represented Folks Middle School. Photo credit: Hope Trinidad.

Many operations on the Port campus work through platforms similar to video games, and employers recognize parallels between esports and the development of skills relevant to the careers they are growing: teamwork, effective communications skills, analytical thinking, adaptability and a broad knowledge of computing.

"R20 and the work around esports and gaming is critically important to the long-term talent pipelines we're creating here at Port San Antonio," said Will Garrett, Port San Antonio's Vice President of Talent and Technology Development & Integration. "The R20 League is bringing together kids with the right aptitude and inspiration and excitement in the STEM career fields and opening their eyes to the myriad of opportunities in aerospace, advanced manufacturing and cybersecurity jobs here on the Port's campus."



Photo credits: Mark Sobhani.