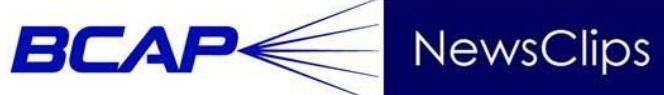


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Japan is opening its first gym for esports in Tokyo, a space for both amateur and experienced gamers to train and get professional coaching, according to Japan Today.

The competitive gaming space, which is set to open on May 19 and will be known as "Esports Gym," will include a lounge and gaming PCs outfitted with some of Japan's most popular games, including Valorant and League of Legends.

Gamers can book a three-hour time slot at one of the PCs for about \$13 or opt for a monthly membership starting at \$50, which allows daily access to the gaming PCs as well as optional coaching sessions that can be added on for about \$25 an hour.

Esports Gym, which is jointly operated by private transit company Tokyo Metro and esports education company Gecipe, will welcome experienced gamers as well as those who are new to gaming PCs or don't understand the game rules, according to the website.

It will offer online and in-person professional coaching from Crest Gaming and Glory Be Esports for games including Valorant, League of Legends, Rainbow Six Siege, and Identity V.

An exploding global industry dominated by Asia

Competitive gaming has become a massive global industry.

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In 2021, global esports revenues are expected to surpass \$1 billion and global games live-streaming audience is predicted to hit 728.8 million, according to a market report from games and esports data company Newzoo. Investors are taking notice: Consulting firm Deloitte found that investments in esports reached \$4.5 billion in 2018 — a 837% jump from the year before, as Mariel Soto Reyes recently reported for Insider.

Asia has been leading the esports charge — the Asia-Pacific region made up 57% of global esports viewership in 2019, per Newzoo.

Japan's new esports gym joins similar facilities that have recently opened in Asia.

In Singapore, audio-visual and events company NEO.TM opened Asia's first 24-hour coworking space dedicated to esports last February, according to The New Paper. The 7,700-square-foot space, called simply The Gym, includes gaming areas, live streaming capabilities, and events spaces. NEO.TM's founder, Neo Yong Aik, told The New Paper last year that "there is little doubt that esports has become mainstream in this part of the world." But while millions of young people play on their mobile phones and PCs, the sport lacks a professional approach, the founder said.

"... We need more places that not only provide a place for individuals and teams to practice and compete, but also for them to pick up the right habits that will stay with them as they pursue successful esports careers," he said. In South Korea, professional esports team T1 — whose most famous member is League of Legends player Faker — last year built a space that appears to have been designed to do just that.

At the brand-new 10-story facility in Seoul's Gangnam district, about 70 professional gamers have access to a Nike-sponsored gym, on-site nutritionists, and English language classes, AFP reported last month. "We have a gym, a cafeteria, chefs... everything that these young players need to perform their best," John Kim, the organization's chief operating officer, told AFP.

China is also investing in esports. In January, Shanghai started building a 5.3 million-square-foot esports arena that's expected to cost nearly \$1 billion.

It was two California residents, however, who claimed to have opened the world's first esports gym in Los Angeles almost three years ago, according to USC News. E-coliseum opened in May 2018 as a space where, for about \$40 a month, gamers could enter tournaments, hire trainers, and meet esports influencers like Rachell Hofstetter, known as "Valkyrae." - *Insider*

