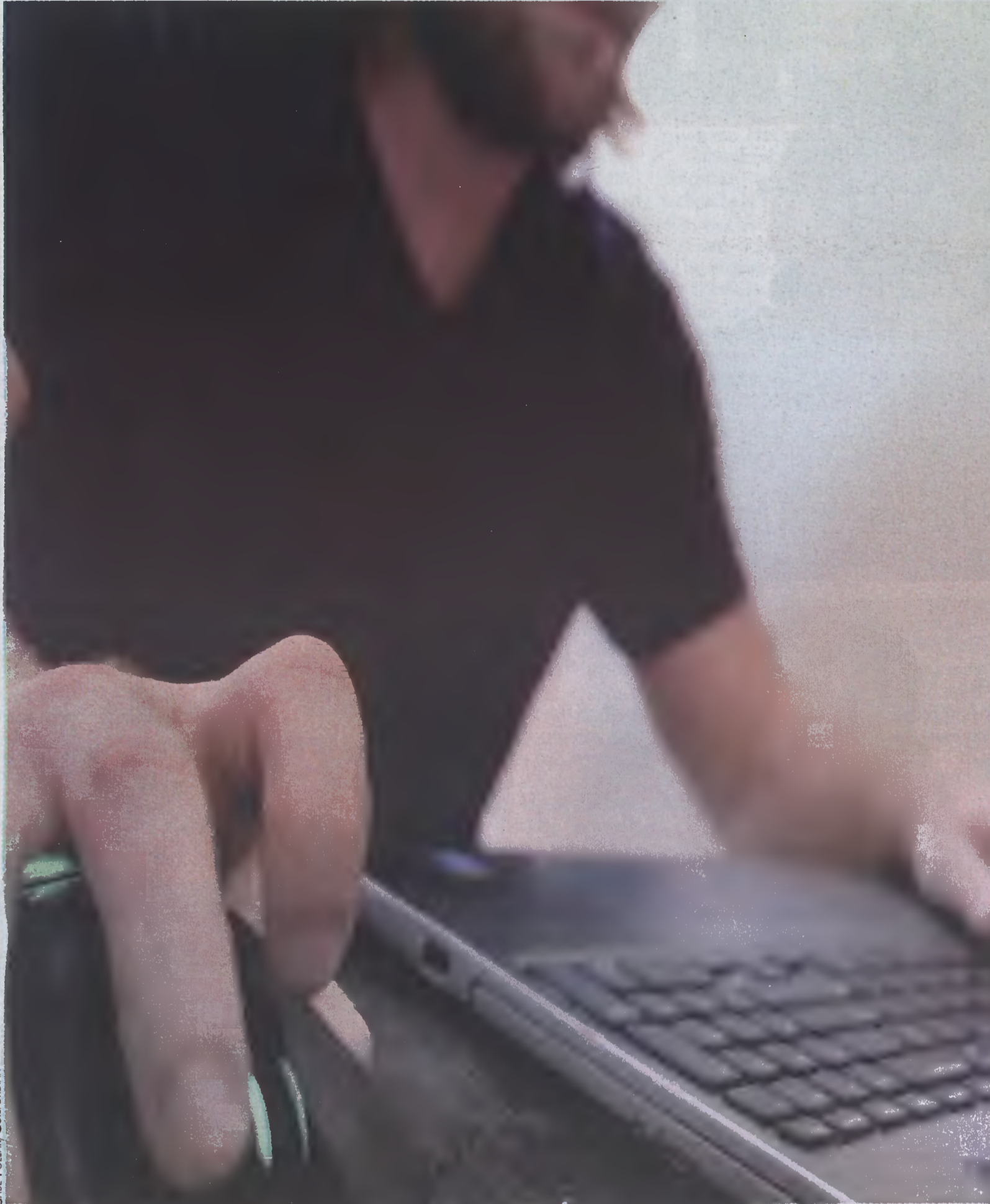


## SPORTS

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## Professional gaming garners attention



BY AUBREY KING  
STAFF WRITER

Ten teenagers sit around expensive computers, furiously clicking and typing for a \$2.1 million prize pool. Over the Internet and on ESPN3, 27 million people watched, cheering them on.

This is the "Defense of the Ancients 2" 2014 International Championship, one of the largest professional gaming tournaments worldwide. Every year, tournaments like this attract massive crowds with intensity and displays of skill.

"I enjoy watching professional gaming for the same reason I play lacrosse and enjoy watching high level lacrosse," said senior Sam Cole. "I found originally it helped me get better, but then, as I got more invested, I grew attached to particular players the same way you would a star athlete."

Across the world, these game tournaments have sprung up around various games, allowing fans to gravitate toward whichever game they prefer.

"My favorite game by far out of all popular eSports video games is 'League of Legends,'" said sophomore Ben McKay-Simmons in an email interview. "I have tried playing a few others, but none of them really have that spark that ('League of Legends') has."

"League of Legends," a five-on-five fantasy strategy game, focuses on teamwork and fine strategy. Often categorized as a multiplayer online battle arena, "League of Legends" objectives center around fighting through a large map and capturing the base of the enemy team.

One of the more popular genres in eSports, MOBA's like "League of Legends" and popular alternative "DOTA 2" are well loved for their deep strategic focus.

"I played 'Starcraft,' 'DOTA,' 'DOTA 2,' 'Heroes of the Storm' and 'League of legends,'" said Cole.

"I keep coming back to 'DOTA 2' because it has a high skill cap; you're put in scenarios where you and your teammates have to work together to achieve certain objectives."

With so many names, acronyms and rule sets, eSports can seem intimidating. But the developers and community members have adjusted to welcome new players.

"There might be people who are just light-years ahead of you when you first start out, but all it takes is a desire to learn how to play a game to become so much better," said Early College junior William Buck in an email interview.

If newcomers would rather observe than play, most large eSports tournaments feature a specific broadcast with announcers specially focused on teaching the game's mechanics while covering the current matches. Twitch.tv, a live video website, streams most professional sporting events.

With that small amount of extra information, most newcomers may find themselves picking up eSports quite quickly.

"Competitive gaming has no entry barrier; anyone can be the best," said Buck. "In the world of technology, everyone is on an equal playing field. The only limit on the players is in the code of the game."

As eSports continue to grow, the community grows more and more inclusive. More tournaments find more ways to bring in viewers and excitement continues to build. From The New York Times coverage of "Call of Duty" teams to ESPN3's broadcast of "League of Legends," eSports is only growing, and it is a fantastic time to jump in.

"To some people, it may look like there's a lot going on screen, and they're right," said Cole. "But if you can watch football or basketball and understand what's going on you have what it takes to watch or play 'League of Legends' or 'DOTA.'"

Lacrosse player Sam Cole '15 enjoys playing and watching professional video games online like "League of Legends."

## Baseball's busy offseason full of trades and changes

BY ZACHARY LINDSEY  
STAFF WRITER

America's pastime is back. Major League Baseball kicked off its 146th season on April 6 of this year, and fans can only hope this season is exciting as the last.

This season is coming off the cusp of a seven-game World Series that saw the San Francisco Giants edge out the Kansas City Royals in the Fall Classic for their eighth World Series and third in the last five years. It was a series headlined by pitcher Madison Bumgarner, a product of South Caldwell High School in Hudson, North Carolina, who was named the World Series Most Valuable Player.

Following this was perhaps one of the most bizarre offseasons in baseball history.

Within a week of last year's season ending, the Chicago Cubs signed Tampa Bay Rays manager Joe Maddon to become their new manager. Add this to the fact that the Chicago White Sox could potentially be the most improved team in baseball for the 2015 season after an excellent offseason, and the city of Chicago has been in the spotlight for the past six months.

Then the Los Angeles Dodgers, consistent big-time spenders, replaced one of the best middle infielders in

baseball from 2014: shortstop Hanley Ramirez and second baseman Dee Gordon. Ramirez signed with the Boston Red Sox and Gordon with the Miami Marlins. The excellent duo of former Philadelphia Phillies shortstop Jimmy Rollins and former Los Angeles Angels second basemen Howie Kendrick took their place.

Teams from the National League East Division were other major headliners of the offseason.

The offseason also included former Greensboro Grasshopper outfielder Giancarlo Stanton. In his 2014 season as a Marlin, Stanton hit 37 home runs on a .288 batting average with 105 RBIs. This led Stanton to signing a 13-year, \$325 million deal with the Miami Marlins, the largest contract in sports history.

The Washington Nationals were able to make one of the best pitching rotations in baseball even better by signing former Detroit Tigers ace Max Scherzer to a \$210 million deal. Speculation regarding this deal helps make the Nationals the early National League and possibly World Series favorites.

And then there is the local favorite of many North Carolinians, the Atlanta Braves, who traded their best offensive players, catcher Evan Gattis to the Houston Astros, outfielder Justin Upton to the San Diego Padres and outfielder Jason Heyward to the



MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL

St. Louis Cardinals. Then the Braves made perhaps the most surprising late offseason move by trading both outfielder Melvin Upton Jr. and star closer Craig Kimbrel to the Padres.

Along with many offseason transactions came multiple offseason rule changes, most of which regarding pace of play.

For the 2015 - 2016 season, managers must now challenge all replays from the dugout, batters must now keep one foot in the batter's box at all times unless an established exception occurs and

play must resume promptly once the broadcast returns from a commercial break.

After all of these drastic changes and a couple of months of spring training, the 2015 season got kicked off April 6 with a matchup between the Cubs and the Cardinals. The Cardinals shut out the Cubs 3-0.

This season, many believe that the National League can be the best of the two divisions despite American League teams getting off to a hot start. The Washington Nationals are the preseason consensus to be the

World Series favorite. According to Vegas odds though, the Los Angeles Dodgers and the St. Louis Cardinals are not far behind them.

In the American League, many expect the Red Sox to have a great shot to be playing late in October with the hot-starting Tigers, Royals and possibly the rising Seattle Mariners as World Series contenders.

After the long wait, baseball fanatics have seven months of baseball in front of them.

The quest for October has officially begun.