Hosts China win Asian Games' first-ever eSports gold

September 26 2023

Spectators watch the "Arena of Valor" Asian Games finals.

Hosts China on Tuesday won the Asian Games' first-ever gold in eSports in a landmark for gaming, beating Malaysia 2-0 in the smartphone game Arena of Valor.

ESports is making its debut as a medal event at the Games in Hangzhou, seen as a major step towards the Olympics one day.

Medals are up for grabs in seven gaming titles, including Arena of Valor, League of Legends and EA Sports FC Online.

In the fantasy-themed Arena of Valor, players take on virtual avatars, each with different traits and strengths, and work together with teammates to destroy enemy towers before reaching the ultimate target, the opposing team's crystal.

"Being able to stand on the podium, I felt very honored and proud," Chinese player Jiang Tao told reporters after his team's historic victory.

"Everyone performed really well today," he said of his teammates.

Emotions were high at the packed 4,500-capacity Hangzhou Esports Center, where the crowd was dominated by China fans.

The young spectators waved flags and banners in support of the host country, as well as photos of their favorite players.

"Chinese eSports, step onstage and create legends!" one banner read.

Team China stepped out on to the stage to roars, while Malaysia were greeted with polite applause.

China immediately outpaced Malaysia in destroying enemy towers in the first round of the best-of-three match, putting the Southeast Asian team on the defensive.

Players sat almost perfectly still in rows of gaming chairs onstage, only moving their hands rapidly to control their on-screen "heroes".

"We felt nervous but we have tried our best to play a good [game](#)," Malaysia's Lai Chia Chien said.

Underlining just how popular it is, eSports is the only competition at the Games where tickets were allocated through an initial online lottery, before being opened up last week for direct purchase.

Thailand nabbed the sport's first-ever Asian Games medal earlier in the day, beating Vietnam to win Arena of Valor bronze.

"I'm playing for my country and I'm so excited to win a medal for my country," Thai player Kawee Wachiraphas said.

Chinese eSports fan and spectator Gong Lin told AFP before the match she had faith the home team would win, especially because of their captain Luo Siyuan.

"I have a lot of confidence in him particularly," she said.

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