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Gamers pull all-nighter Tourney draws about 140 players who battled for 40 hours

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Four guys sat in the Holiday Inn lobby next to their computer equipment and a case of caffeine-heavy Bawls Guarana Friday evening.

They'd need the beverage to survive FITES - the Frag Infinity Tournament (Extreme Slaying), a LANParty - or Local Area Network Party- of 40-consecutive hours held at the hotel in West Manchester Township this weekend.

"Nothing like overdosing on caffeine," said David Broadwater, 20, of Columbia. When registration began at 6 p.m. Friday, Broadwater and his friends lugged their computers and accessories into the conference room and set up in a corner. Gamers from across the country connected hard drives, monitors and keyboards, wheeled in their home office chairs and set up cases of Mountain Dew, sleeping bags and pillows for the chance to play in the same room with opponents they usually only meet online.

They plugged in their gear and went to play. Gamers could sign up for tournaments or play a game with whoever was offering.

By 8 a.m. Saturday, only the devoted remained awake.

Broadwater and his friends, Jon Juarbe, 21, of Columbia, and Mike Zimmerman, 18, of Mount Joy Township, sat surrounded by empty soda cans, Bawls Guarana bottles and plates of pizza crusts. More soda chilled in the mini-fridge attached to Broadwater's hard drive.

Juarbe was fresh from a couple hours of sleep. Broadwater was running on caffeine. They've been to FITES before and play regularly in smaller LAN parties, so pulling an all-nighter isn't new.

The trio entered a slim field for the morning's Unreal Tournament 2004 competition and advanced to the semi-finals after a few rounds of competition. In the first-person shooter game, teams run around a virtual world and try to capture a flag from their opponents' base.

The semi-finals pitted their team, TFM - Trained Flak Monkeys against Team Happy Face. The teams of three sat on opposite sides of the conference room.

"Warning, these guys know how to use the forest," Mark Senft, 29, of Waynesboro, warned his Happy Face teammates as they started.

It wasn't long before things got tense. The players' left hands jabbed at their keyboards, their right hands furiously clicking mouse buttons.

"One in our base! One in our base!" Andrew Kipe, 18, of Waynesboro told his teammates, his nose inches from his monitor screen.

Across the room, TFM members shouted commands at each other.

"I need somebody to back me up!" Broadwater said.

"I have all three people shooting at me! You guys should've had a free and clear run," Juarbe said.

A small crowd gathered behind Happy Face. Then it moved to watch TFM. They shouted and groaned as the game went into overtime.

TFM emerged victorious after more than 20 minutes. The teams met in the middle of the room and shook hands.

"That was intense," Kipe said, twisting his palms. "My hands are really sore."

TFM fell in the finals.

"We're the first losers," Juarbe said. Looking a little disgruntled, they stood up and looked for the winners, but couldn't immediately find them.

Now, they had time to relax, just as awakening gamers began to return to the conference room.

"Let my adrenaline cool off," Juarbe said.

But they only had two hours. Then, the Call of Duty tournament would start.

PIC: DAILY RECORD / SUNDAY NEWS - JASON PLOTKIN Bill Schmidt, 34, of Harrisburg, left, takes on John Sergott, 42, of Middleton, in a round of Dance Dance Revolution at the Holiday Inn in West Manchester Township Saturday morning. PIC: DAILY RECORD / SUNDAY NEWS - JASON PLOTKIN While fellow gamers Chaz Klinkbeil, 21, left, of Fort Wayne, Ind., and Andrey Krabets, 21, of Harrisburg, play a game, Doug Lawson, 18, of Jamestown, N.Y., takes a nap on the floor. During a 40-hour tournament at the Holiday Inn in West Manchester Township, some gamers took to hotel rooms, some crashed on the floor or in their cars, and others just kept themselves caffeinated.

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