



Fall 9-26-2017

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Recommended Citation

Twork, John, "Fletcher Joins Illinois Wesleyan as Esports Head Coach" (2017). *News and Events*. 3549.
<https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/news/3549>

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Fletcher Joins Illinois Wesleyan as Esports Head Coach

Sept. 26, 2017

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.— Understandably concerned about his child's future, Steven Fletcher cautioned his son, Callum, about spending too much time playing video games.

After he was named the first-ever [Esports](#) head coach at Illinois Wesleyan earlier this month, Callum called up his father – an engineer – and playfully taunted, “I told you so.”

A native of England, Callum Fletcher earned a bachelor's degree in law enforcement and justice administration with a minor in homeland security from Western Illinois University and intended to pursue a counter-terrorism finance career. However, upon graduation, Fletcher decided instead to intern with Play Mechanix, creator of the arcade game Big Buck Hunter.

In a few months, Fletcher was hired as a full-time community manager, and later, as an event manager who helped organize and run the annual Big Buck Hunter world championship which featured \$100,000 in prizes. After more than two years with Play Mechanix, Callum read that [Illinois Wesleyan was creating an Esports program](#) and in need of a head coach.

“I jumped at the job as soon as I saw it,” Fletcher said. “This is that dream opportunity that I was looking for. It's ‘League of Legends,’ and it's building the Esports program from the ground up. I very much enjoy the whole start-up aspect of it. I love being able to create something and be proud of the final product.”

Esports – competitive online video gaming – is one of the fastest growing collegiate team activities, now offered as at least a club activity by more than 600 colleges and universities across the country.



Callum Fletcher



Students Aejin Kim (left) and Tao “Paul” Jin celebrate during an Esports demonstration at IWU in April.

Illinois Wesleyan's Esports team – which plays computer-based “League of Legends” and is becoming one of approximately 40 intercollegiate varsity programs in the nation – will begin competing at the varsity level in the fall of 2018.

Fletcher is tasked with recruiting 12 players from around the world, and in the meantime, he is coaching IWU's current Esports team. Junior math/physics double-major Tao “Paul” Jin from China, who has played “League of Legends” since season one, was captain on last year's inaugural team.

“I've gotten to know people who I didn't know before,” Jin said. “We get to know each other, play together, and try to figure out the best way for the team to move forward. It's been a really good experience.”

As head coach, Fletcher discusses strategy and watches game film with players. He is also part of a small committee spearheading the creation of an Esports arena on the second floor of the Hansen Student Center.

“I can't stress how appreciative and grateful I am for the opportunity to wake up every day and work on ‘League of Legends,’” Fletcher said. “I don't come in and play, but I give students the opportunity to come in and play, and I think that's really cool.”

Students who are interested in trying out for the 2017-18 IWU Esports “League of Legends” team are invited to participate in an open tryout session Tuesday, Sept. 26 from 5-8 p.m. and Wednesday, Sept. 27 from 4-8 p.m. in Buck Memorial Library room 202.

By John Twork