

Bad Machines

OUR STORY

In 2010, it started with the idea of having a LAN center that would be the home of the Fighting Game Community (FGC) of Raleigh-Durham (RDU). Glen Swan, who was the Senior Community Manager at Funcom at the time, embarked on his quest to start that LAN center and build it around a community of local competitive players. Through many iterations, much research from past failed LAN centers in the area, and talking with many others across the country, he gave up on the idea it could be profitable enough to be worth both the time and investment.

Over the years, Glen made a dramatic pivot in his career. He left the video game industry after 7 years of working in the communications and publishing arm of video game development and jumped into data engineering within digital marketing. Glen spent the next 7 years working for one of the largest advertisers in the world. Working on some of the largest brands in the world building analytical and big data solutions.

During that time, Glen's passion for gaming was still strong. However, the world outside of gaming paid very well and was much more mature than his work in the industry. Thus, making it difficult to justify both a pay cut and other sacrifices that go into jumping back into the video game industry.

One day, Glen had another idea after watching old reruns of CrossCounterTV, a YouTube series that featured two players that played casual online matches in Street Fighter IV for fun. On that show, they played an advertisement for "Bar Fights." Another series from the makers of CrossCounterTV, that featured exclusive exhibition matches between the biggest pros in fighting games live at a bar in California.

“What if we could do exhibition matches like they do in *Bar Fights*, but extend it to other esports titles,” Glen thought. “What if instead of renting a bar for the night, we just own the bar completely,” he continued.

You see, in esports, most of the coverage is around major tournaments. Many teams, many people, all converging to one location for a fee to win big prize money and recognition. How spectators watch StarCraft is a lot different than how they watch Street Fighter. You are talking golf versus basketball. Glen did not just see a means to run an event in fighting games. He saw an experience, a culture in one piece of the world (or genre of game) that could translate into another (e.g.: spectate golf like you would a basketball game).

Thus, the idea of Bad Machines was born. Something that is not just a bar, but an experience—a show of some of the best and up-and-coming esports players across multiple hot titles playing in an epic, yet exclusive, exhibition match just for fun. I mean, who would not pay to see LeBron James go 1v1 against Michael Jordan? Even if it is just for fun and just for kicks?

However, it did not stop there. The question of how to fund such a show, how to pay for the talent, and everything in between came into play. Then, Glen remembered a video he saw from one of the co-hosts of CrossCounterTV, Mike Ross. Someone that had recorded a heartfelt message on where esports was going, how the sport was going in a bad direction due to greed. Something that years later after its recording, came true even after Mike had completely removed himself from the scene after.

This triggered Glen to think about the business model for Bad Machines. He decided to build a self-sustaining model where parts of the business like the bar would help pay for the show, which helps address the underlying problem Mr. Ross had brought up in his emotional video to the community – put the players first.

Glen set out on this quest to raise money, take his own savings, and dump it into this idea of establishing North Carolina’s first esports bar. Fast forward to today, he found an amazing 2,400 SQFT location, 108 East Main Street in downtown Durham, NC. It has its own parking deck, an amazing steampunk feel with original 1920’s hardwood floors, with the most gorgeous worn brick walls, and the original metal torn doors from past businesses in the 1940’s that have been forgotten until we resurrected them from the grave and now immortalized them into our décor that has now become the home of Bad Machines.