Gambit their way to a global game win

A LOCAL team of students has earned a place in gaming history by winning DreamBuild-Play 2008, Microsoft's global game development competition.

Team Gambit's winning title, *CarnyVale: Showtime* (picture), beat 350 games submitted from 100 countries to win the top prize of US$40,000 ($58,800) in this annual event.

The team is made up of seven students from National University of Singapore (NUS), Nanyang Polytechnic and Nanyang Technological University, and is part of the Singapore-MIT Gambit (Gamers, Aesthetics, Mechanics, Business, Innovation, Technology) game lab.

The lab is jointly run by Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and the Interactive Digital Media Research and Development Programme Office hosted by the Media Development Authority.

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Mr Bruce Chia, an NUS computer science undergraduate and lead programmer of Team Gambit, said: "We wanted to make a game that was easy to pick up, but with depth as well. It gets pretty hardcore at the later levels."

In the acrobatic puzzle game, gamers play a clown that has to complete various circus stunts. The team developed the high-definition game using Microsoft's game development tools and included an easy-to-use game editor that allows players to create their own levels. It took the team four months to develop the game.

Apart from the Xbox 360 console, the game can possibly be ported to the Windows operating system and the Zune portable multimedia player, thanks to Microsoft's cross-platform gaming development tool dubbed XNA Game Studio.

According to the judges, Team Gambit's entry received the highest scores in three criteria — fun factor, innovation and production quality. The second- and third-place teams are from Venezuela and the United States.

Microsoft Singapore marketing communications manager Ian Tan told TODAY: "The game gives Singapore and the winning team great international exposure and there is an opportunity to commercialise the game for Xbox Live."

Microsoft's Xbox Live online gaming platform has garnered 14 million users and generated US$2 billion in revenue from downloaded games and content.