

Julia Christophers and Tobias M. Scholz



eSports Yearbook

2010

ESPORTS YEARBOOK

Editors: Julia Christophers and Tobias M. Scholz

Pictures: Julia Christophers

Layout: Tobias M. Scholz

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ISBN: tba

Production and Publishing House: Books on Demand GmbH, Norderstedt.

Printed in Germany 2011

www.eSportsyearbook.com

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Preface

Hell, it's about time!

Another year has passed, and what an incredible year for eSports it was! Starcraft II appeared in the beginning of 2010 and like a whirlwind it changed and intensified the scene all over the globe. We realized that we were in love with eSports all over again. The dedication of players, casters, journalists and league operators is phenomenal and makes this viewer-broadcast-league-player network a beautiful thing to behold. And what is going on with League of Legends right now? Have we ever had so much streaming and viewing going on as we have now? In the eSports Yearbook 2011, DotA 2 will surely be an interesting topic and people will watch it a lot, at least that is what we believe right now.

However, after having been part of the scene for more than 10 years, we are not convinced that people will one day refer to 2010 as the most exciting year in eSports history. In 2010, many people have learned what competitive gaming means for the very first time. They have stuck their curious noses into the ESL Intel Arena, they have visited Gamescom, they have seen Dreamhack on national Swedish Television. Old eSports games such as Starcraft, Quake and Counter-Strike are ideal to explain tactics and competitiveness to the public. Let's hope for a new star to be born, a title as balanced as CS and as tricky as Starcraft. Something that will be able to satisfy the CS 1.6 players as much as many Broodwar players were satisfied with SC2. Counter-Strike: Source split the community in two strong halves, but will there be a title to rejoin them?

There is so much to talk about, and we have some great contributions this year. Let's let the editors speak and sum up their 2010!

GL&HF

Julia Christophers and Tobias M. Scholz

A Decade of eSports: The Asian Perspective

By Jasper Mah

10 years have passed since the launch of the WCG (World Cyber Games) in Everland, Yongin, Korea, and in 2010, it will be going to Los Angeles, U.S.A for the World Finals. With its vast history of being the 'Olympics' for professional and non-professional gamers around the world, the WCG has been part of the ever-growing community of gamers who strives to compete and make a name for themselves in the global gaming scene. Especially in Asia, the eSports scene had always thrived upon the success of StarCraft, which made itself a household name especially in South Korea, where it is considered a national pastime and has developed a culture among the youths to endorse professional gaming into something of a celebrity status. As I start to write this article, I remembered a brief moment of looking at the news on TV ten years ago, where there was a special feature of a gaming competition in Korea, and that was where it all started.

If you had ever been curious about how the scene in Asia has been like compared to what is happening in U.S.A as well as Europe, it would be the amount of effort, money and exposure that had been invested to make it what it is of today. It is definitely not the idea of 'building Rome in one day', but the continual support from the gamers, the eSports event teams as well as the multitude of support provided from sponsors and partners and also the media worldwide over this past decade.

I come from the background of being an events and marketing manager in the eSports scene of Singapore, a small island in South-East Asia, where the community had grown exponentially over the years. Singapore has become a known name in the gaming industry, especially with the series of World Cyber Games hosted in Singapore, as well as the multiple series of the Asian leg of the World Cyber Games from 2006 to 2009.

In my times of being an eSports events manager, I have worked on a fair share of eSports events with many of the professional gamers in Asia, as well as a series of sponsors and partners in the gaming industry. My choice of involvement in the eSports industry all began in 2001, when I first watched a video broadcast on the local news of StarCraft gamers competing against each other in a competition, made me decide to be part of the eSports scene globally.

South Korea, known to many for its extremely competitive eSports community, is not purely a façade of professional gamers who live a career of playing games professionally and making their earnings through it. Especially in South Korea, professional gamers has been looked upon at the same statuses of idols and celebrities and have their own share of fan clubs and fame.

”Developers and publishers worldwide have started to produce more games than ever, to cater to the different group of audiences in their markets, and the eSports scene throughout the world changes along with it.“

The amount of exposure through multiple medias such as TV, Internet and written media is astounding, with TV channels such as ongamenet, and MBC GAME, that provides a broadcast platform for eSports activities, video-on-demand, media exposure, product endorsements and viewership. The number of fans watching these channels reaches millions, and provides eSports with the exposure it requires. Millions of dollars are spent on signing players in the professional gaming leagues, and professional teams have received their fair share of endorsement from companies like Samsung and Intel, and organizations such as the Korean Air Force which provides sponsorship for its premier gaming team, AIR FORCE ACE.

I spent my time working with Lunatic-Hai, the well-known Korean Counter-Strike team when they came to Singapore for the KODE5 South-East Asia Qualifiers, and the level of expectations, professionalism and hard work dedicated to them were similar to what you see from professional sportsmen taking part in their fields of specialty, with the support of companies like Razer. In China, gaming has also been looked upon as one of the few hobbies among the youths that have received quite a bit of media attention, especially with the participation of professional teams and individual players who have etched their names upon the milestones of eSports. With well-known household names such as WNV.CN and the World Elites, the players are seen as national heroes when they are sent overseas to take part in competitions and tournaments. They are endorsed with professional gaming products from companies

like SteelSeries, as well as sponsorships from global giants such as Coca-Cola and Adidas.

At the same time, multiple tournaments are organized annually to select gamers to represent China at events like the CPL, the Intel Extreme Masters Series, as well as global competitions like the WCG and the ESWC over this decade. There are a series of eSports community websites in China that provides gamers and sponsors immediate news and highlights from their teams taking part in overseas competitions, and the WCG Grand Finals in 2009, held in Chengdu, China, highlighted the presence of Asian countries playing host to global events due to the amount of recognition and media coverage, as well as the positive outlook of eSports in China.

In South-East Asia, the eSports scene differs slightly due to the timeframe where gaming have been exposed to the general audience in the many countries within it. In the country of Singapore, eSports had only reached the mainstream audience when a broadcast of the whole event of the CPL World Tour 2005 appeared on TV and provided viewers a glimpse of what professional gaming was like, with the match of the well-known Jonathan 'FatalIty' Wendel, against Sander 'VoO' Kaasjager in the competitive title, PainKiller. In the same year of 2005, Singapore also won the rights to host the Grand Finals for WCG, being the first other Asian country to host the prestigious 'Gaming Olympics' other than Korea. It provided Singapore with the opportunity to invest largely on the prospects of eSports, as well as the endorsement from the Singapore government towards the prospects of the gaming industry being the next billion dollars industry worldwide. LAN Shops, otherwise known as LAN Centers in the countries of U.S.A and Europe, started building the foundation where eSports organizers work together with local LAN gaming outlets to establish the eSports scene.

From 2006 onwards, Singapore played host to the WCG Asian Championships, by building the South-East Asia eSports community with a stronger foundation and providing multiple countries the channels of taking part in eSports.

The eSports community is ever growing, especially with companies like Rapture Gaming, which hosted the 2005 World Cyber Games in Singapore, bringing their operations overseas to cater to the community in countries like Vietnam and India.

Neighboring countries to Singapore, such as Malaysia, Indonesia, Brunei and Thailand, also focused their efforts on churning out professional gaming

teams, which made their debut across the Asian nations as strong Counter-Strike and DotA teams that took part in global competitions and events like 'DreamHack' and 'ESWC' in the past decade. Names like FMJ, Hybrid, KingSurf, Zenith and XCN started making appearances on global gaming websites as the next Asian teams to dominate the DotA scene.

Countries like Taiwan, and Japan, also started making their appearances on the global platform, with Taiwan playing host to the Intel Extreme Masters in Taipei, and Japan making their appearance on the arcade and console gaming arenas for fighting titles like Street Fighter and Tekken. At the same time, both countries also send their own representatives to take part in other tournaments, like Taiwan who have their well-known Counter-strike team, UMX-Gaming, as well as 'Daigo', the recognized Japanese player who make an impact on the American scene whenever he takes part in Street Fighter tournaments and made a name for himself.

Competitive gaming has indeed made a scene in the Asian side of the world in the past decade, and has exponentially developed multiple gaming communities across the world, from participation in games like StarCraft, to WarCraft 3, to Quake, to Counter-Strike, to titles like Dead or Alive, Street Fighter, Project Gotham Racing and FIFA World Cup. Many Asian countries start to hold their own local and regional tournaments, to establish the common eSports platform where gamers can come together and compete against each other. Companies like Garena develop their own software to allow gamers to compete in a LAN environment online, and also host their own tournaments in different countries to increase the multitude of competitions gamers can participate in. The participation of Asian countries in the defunct Championship Gaming Series also marked a milestone that the presences of Asian gaming counterparts have made their stand across the globe.

However, like what the introduction has highlighted, a decade has passed. Developers and publishers worldwide have started to produce more games than ever, to cater to the different group of audiences in their markets, and the eSports scene throughout the world changes along with it.

Companies like Blizzard Entertainment has produced games like World of WarCraft and in 2010, StarCraft 2 will be launching worldwide, while online game publishers in Korea seek to develop their own titles to compete against offline titles like Counterstrike 1.6, by providing alternative titles such as the popular 'Sudden Attack', a popular FPS title that made its debut in since 2004. Blizzard Entertainment's World of WarCraft provides the 'Arena', which is a PVP event held in its Blizzcon event annually and caters to the MMORPG

gamers that subscribes to its game services. At the same time, the emergence of StarCraft 2, the sequel to the game that shaped Korea's gaming scene, has been constantly debated on whether it will pull off the same amount of success its predecessor has achieved.

Many developers and publishers have started hosting their own events catering to their own games, which has reduced the amount of eSports events that debut annually due to the amount of support and exposure on a different level provided.

eSports companies and organisations are also affected by the economy, especially in Asia, as the significance of sponsors and partners working with the developers and publishers affect the sustainability of events like the ESWC, the WSVG and the CPL and even the World Cyber Games as well. Countries like the Philippines, which had miss the chance to have their own WCG qualifiers since 2008, also show how the costs of running eSports events have also been severely affected, with decisions from most of the organizers in Asia to stop sending teams on behalf of their countries to the Grand Finals of the World Cyber Games. If one were to observe, the presence of countries from Asia taking part in the World Cyber Games have either dropped drastically, or their participating numbers have dwindled over the years. The costs of sending a whole Counter-Strike team versus a gamer competing in the individual category, often weighs the objective of sponsors putting in their money to send the teams around the world to take part in eSports events.

It is good to hear that such initiatives are taken up by the developers and publishers, but eSports communities wanting their own series of gaming events might have to be patient and understanding that the scene in Asia, as well as on a global context, has moved. The people behind events such as Major League Gaming have also indicated in an interview, that companies planning gaming events cannot sustains their operations over long periods due to the costs and constant support required to make the events successful.

My years of experience in the eSports industry has changed my perspective towards supporting eSports as a particular cyber sports activity other than purely professional gaming and its events, but that whether you came from the perspective of a gamer, a developer, an event organizer, or the member of the public, a lot of changes are expected, and that we must adapt to these changes. To some, eSports became a passion, and to some, it has become a form of business. These 10 years became powerful milestones of the eSports industry, where a moment of stepping into one of the video games you have played before is no longer just a moment at home, but an experience bigger,

better and strong than ever before.

It is not a matter of trying to repeat the successes of other organisations and events that showcased eSports professionally and positively, or to outshine the other in one way of another, but to realize that we work in a global community no matter where we are, to sustain the efforts of video games being part of our lives, and making an effort to support it, whether is it casually, competitively or with our own objectives.

”To some, eSports became a passion, and to some, it has become a form of business.“

It has taken years for the community to slowly build up, and no one would want to see it end because of reasons like ‘there is no future in eSports’ or ‘video games will die out one day, it’s just a hobby anyway’. Like what Tobias Scholz has mentioned, a lot of the eSports people plan all the events and competition out of their passion to see that it is a success globally and it is the same for me to want that in Asia, and that it would not die out soon. I step into an eSports event, an arcade, or a LAN Center and I see the future that we can create out of it.

These are my thoughts and opinions, from the perspective of the Asia scene, and I hope it will be shared among everyone, whether you are from the U.S.A, or Europe, or any other nations that have developed interest in eSports. I express my gratitude to all who have read my article, and might share the common goal with me to establish eSports and video games globally as part of our efforts on a lasting basis.

Jasper Mah is one of few event managers in Singapore involved in eSports. He has worked for eSports, video game and technology events with companies such as Intel, KODE5 and the World Cyber Games. He also supported several hardware companies by helping them with their campaigns: he connected them with tertiary institutes of education in Singapore. Since 2006, he has been supporting the competitive gaming scene in South-East Asia, helping publishers to optimize their MMO games in order to make them more balanced for eSports. His experiences and knowledge in the worldwide gaming industry as well as in the Asian Pacific eSports industry enable Jasper Mah to promote the image of eSports for the benefit of the community. He can be contacted at jasper.mah@gmail.com.





Passion in eSports - A Flame that Never Goes Out

By Duncan Shields

”Everything flows; nothing remains.“

- *Heraclitus*

The watcher

For over a decade now eSports has been a significant player in the realm of my experience. Through that lengthy period of observation I’ve seen many things come to pass. Talented competitors, inspired writers and visionaries have lit up the eSports sky with a flash and then, like shooting stars, gradually burnt up into nothing over time. The few who made it through the atmosphere crashed into the ground but by then their impacts were too weak to permanently affect our world. Huge stones which made a big splash only to sink to the bottom never to be seen again, gone once the last ripples rolled back into the ocean.

Many there were who seemed so exceptional in their play and so impossibly adept at their games that it seemed as though they’d rule atop their scenes for a lifetime. Whose prose captured and expressed the intangible experience of a moment like no other. Whose promises of bigger and better whisked many up into rapturous visions of luxurious vistas we could all inhabit. Yet time gets them all, sooner or later he catches up with them and they fade into the night one by one. Drained of their motivation, sapped of their inspiration and rushing to escape the eSports world voluntarily or hopelessly clamoring to stay relevant in the face of changing times. Everything has a metagame, not just RTS games, and the only constant is that it always changes eventually.

Across many of these times I’ve been an active participant, in others I’ve been a detached observer soaking in the scene and distilling its direction to gauge its vitality. Once there was a young man seeking to find and express his own voice in the fledgling scene of the early eSports wild west. Then shifting into the protean role of a craftsman working in the shadows to hone his skills

and expand his capabilities as his perspectives changed. Now an elder statesman working to uphold the fabric of his field, with others, and more aware of the importance of knowing when silence can accomplish more than a word. Now more than ever is a time of flux when everything can hang in the balance with each passing moment.

On one hand you have the old guard who sees where this thing has come from and the forces which shaped it and dictate its flow. On the other you have a new cadre of voices who call out for drastic changes and a furious push forwards into uncharted territories, yelling that wonders yet unimagined lay over the next hill. In these times I have often considered, and many times been asked, how one maintains his passion. How one keeps alive that ineffable song between the soul and the intellect that the ancients called the muse, inspiration. Games grow boring, strategies become time worn styles and success breeds a degree of complacency. Or so I'm told. You see despite my own battles with motivation and inspiration I've never let passion's flame go out and I think it all boils down to a subtle difference in perspective. Let me show you the eSports world through my eyes.

”And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same.” - Marianne Williamson

The changing of the guard.

In early March the clock on my life ticked over to a round 27 years but it wasn't until the following day I got my surprise. The IEM IV World Championship looked set to be a coronation if ever I saw one. fnatic had ruled the Counter-Strike world in 2009 and after a second place at the European Finals, thanks to a once in a lifetime performance from mouz, it looked inevitable fnatic were set to return to the throne and cement their position as the best team in the world. The previous day they had unleashed a truly vicious thrashing upon their longtime rivals SK Gaming and now the only thing standing in their way was a green Ukrainian team whose players had never been in a major final and who came from a heritage of a region known for being irrelevant in the grand scheme of the top teams. Yet fate has a strange way of allowing things to come to pass; circumstances often seem setup to provide a particular contrast which then illuminates our understandings of a key moment.

Even after Na`Vi had won the first map nobody had any reason to believe the tide had turned. fnatic came back on inferno, the same map Na`Vi had crumbled on against mouz at the European Finals, and soon had themselves in position to even the series. When the best team in the world plays any other team it's not always required that they build leads or blow the opponents out of the water, the most consistent and high level performers merely need to keep the distance close since they know when the pressure reaches its peak they can handle it better and even use it to spur themselves on towards victory.

fnatic seemed dialled in to begin their push to move onto a third map when Na`Vi turned it up to 11 and outplayed the Swedes completely. Suddenly ceh9, universally cited as the weakest player in the lineup, exploded and his impact put his already talented team over the top. Here was passion embodied in a pure moment which changed the course of recent eSports history. Just as fnatic's legendary run in 2009 began with their victory at the Global Finals so Na`Vi's World Championship success became the foundational moment in what has been one of the greatest years of Counter-Strike any team has ever delivered.

It would have been enough for the Ukrainians to win a major title over the best team in the world and put their region on the map. It would have been enough for them to win the first two majors of the year, IEM and ESWC, and show themselves to be the new top dogs. It would have been enough to finally peter out and bomb a few tournaments citing mental fatigue from an entire year's worth of tournaments or physical strain from a calendar filled with travel. Yet Na`Vi never settled for what they had, they pushed and pushed and kept straining still to reach what they yet had not. Here was a team capable of returning to their world beating form again and again. Here is another group who carry the divine light of inspiration. Here are a band whose flame of passion was at times a roaring furnace burning up their enemies but even in their low moments was never extinguished from a delicate candlelight.

You didn't need to read articles or debate back and forth on forums to see this passion in action, it was right there in the servers. markeloff transformed himself from a player who would take every AWP shot, no matter how audacious and risky position-wise, and pushed on through until he became a player capable of taking over some of the highest profile matches of all time and hitting again and again in the face of exasperated opponents who tried futilely to wait out the storm. Edward had for a couple of years been the player fans had overhyped and exaggerated to the point that it seemed neither he nor anyone else could ever live up to that billing. Then suddenly he was exceeding

everyone's expectations. Even when everyone knew what he could do on a pistol round or in a crucial CT defensive moment still he continued to produce miraculous rounds to stun opponents and incite hysteria in spectators.

"The struggle itself...is enough to fill a man's heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy." - Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*

Thankless toil

In an entirely different arena of eSports competition another player's passions had been reignited and he saw before him an unconscionable gauntlet of challenges he would have to overcome to achieve success. In the world of Counter-Strike individual talents allow their performances to contribute to the success of the whole and ultimately the core chemistry and single-minded focus of the unit conquers even the greatest opposing band of individuals. In the world of Quake dueling though a man stands alone and at all times must face the knowledge that he will live or die on his own ability to perform on demand, his own mental fortitude to see a goal through to completion and his own inner depths from which to summon the spirit to continue in the face of adversity.

One man had been to the top of the mountain before and seen the view granted only to those who stand alone above all the rest. One man had seen his prime pass him by and his priorities change as he settled into a comfortable life of occasional practice but more frequent disappointment. As the QuakeLive professional dueling scene had taken shape in late 2009 much of the fervor and mumblings amongst the fanbase was not about whether the young American rapha could continue his sparkling form or if the mercurial Belarusian Cypher could refind his groove. Rather people were talking about the return of Cooler. The Russian master had returned and from all reports he was fully rededicated to practicing and reclaiming the number one spot in the world.

Comebacks in the world of eSports have never been very successful and this can almost be stated as a rule at this point. A competitor might return thanks to the lure of winning some quick cash or feeling the thrill of winning some games early on. In the end though either the metagame has moved on and their skills and style no longer suit the environment or the reasons which caused them to drop out or fall off previously reassert themselves and conti-

ning seems a fruitless endeavour. Yet Cooler had more to lose than anyone. At his peak one must remember that Cooler was the most brilliant dueler the world of Quake had ever seen. His ability to dominate opponents who had better aim using his understanding of positioning was a revelation. His innate sense of how to dodge fire while in disadvantageous positions and uncanny ability to force his opponent out of control were unparalleled across the entire dueling realm.

Cooler was a man who had won both ESWC Quake III dueling titles despite entire fields of top players, and legends, to wade through. When the game of choice on the tournament circuit had switched to Quake 4 his motivation had wavered more and more. His passion which in the past had seen him practically live in a LAN cafe as a young man seeking to conquer the world now faded away into thoughts of a life outside of gaming. Visions of nice cars and further education and building a future away from monitor screens and oversized cheques. The maestro still played, still had performances which struck a chord with fans, but his moments of brilliance were fewer and further between. In the age of cast iron dominance from the Swede toxic our subject seemed more and more disinterested and his losses became more frequent and less surprising.

So as 2010 comes to a close we sit here and what is immediately noticeable about Cooler's year is that it has not yielded a single title of note. Despite being a permanent fixture amongst the four kings of the modern age (himself, av3k, rapha and Cypher) the only one without a crown remains the Russian. Where his opponents have bookended the year with dominant runs (rapha and Cypher) or shown enough concerted brilliance over a handful of days to take a title (av3k) Cooler has seemingly been cursed to play well enough to narrowly lose. Had enough genius in him to beat one of his fearsome opponents only to then fall to one of the others by a close margin in the final or semi-finals.

The man who had once seemed a solid cut above the rest of the dueling world now found himself facing a three-headed monster which embodied every aspect of the game taken to a higher height than even he could accomplish. If he chopped off one of the hydra's heads another would sprout up in its place and thwart him. Where he had once been the mastermind of Quake the American stood in his path and matched him wit for wit escaping with slivers of health and map wins by a couple of frags. Where Cooler's uncanny ability to pressure his opponent and force control away, and then do more with it during his time, had been the envy of all now a Pole played him at his own game and bested him again and again. Even Cooler's admirable work to elevate his

pure aim to a higher and more consistent level was cast aside as the Belarussian hit impossible shots and got on incredible runs of momentum.

Yet the moral of this story is not that success is the only thing of worth, that the destination is all that is of value. Rather the journey one takes in search of that object of value, that destination of glittering lights, is the pool from which the soul is sustained. Cooler's passion was not waiting to be captured in joyous tears lifting silverware but rather it was there both when you saw him and when you didn't. It was there when he decided to put it all on the line: his reputation and his legacy and his heart to compete. When he decided not to live off any past successes or rest on his legendary laurels but rather to rededicate himself to the purest dueling aspiration: to test himself against the greatest players in the world and fight to prove himself the best once more.

Cooler's passion is a fire which burned in an empty office space in Cologne shared by SK and mouz where he committed himself to nights of practice. His passion was there as he again and again pit himself against the modern pantheon of Quake gods, champions all, without a flicker of fear on his resolute visage. Impossible as it might seem Cooler deep down believed he could become the champion again and I suspect he still does. I suspect he's still thinking and scheming and working to reascend the mountain. Will the view still be as beautiful and rewarding after so much toil? Who can say, but the task is a righteous one and it garners its own rewards. No, let us not pity Cooler his struggles but imagine him happy for his efforts however far he has yet to travel.

"You can't go back and you can't stand still, if the thunder don't get you then the lightning will." - *The Grateful Dead, Wheel*

Change or die

What has been the purpose of these extended examples from 2010? What core principle do I strive to highlight? How does one connect one of the most successful years of Counter-Strike ever with one of the most frustration filled of QuakeLive? The matter of perspective I want to make clear is that passion is not a force from without. It is not an ethereal link to a godhead which wanders the world unseen and strikes without warning in a thunderbolt of inspiration. Those who have felt that electricity and mourn its departure look

in the wrong direction it seems to me. The artist who no longer hears the call of the muse and so abandons his easel and canvas can never expect to feel her touch again. Rather he who looks within and rededicates himself to the quest is the one who will bask in her embrace time and time again.

If you ask me what keeps me passionate about eSports I'll look at you with a curious expression of confusion and puzzlement. What doesn't keep me passionate about eSports? Everywhere I look I see passion and spirit and inspiration in the face of any and all frustration, disappointment and adversity. Psychedelic philosopher Terence McKenna said „Rome falls nine times an hour... your job is to notice every time it falls.“ The vibrant storylines and key myths and significant archetypes inside of you which yearn for fulfillment and expression are out there the world of eSports playing out in every tournament, every match and every moment. Your job is to put in the work to find them!

If the scene has grown stale for you and nothing sparks your interest then look within and find that cool and still pool of bottomless imagination and summon from it a leviathan to carry out your desire. „Be the change you want to see in the world“ as a famous Indian once said. You have the tools now work to develop them until you can build your own palaces externally to mirror those within. Sit back down at the desk and rededicate yourself time and time again to the quest. In time the muse will reappear and fill your ears with her effervescent song. Your job is to be in the time and place and state of mind to be capable of hearing it.

Perhaps you didn't see my passion because it hid behind the mask of analytical rhetoric during my commentaries. Perhaps you didn't see the nights my passion inflamed me as I burned through archives and demo sections researching and committing to memories obscure details because I strove to make my techniques invisible and let my points and arguments speak for themselves. Perhaps I lucked into the stamina to maintain my pace in a marathon in which others burned themselves out sprinting. Or perhaps there's another way to look at eSports and we can all do it. Perhaps change is coming after all and you can get caught up in the flow or you can retire to the dinosaur's graveyard with all the others who came before.

”if only you could see what I've seen with your eyes!“ - Roy Batty, Blade Runner

Duncan Shields is the Editor-in-Chief of SK Gaming. A veteran of a decade in eSports he has worked with Swedish and American subscription communities Gamers.nu and ESEA. He is also the author of the TAO-CS and TAO-fRoD guides to Counter-Strike as well as a frequent colour commentator for ESL TV. He can be contacted at thorin@sk-gaming.com.



A Year in which Business and eSports Games Learned to Co-exist

By Mark O'Beirne

It could be argued that developers would not want to support the fledgling concept of eSports. Gamers, whether casual or hardcore, are a group populated by those that will happily move onto the next “latest and greatest” game. This majority has contributed to new release games such as Call of Duty: Black Ops achieving sales figures of over 5 million in just one day. However, 2010 saw a change in attitudes from developers who appeared to recognise the importance of multiplayer and this stands to benefit the eSport scene.

Since its conception, there has been a conflict between the idea of eSports and the business side of the gaming industry. On one hand, eSports requires stability as it allows players, spectators, commentators and tournaments to become accustomed with the nuances of a chosen game. However, on the other hand, developers and publishers are looking for titles to bring in the dollars, and that is the bottom line.

Some of the most prominent examples of successful eSport titles such as Counter-Strike 1.6, Starcraft and Quake 3 are over ten years old. The games industry has become a booming business and allowing years to pass before a sequel is unveiled is no longer a good business practice.

Sequels pose both a problem and an opportunity for eSports. Some games change dramatically between releases. The end result is that several players may stay with the old while others pick up the newest release.

The Quake series is a prime example of players refusing to migrate to the next release. Nearly 15 years on, there are still tournaments and players in Quake 1. Quake has also been unsuccessful with later releases. Quake 4's reign as a competitive title was short-lived as tournaments and top-level players went back to the pinnacle of the series, at that time, in the form of Quake 3.

A sequel can, however, act as a breath of fresh air for a title. Naturally, games can become stale as they age and player numbers drop off. With the release of a sequel comes an influx of marketing materials, discussion and hype. Should these be successful, the player base in the new title can equal or possibly surpass its predecessor.

There are developers that have supported competitive gaming and eSports over the years. Blizzard patched Starcraft and Warcraft 3 constantly since their respective releases. Capcom has been a supporter and sponsor of a number of worldwide events. It could be even be argued, that the multiplayer element of Halo has essentially remained unchanged due to its success as a competitive title. iD Software host the yearly QuakeCon event and made modding tools available which contributed to the lifespan of Quake 3 as a competitive title. Leading up to the release of Quake Live the author of the Challenge ProMode Arena mod, Kevin 'arQon' Blenkinsopp, was hired as a contractor.

2010 saw the release of a number of AAA titles, but the focus has shifted over time from a solid single player experience to a prolonged multiplayer experience. One of the reasons given for this is the growth of trade-ins. The highly anticipated releases of Halo: Reach, with release day sales of \$200m, and Call of Duty: Black Ops are proof of this. Treyarch has acknowledged the importance of multiplayer in the run up to the release of Black Ops and stated, "Multiplayer is critical to the success of this series." Of course, 2010 also saw the release of Starcraft 2, but the focus of this series was never on the single player side.

"However, 2010 saw a change in attitudes from developers who appeared to recognise the importance of multiplayer and this stands to benefit the eSport scene."

It is evident that more developers are seeing the value of a strong multiplayer element. With it, potentially, comes the aspect of competitive gaming.

Call of Duty has become a franchise at this stage with 14 releases across a number of platforms since 2003. Recent releases have demonstrated the value of a strong multiplayer element with millions of players logging on and maintaining activity over the life cycle of each release. Treyarch said that multiplayer "has such tremendous staying power". It has been knocking at the door of the competitive circuit with various releases but hasn't been fully accepted yet. The successes of Modern Warfare and Modern Warfare 2 will be emulated in future releases, with Black Ops feeling oddly familiar despite being a new game.

Similarly, Halo has seen five renditions since 2001. Once again, those who have played Halo titles before feel right at home with newer versions. The more recent releases try to refine rather than fix something that isn't broken. Due to its consistency as a multiplayer title, it is clear why Halo is used in tournaments around the world and on the regular Major League Gaming Circuit.

Of course, those companies that have supported eSports from the ground up must also shift focus. While they may have cracked the formula for multiplayer and games suited for competition, the yearly financials await and profits need to be made.

Blizzard has seen the success of Starcraft and waited ten years to release the second edition. To accommodate the business side, the single player game has been split in three. Each race will get its own game with release dates a year or more apart. The positive of this is that the multiplayer will remain stable and supported for several years at least while Blizzard remains a business at heart.

Starcraft 2 is almost certain to have a promising future on the eSports circuit and has already featured in high profile tournaments and leagues such as Dreamhack Winter 2010, the GOMTV Global Starcraft 2 league and the Major League Gaming circuit among others.

Other developers try different approaches. Capcom released Street Fighter 4 nine years after 3rd Strike, with Super Street Fighter 4 released just over one year later. With a lower retail price, extra characters and balances, it was a justified purchase. To add to potential revenues, Capcom has delved into micro transactions with a variety of costume packs available as downloadable content.

At the same time, Capcom has demonstrated its support for competitive gaming over the years. The most recent example of this is the inclusion of an exclusive unlockable player title on Xbox Live for the winner of EVO Online 2010.

iD Software has taken yet another approach with the release of Quake Live: a game that has featured and is certain to feature in the professional circuit for some time thanks to its roots in Quake 3.

From the outset, it was made clear that the free game would be supported with advertisements. However, during the keynote speech at QuakeCon 2009,

1994 February 1994: Super Street Fighter II: Turbo
October 1994: Doom II

1996 June 1996: Quake
December 1997: Quake II

1998 March 1998: Starcraft
May 1999: Street Fighter 3: 3rd Strike
October 1999: Warcraft II: Battle.net Edition
November 1999: Unreal Tournament, Quake III

2000 June 2000: Marvel vs. Capcom 2
November 2001: Halo: Combat Evolved

2002 July 2002: Warcraft 3: Reign of Chaos
October 2002: Unreal Tournament 2003
July 2003: Warcraft 3: The Frozen Throne
September 2003: Counter-Strike 1.6

2004 April 2004: Painkiller
November 2004: World of Warcraft, Counter-Strike Source
October 2005: Call of Duty 2, Quake 4

2006 January 2006: Trackmania Nations ESWC
November 2006: Gears of Wars
September 2007: Halo 3
November 2007: Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare, Unreal Tournament 3

2008 November 2008: Call of Duty: World at War, Super Street Fighter II Turbo HD Remix, Gears of War 2
February 2009: Street Fighter IV
September 2009: Halo 3: ODST
November 2009: Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2

2010 April 2010: Super Street Fighter IV
July 2010: Starcraft 2: Wings of Liberty
August 2010: Quake Live
September 2010: Halo Reach
November 2010: Call of Duty: Black Ops
February 2011: Marvel vs. Capcom 3
November 2011: Gears of War 3
not yet released: DotA 2

John Carmack revealed that subscriber features would make their way into the game. He said that advertisements were “not going to be able to carry the project”.

The new subscriber model was unveiled in August 2010 with two new subscriber tiers along with the free mode. These subscription based accounts carried their own perks to entice consumers to part from their hard earned money.

”Business and eSports stability can co-exist as illustrated by the companies outlined.“

While iD Software is trying to keep one eye on the business end, the eSports side is still supported. The initial beta was invite only which allowed the top professionals to give their feedback and ensure the game ran well. Changes and fixes continue to be made to Quake Live.

eSports has been growing as a sector of the gaming industry and is finding its feet all the time. Reputable tournament partners are becoming more organised, some major sponsors have been acquired, and commentators and broadcasters are becoming more plentiful and professional by the day. eSports requires a commitment from game developers as stability is a premium requirement. Traditional sports do not change year in-year out and neither should competitive games if a proper foundation is to be laid.

Business and eSports stability can co-exist as illustrated by the companies outlined. In order to be successful and provide a stable multiplayer platform, companies will have to come up with new strategic models. This can range from micro transactions such as downloadable content to consistent multiplayer modes despite frequent title releases. At the same time, a solid and stable multiplayer experience can reap rewards. Trade-ins are reduced, which in turn means more first hand sales, interest in a title remains high and more publicity can be gained if a developer’s game is involved in a competitive scene.

Mark O’Beirne has worked with eSports.ie since its launch at the World Cyber Games finals in 2008. He is currently undertaking a Journalism masters at the University of Limerick in Ireland. Presently, Mark is submitting articles on a freelance basis to various eSports or gaming publications and sites. He can be contacted at **mark.obeirne@eSports.ie** and is available on Twitter (**@Sabre0001**).

StarCraft II in Western eSports: Is Television Needed?

By Marc Onofrio

eSports is at a major turning point. With the release of StarCraft II being heralded as the biggest thing to happen to the industry in its roughly decade old history, many believe it will be the key to bringing eSports into the spotlight of mainstream media in the West. However, due to the way mainstream Western media works, trying to make eSports ‚mainstream‘ by giving tournaments television time will not work nearly as well as it would with using the same strategies, but through the vehicle of online media. Also, the games developer, Blizzard, has shaped the multiplayer experience in such a way that most players are aware of the competitive scene.

It is South Korea that StarCraft fans point to and exclaim „I want my country to be like that!“ In order to understand why that simply isn’t feasible, one must understand how StarCraft came to be a part of Korean culture. The rise of StarCraft in Korea was a grand mixture of economic uncertainty, exquisite timing and luck. With the Asian financial crash of the late 1990s taking its toll on Korea, all economic emphasis was on spending the minimal amount of money possible. For many teenagers this came in the form of gaming, and with long lingering bad blood with the Japanese after World War II, Japanese made consoles weren’t an option. As one observer put it, “[Japan and Korea’s feud] resulted in Japanese goods being either completely omitted from the Korean market place or carrying a price tag with more digits than a Korean phone number.” In 1995 the government introduced widespread broadband over Korea, at the cost of US\$1.5 billion, giving tens of millions of Koreans the chance to buy cheap PCs with fast and inexpensive internet. It came as no surprise that online gaming took off a few years later with the release of StarCraft. While online gaming was great at home, the real trend was hordes of young gamers swarming to Korean internet café’s (known as PC bangs). It’s understandable now that Korea has more than 26,000 internet cafes, earning \$428 million per year according to the Health Ministry. Because of this widespread internet and gaming culture, competitive gaming is seen as a normal thing to do for young Koreans, instead of having the nerdy stigma attached that it has in the West. Luckily, this stigma is starting to disappear. With millions of Koreans playing, and being the best in the world, StarCraft made its way onto Korean television. Lots of gamers played, and so obviously lots of gamers would tune in to see the best of the best play. Hugely profitable com-

panies started to venture into eSports after this, sponsoring teams in the mid 2000s, injecting professionalism into a group of players, making them into a slick, practicing machine.

Titles like Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2, the Halo series and even Guitar Hero games are introducing a whole new wave of gamers into the online experience. Starcraft II is having the same effect on gamers worldwide, with players of every genre swarming to play, news reports from all over the globe are pointing to signs that StarCraft II is selling record numbers. It would seem logical that the West would then follow suit the way Korea did – moving the nationwide hobby of StarCraft onto the television, for all to see and enjoy. However, in the West (especially in the United States), it simply won't work as well as online media would.

”eSports is at a major turning point.”

One must only look at the Championship Gaming Series (CGS) to understand how gaming translated to the television in the United States (and in Season 2 of the CGS, to Europe and some of Asia as well). While the CGS seems to act as a lightning rod of hate from many in the eSports community, it serves, perhaps more importantly, as a lesson to show the mistakes that were made. As Marcus ‘djWHEAT’ Graham said on his eSports podcast Live on 3, “[for the future of eSports] it is imperative that they don't make the same fucking mistakes that these companies made.” The choice of games to broadcast was often criticized as the biggest mistake made – a valid point, and Counter-Strike: Source (CSS) often took the brunt of that hatred. Many fans of the CS series were outraged at the decision to switch from Counter-Strike 1.6 (known commonly as 1.6) to CSS, the game which many saw as inferior in gameplay but much ‘prettier’, something that the television cameras would much rather. Herein lies the main problem of televising eSports in the United States – the heart and soul of the game will be taken away in favor of pretty graphics, lame catchphrases (BACKBREAKER!!!) and introverted gamers shuffling on stage awkwardly to give post-game interviews with a twenty-something hipster who has no idea what they're talking about. The community made rules have evolved since the birth of eSports, and shouldn't be messed with. eSports in Korea became huge because the people who broadcasted, produced and casted it genuinely loved it, and it was broadcast in the simplest of ways, keeping the humility and innocence of the game and gamers intact. Two players sitting alone in booths, waging war through a mouse and keyboard. The gamers were already an in built audience, but the problem is attracting and building upon

a target audience, while trying not to dumb down the complex gameplay too much. The CGS showed the CS:S matches in third person, attempting to copy how mainstream team sport games were shown. This shows how ‘TV people’ take the heart of the game out – imagine watching a Counter-Strike match or a QuakeLive duel in the third person, and harder yet, imagine trying to commentate and follow the action. The game format was also changed, instead of the matches being a more standard MR15 (15 rounds per side, first to 16), the CGS changed to MR9, along with the starting money being bumped up from \$800 to the maximum, \$16,000. This is more or less like starting a StarCraft II game with limitless minerals and gas, or a QuakeLive duel with all weapons and full health and armor. This eliminated the all important pistol round, but was necessary to do so that the matches would finish faster, as the TV time is non-negotiable. Speaking on the topic of time limitations on television, Graham said “A [StarCraft] game could last 5 minutes and it could last 20 minutes, that’s not okay when you’re doing a live television broadcast.” While it seems anything can be put on television in the USA (the Lingerie Football League is even on TV, and it sadly isn’t as good as it sounds), the network it is on ultimately decides how it is run and how many resources are pumped into it. As Graham put it; “[the CGS]’ goal was not to make the most amazing eSports league, their goal was to make television.”

”If television is so grim, what can we look forward to? Online broadcasting is the way of the future – at least for StarCraft II – in the West.“

If television is so grim, what can we look forward to? Online broadcasting is the way of the future – at least for StarCraft II – in the West. With sites like YouTube, livestream, ustream, stick.am and justin.tv, streaming has never been more simple and popular, just look at the PokerStrategy TeamLiquid Starleague, ESL TV, the HDH Invitational, World Cyber Games, the Intel Extreme Masters tournaments, Levelup doing QuakeLive broadcasts, Day[9] dailys and djWHEAT and his many, many eSports related ventures. Would you really sit down at your television to watch the eSports you love after having observed the freedom granted by online streaming? During the World Cup, IRC channels were being flooded with people asking for stream links to the matches. If people won’t watch the World Cup on TV, what will they

watch? Ugly Betty and Jersey Shore, most likely. Even while the CGS was running (sorry for bringing the CGS back into it), they had well-marketed matches being streamed online during season 2, attracting 10-15 thousand people tuning in. While 15,000 people may not seem like a mind blowing figure now (as a comparison, the first game of Lim Yo Hwan in the GSL reportedly had over 750,000 people watching), but at the time it was quite significant. Online streaming doesn't have the problems that TV has – the broadcasting schedule can be made at any time, not at the mercy of time constraints. Gamers, competent admins (often the hardest part) and people with a vested interest in the success of the tournaments will be able to run them, maximizing efficiency and player and spectator satisfaction. Counter-Strike, QuakeLive and StarCraft II matches can be shown and commentated in the way they were intended online, with one small problem – it is hard for the audience to get bigger. The current way online media is presented makes it quite hard for an outsider to enter the international eSports scene, with bunches of tournaments being held everywhere and links to watch confusing to find. TV would solve this problem, showing the games to a much, much wider community than those who already watch, and on a much more precise schedule. Even if there are more people watching the show on television, without them having a basic understanding of what is actually going on the longevity of their interest in competitive gaming will wane. Fighting games are perhaps the simplest form, two characters beating the crap out of each other, what could be simpler? This is why the ratings for the Dead or Alive 4 segments in the CGS were the best – because of their simplicity.

So the options are to either televise simple games which the layperson can understand with relative ease, or to increase the base amount of people that understand the game and its intricacies so that it will work on television easier or more people will watch matches online. StarCraft II is the perfect example of the latter option. With record sales being reported pretty much everywhere, the amount of people playing StarCraft II is amazing. Blizzard has done a fantastic job in promoting the multiplayer side of the game and players are playing non-stop. With the release of StarCraft II, both Major League Gaming (MLG) and the Electronic Sports League (ESL.eu) announced that they will be including StarCraft II in their future tournaments. The MLG is a primarily console based circuit over North America that has been running successfully for the last few years. The ESL has been the leader in promoting eSports in Europe through its ESL Pro Series' (currently in its 17th season in its home country of Germany) in a number of regions and its famous Intel Extreme Masters (IEM) events, now in their fifth season (editor's note: with about 5.5 Million viewers at the CeBIT 2011). On July 27 (yes, the release date of StarCraft II) they announced that season five of the Intel Extreme Masters would

be shown on the Eurosport channel, the same channel that broadcasted the CGS in Europe. The ESL has said that the IEM program on Eurosport won't be strictly gaming," Each episode will focus on one event, one game and one star player of the Intel Extreme Masters" the official news post read. The first episode covered the Intel Extreme Masters Global Challenge Chengdu, and had its focus on fnatic's Counter-Strike 1.6 team, and primarily its captain Patrik 'cArn' Sättermon. With a sort of lifestyle angle added, the show will appeal to non-gamers and gamers alike, and with the guidance of a man who has done more than can be imagined for European eSports, Michal 'Carmac' Blicharz, it will certainly be successful. Europe has always been ahead of North America in the acceptance of gamers however. I'm sure we all remember the Swedish DJ Basshunter and his 'songs' about an IRC bot named Anna and the Warcraft III map DotA (and I bet you all just searched for the songs on YouTube). Swedish Counter-Strike legends Emil 'HeatoN' Christensen and Dennis 'Walle' Wallenberg are quite famous in their home country, with HeatoN admitting that most young males know who they are and will occasionally stop them on the street for a sometimes awkward autograph or picture. The ESL is taking a very smart approach to eSports on television, and perhaps if there is more widespread popularity and success, there may be a transition away from a lifestyle type show to showing eSports as it was meant to be shown.

"Online streaming doesn't have the problems that TV has ..."

StarCraft II in the West doesn't need television coverage - with developer support from Blizzard creating a large player base that is interested in the game, the fan base will come from within, rather than trying to draw in fans. eSports and StarCraft II are still young, perhaps in ten or 15 years the media, technological and gaming landscape will allow for a Korean approach where the games integrity wasn't challenged, but until then online is the way to go.

Marc Onofrio is a 20 year old from Adelaide, Australia, and works as an Events Manager for FXOpen eSports. An eSports fan since 2004, his knowledge spans Warcraft III, DotA, Counter-Strike, QuakeLive and StarCraft II.

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These designs were made by **Daniel Andersson**. He is the owner of the largest private professional community for CS teams called denuke. Designing is not his job or main profession, but he has a deep passion for both gaming and design. Therefore he combines both his passions in his designs. For many years his designs were not made public. In this year's edition of the eSports Yearbook the talented artist finally shares his work with everyone. He can be contacted at www.de-nuke.eu.



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Changing Perspectives – An Owner’s Journey through eSports

By Frank Fields

In the United States, we are in a rapidly changing world of eSports. Five years ago the focus of the eSports scene was on Warcraft 3, Starcraft and Counter-Strike. Recently there has been a shift to Starcraft 2, Halo, and Quake Live. In early 2010, when the Starcraft 2 beta was released, I made the decision to stop working for other eSports organizations to start my own team. It has been a rocky road, and there are some things I wish I could have done better, but I’m satisfied with the job I’ve done so far.

A bit of introduction may be necessary to add context to this article. I was a professional DOTA player and manager for several years, most notably with Check-Six from 2005 to 2007. I played Warcraft 3 and managed VT Gaming for two years from 2007-2009, an American team in the amateur scene. Later I was a writer for GotFrag and then later MeetYourMakers from 2006-2010 where I became an Editorial Supervisor. I am now the President and co-owner of VT Gaming. As such, I have seen the eSports scene from almost every vantage point. While I cannot claim to be an expert at any of the positions I’ve occupied, I’ve been recognized by my peers for my accomplishments and that at least gives me license to share my experiences. Perhaps you can take it as a cautionary tale, perhaps a story of inspiration, or simply a view into a world previously undiscovered.

Beginnings

At the beginning of the Starcraft 2 beta, I was playing with a friend of mine who was in the Warcraft 3 team VT Gaming with me. I decided that I wanted to build my own eSports team after having been slighted by American eSports organizations. I saw how badly some of them had treated many of their players. I made my way up the North American ladder and started playing in some prestigious events at the time such as the weekly show-match series ITL. Prestige and networking led to such players as Attero, TorcH and Godder being recruited to the team.

It was at this point that I realized I could have something special. Shortly after Attero joined, he mentioned that he had beaten a few good players on

ladder that might want to join. One of these was the now world famous Chris Loranger, better known as Huk. Another was Taylor Parsons, also known as PainUser, who was recruited partially because our player Aaron Abrams (Arlock) is a good friend of his from the San Francisco bay area.

Media and Networking

I have always been proud of the way we market our players, a fact that has been reiterated to me by other players. The best example is the identity we created for our blossoming star – “Huk Norris”, complete with posters and show-matches against other top players.

At the time, Attero was one of the most active and popular streamers on the North American server. Because of his streams, we attracted the attention of a few generous fans who wanted to donate money to our cause in order for us to host tournaments and show matches. One such person was Grant Kimmerling also known as Tranqfx.

At first Grant donated a mere \$300 for a 32 person invitational tournament for both his personal entertainment and to help out the young Starcraft 2 scene. It did however legitimize my feelings that there was a market for new eSports teams because of emerging community of a new game.

”In early 2010, when the Starcraft 2 beta was released, I made the decision to stop working for other eSports organizations to start my own team.”

When I saw the potential of VT Gaming advancing to something beyond that of just a mid-level Starcraft 2 team, I came to Grant about helping turn the team into a multi-gaming giant. I called upon Andrew Olsen (Katsune), an old friend and professional web designer I met through World of Warcraft, to design a website that could sustain both teams and communities of gamers.

It was the perfect storm. We had Grant, an investor and partner with a heavy business background, Andrew, a web designer with superior IT expertise, Trevor (TorcH), who had superior knowledge into the eSports scene, and me

with the vision of VT Gaming and the knowledge to reach our goals. Combined with our players and their ambitions, we became an engine, each of us cogs performing our expertise in tandem.

Money = Problems

Problems arose in the team when financial decisions had to be made. Do I give salary to a player like Huk or Painuser, or do I invest in the community, tournaments and website of VT? Ultimately, the salary I would have had to pay Huk and/or PainUser would not be enough to secure them for more than a matter of months, at which time I would have lost them anyway.

This was a rude awakening as a manager. I realized that many people looking from the outside (including myself previously) wonder “Why don’t you sign these players?” Now I wish it was that simple. Over time you become friends with these people and love to be around them, but there is a business side of eSports at a high level that is impossible to ignore.

I have received criticisms about the choices I’ve made as an eSports team owner. Since I have gone into this project investing very little capital, it has been hard in the short term to secure top players. I knew that under this model, unless I had an extreme amount of patience from my players, I would not be successful. Because of this requirement, I have lost many players that have furthered their eSports career (and I am happy for them), and others that have seem to quit eSports entirely. Our team has struggled at times as a result.

Sustainable Models

This is where the recruitment aspect comes in, where many organizations underestimate its value. If you have good coaching and practice systems, you can turn many players into stars. At the beginning of beta, Zerker was completely unknown as a player and wasn’t even in VT Gaming’s starting lineup. However, as time went by, he became one of our greatest stars. While there have been teams who have large amounts of private sponsorship such as Lazarus or Root, VT Gaming has not had this luxury and has had to seek alternative means of growth.

Our model has been to pick people out of the US Ladder and turn them into superstars. Some of VT Gaming’s former players include Huk, PainUser, Antimage, Attero, Zerker, and Clonze. We have been very close to securing other

players but did not have the financial incentives to do so. Right now we boast a formidable roster, without much financial capital invested directly to the players.

Luckily for me, Trevor had the same mindset as I did about eSports. He was extremely helpful in introducing me to the right people and showing me how to advance in the eSports world. With his assistance, I was able to build VT Gaming up to the point it is now.

It was hard for me to see all the difficulties of being an owner while I was still a player (while at Check-Six) or a writer (while at Meet Your Makers). The eSports world is multifaceted in that the teams provide most of the news content in circulation and often the same people who recruit players are the ones who negotiate sponsorships and partnerships. Overall, it's still an industry in its adolescence.

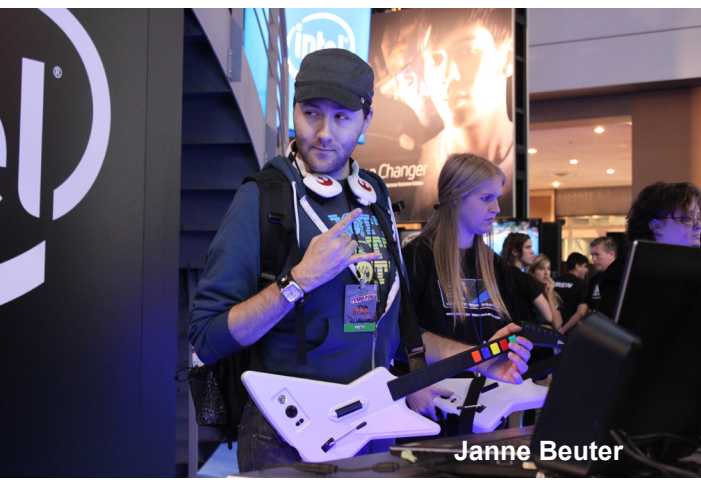
”Be patient.”

As a fan on the outside looking in, the eSports world may seem simple, and many of the teams may seem vindictive, selfish or greedy. Let me correct this misnomer – eSports is not a profitable business to get involved in. Even the most successful teams do not much more than break even. eSports owners and managers do their jobs because they love eSports.

For those who have the desire to start teams for the purpose of improving eSports, I give one piece of advice – Be patient. The prime example of what happened to the prior MeetYourMakers is still the poster child for how to not manage your money. A team with all the publicity in the world, one of the best editorial staffs, nominated for several awards, great management, goes out of business in large part because of the exorbitant salaries owed to some of the world's top players. You have to spend within your means. There is a reason that all the best players are not on the same team – it's not financially feasible. There are teams that will throw money around, but as we've seen in the past few years, they will not last long.

Frank Fields is the President and co-Owner of VT Gaming. He is currently attending Wright State University for English and Journalism. He is a two time nominee for the eSports Award for Best Scene Journalism and was published in the 2009 edition of the eSports Yearbook. He has worked for several prominent community sites such as Gotfrag.com, mymym.com and readmore.eu. He can be contacted at **frank@vtgaming.net**





Janne Beuter



Philipp Saedler



David Hiltcher



Philipp Saedler



Rising to the Challenge

By Colin Webster

Very few gamers in the rest of the world realise the strides that have been made for gaming and gamers in South Africa.

Sport in South Africa is highly regulated by the government through Act of Parliament. Thus the Sports and Recreation Act of 1997 (as amended) gives the the National Federations so recognised wide ranging powers and recognises such National Federations as the only authorities for their respective codes.

It is with such authority that the South African Football Association was able to successfully bid for, and host the 2010 World Cup.

The recognition given through such legislation enables all recognised federations to apply for:

- Government Grants, and
- National Lottery Funding, and
- The award of Protea Colours (the award given to all official sporting teams),
- A special relationship with all local government authorities, and
- The ability to run the sport as an official school sport.

As a result of this level of accreditation, Mind Sports South Africa (MSSA) is able to be an active member of the South African Sports Confederation and Olympic Committee (SASCOC).

Challenges posed by the 2010 World Cup:

With South Africa being the host of the 2010 World Cup, all sports were advised by government not to hold any provincial, national or international events of their own at the same time so as not to dilute the interest in the Football.

Of course, all the recognised sporting codes complied, and only an exception was made for the rugby test matches which were arranged well in advance.

However, this did pose many problems for the MSSA as we had to change our calendar of events to accommodate this truly spectacular event. Only the Eastern Province ended up being a casualty with its Provincial Championship being cancelled.

So, even with the additional pressure, the MSSA was still able to hold five provincial LAN championships and its National LAN Championships as well as its Online Championships. All the Provincial and National Championships were sponsored by ASUS.

It is through participation at the LAN and Online Championships that gamers can earn provincial and federation colours as well as earn a spot in the national team trials. It is at such National Team Trials that gamers can be selected to officially represent South Africa.

International Participation:

By being part of the official structures any South African has to have National Federation and SASCOC approval to participate in any international event for any sport. Thus a great deal of work goes into getting a team across – as well as money! Being at the furthestmost tip of Africa, it often seems to most South Africans to be miles away from everybody.

It takes an eleven hour flight just to get to London, eight hours to Greece, and sixteen hours to South Korea.

Even to get a team from Johannesburg often requires flying gamers from different parts of the country to meet and then depart.

It can be quite a logistical nightmare – but damn it is worth it!

Mind Sports South Africa participated in five international events in 2011 and were:

LG MOBILE WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS – NEW YORK

While many hard-line computer gamers may balk at a texting competition being considered to be part of eSports, the MSSA remains committed to promoting Mobile Gaming as a Mass Participation event.

There is no doubt that in Africa, Mobiles are the first contact that many people have with technology. It is also hoped that by winning the 'hearts and minds' of many of the young women who participate in this event, the culture of eSports will grow from year to year.

It may well interest readers to note that of the over 50,000 participants that the MSSA had in the 2009 year, over 67% were women. Then South African Championships grew to a staggering 77,800 participants. Certainly this event has great prospects!

The two women selected to represent South Africa at the World Championships held by LG in New York were Natalie Witoslawski (of Rustenburg) and Kgothatso Moerane (of Soweto). Both gamers enjoyed themselves tremendously and managed to finish in fifth place.

HYUNDAI FIFA CHALLENGE – SOUTH KOREA

Through the International eSports Federation (IeSF) the MSSA was invited to send a player across to South Korea to participate in the HYUNDAI FIFA Challenge. Of course, everyone was soccer mad in South Africa at that time.

At first the MSSA considered running a competition with national television to find the best FIFA gamer in the country, but the idea could not be actualised due to the MSSA's own lack of resources.

The MSSA thus agreed to send the gamer that it sent to the 2009 IeSF Grand Challenge – Xola Magwaza.

Xola Magwaza proved to be a solid competitor in 2009, and therefore was considered a good choice.

2010 WORLD CYBER GAMES

The WCG allowed the MSSA to come into its own.

For a start, all the qualifiers from around the country were flown up to the National Team Trials courtesy of SAMSUNG, The National Team Trials were held in SANDTON CITY in Johannesburg.

Thus gamers for GUITAR HERO™ from Cape Town, Bloemfontein, Durban, and Pietermaritzburg, were flown up to Johannesburg so that a truly representative trials could be held.

It was a shock to many of the gamers who had never flown before, and who had never competed in such a prestigious venue and against other gamers who they had never met before.

However, the event went smoothly and – well – simply rocked!

Unfortunately, only one player could be sent, but the MSSA felt confident with its choice.

Kevin Doran of Johannesburg demolished all of his opponents to earn his selection, and for his efforts was awarded Protea Colours.

2010 was the first time that a gamer has ever been awarded Protea Colours by the South African authorities for participating in the World Cyber Games.

As a result of the government accreditation, national television attended the Colours Award Ceremony. All gamers country-wide were shocked and amazed to see Kevin Doran being featured on prime time television news on all three of the state's channels (SABC TV 1, SABC TV 2, and Kevin Doran with MSSA president SABC TV 3).

The impact made by such coverage was truly phenomenal. All of a sudden, gaming was introduced into the majority of South African homes on three of the nine official languages.

The MSSA also made yet another great stride with the team that was selected for the WCG. Michelle Marder had put in hours of work ensuring that the South African qualifiers were a success. In thanks, the MSSA selected Michelle as the manager of the team.

Thus Michelle became the first woman to be selected as a manager of a MSSA team and be awarded Protea Colours by the powers-that-are.

2010 IeSF Grand Final – South Korea

As usual the International eSports Federation (IeSF) showed its mettle and organised a fantastic 2010 Grand Final for WarCraft III and FIFA.

The MSSA selected its team from eligible candidates and again applied for Protea Colours.

Again the Protea Colours Board (made up of administrators from the South African Department of Sport and Recreation and SASCO) approved the team selection and awarded Protea Colours to the team.

Thus Matthew Putter, Rolando de Aveiro, Abu Bakar Ebrahim, and Magiel de Lange headed out to Daegu to do battle with the best in the world.

1st test match between Namibia and South Africa:

Thanks to the efforts of the Namibian organisers, the MSSA was able to participate in an official test match between the two countries.

The test match was done in two games, being COD 4 and FIFA 11.

The MSSA called up the services of Abu Bakar Ebrahim and Rolando de Aveiro to represent South Africa in FIFA. For COD 4, the MSSA held trials and selected a team.

The team selected was (from left to right) Jo-Ash Rajcoomer, Daniel Grundlingh, Steven Szucs, Peter Myburgh and Nialle Momsen.

The event held in Namibia was a huge success with Brendan Ihmig and Kai Eysselein did everything they could to make the event as professional and enjoyable as possible.

It has been agreed that there will be many more such events that will happen between both countries in the future.

Schools league

The disruption caused by the 2010 World Cup seriously affected the league. Combined with a three week long teachers strike, the league was not held in the format that was designed, but Provincial School events were still held.

The sponsor ASUS realised the pressures and challenges that the MSSA was facing and were most accommodating.

Even with the turmoil, the number of clubs based at schools rose from five to

fourteen, with some of the most prestigious schools in South Africa affiliating to the MSSA.

In conclusion

The accreditation by SASCOC of eSports has elevated all the different aspects of eSports to be on a par with any other sport.

Already, as a result of such a highly successful year, the MSSA is being included in:

- Talks to start a signature event, and
- SASCOC's TV sport channel.

As such it is not impossible to believe that one day eSports will be included in the more traditional sporting events like the All Africa Games, the Commonwealth Games, etc.

Colin Webster is the President of Mind Sports South Africa and a member of SASCOC's Legal and Arbitration Committee. Although Colin Webster comes from a traditional competitive sporting background (swimming), he was one of the founders of the MSSA in 1985. Under his Presidency of the MSSA (which is a Universitas) the MSSA was accepted as a national sports federation in 1991.

Spectator Experiences at MLG Dallas vs. Korea

By Christina Kelly

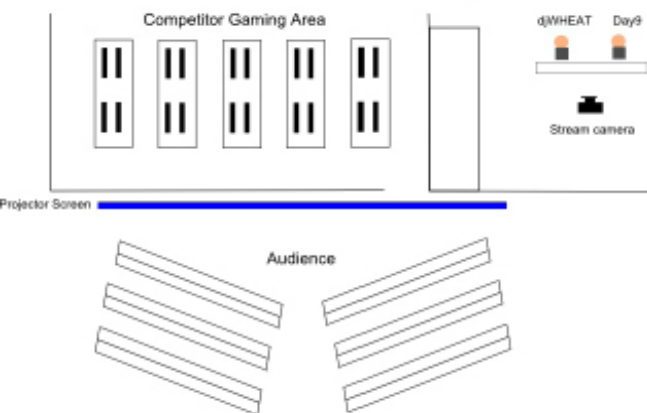
Walk into the Hilton Anatole convention center main room, and after about 30 steps you could turn left and see Day9 and djWHEAT's 10 feet high faces smiling at you from a huge projector screen, surrounded by faceless bodies in darkness closer to the ground. This was the StarCraft II tournament at the Major League Gaming national finals in Dallas, Texas.

If you'd ever been to a live StarCraft event of note, the fundamental participants of MLG's tournament would've been familiar to you - the SC2 competitors over in a gated section set up with tables and PCs, the commentators sitting at a podium with cameras and lights aimed at them, the fans and passerby watching the show from chairs, bleachers, floors, or mobbing the better-known players as they emerged from practice or play. There were also the familiar unexpected technical difficulties and other surprises that audiences have come to expect from most eSports events. But lurking right beneath these superficial similarities were huge differences between MLG and other events (namely, Korean events or Korean-style events like BlizzCon) in venue layout and tournament presentation which significantly affected the audience experience. I'd like to take some time to analyze these differences and discuss how they might be better understood by tournament organizers to improve on for future events.

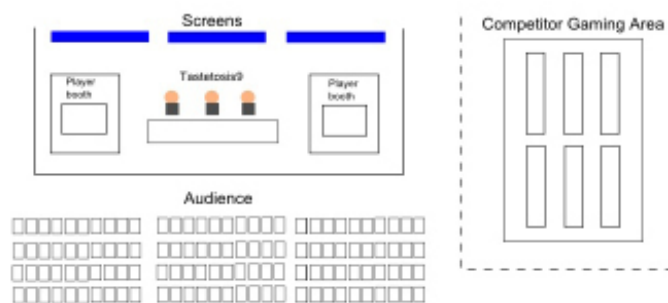
Here is a diagram I've created (using Inkscape, which is a great open source SVG editor) comparing the layout of each venue from a birds' eye perspective.

If you put yourself in the shoes of someone in the audience at MLG vs. Korea/BlizzCon (the two are lumped together because the venue layout is basically the same), you'll notice some significant differences right away. For me, the biggest disparity was that, at MLG, there was no stage, and no way to watch the commentators and the game at the same time. The audience at MLG was essentially expected to watch the screen only, with glimpses of the competitors (or, farther away, the commentators) beyond the screen simply a side effect of venue space and physical convenience. In effect, from an official presentational standpoint, the experience of someone at the event and the experience of someone watching the HD stream at home were the same.

MLGSCII Setup



Korea / BlizzCon Setup



Christina Kelly



Christina Kelly

In Korean eSports stadiums (as of 2008) and at BlizzCon (2008 and 2010), the commentators are front and center (the players whose game is being casted are also visible via the player booths, but this is secondary). The game footage is visible from different perspectives on the screens behind the commentators, which is of course essential for the audience to understand what's going on visually, but it is clear that the commentators are the main focus presentationally. They are the live guides to the tournament's events, and if you're up near the front of the audience you can see every gesture and grimace they make. This layout difference also differentiates the live experience from the HD stream experience - the audience can switch their focus between the game footage and the commentators whenever they choose to, which is not an option if you're watching at home. The commentators are also much more aware of the reactions of the audience, which leads to more interaction between the two groups, and also makes fun stunts like the one below possible because of the short distance between the audience and the commentators' podium (<http://www.youtube.com/v/F6jK63yZlt8>).

*” But, in the end, it was great live StarCraft,
and I was not disappointed.“*

The MLG setup reminded me a lot of professional American sports events like baseball and basketball games. About a month ago I saw one of the division playoff games between the Minnesota Twins and the New York Yankees, and, like at MLG, it was much easier to see the actual players than any commentators or sportscasters. Since the baseball players were involved in their own activities and there were no visible people announcing the game and interacting with the audience, it was very easy to sit back among my friends and chat with them about the state of the game, what we'd eaten last night, etc. This kind of continual socializing during the game itself didn't really take anything away from the experience of watching the game, since it's pretty easy to see what's going on by just looking up and checking out the movements of the players. The same audience chatter effect happened more often than not at MLG - without having anyone physically in front of the audience interacting with us, many people on the bleachers continually commented on the game themselves or engaged in discussion of other topics.

While I think this setup complements baseball's event structure well, I don't think it's an ideal situation for StarCraft. StarCraft arguably has the most developed commentary scene within all of eSports - with individual commen-

tators like Day9 often much more popular than all but the most recognizable pro players - and there's a good reason for that: it's hard to watch and enjoy high level StarCraft without commentary. StarCraft is a very complex and fast-paced game which is, as TorcH noted in his stint on CollegeHumor's Bleep Bloop, „like playing 6 games of speed chess at the same time.“ Without knowledgeable guides to engage the audience and explain the story of each game to us, the subtleties are often lost and the whole experience becomes less exciting. While it's great to have audio of the casters' commentary and even better to have gameplay footage synched to show you what they're talking about, there's something lost when the commentators themselves are not physically the focus of the audience. The result is that audience members are less likely to give the commentary their full attention and instead dissolve into personal commentary and theorycrafting with their neighbors, which can interfere with the experience of the people who want to just listen to the professional commentary. At BlizzCon, the audience tended to be silent along the lines of an audience at a theatrical play as opposed to a professional sporting event, and it seems to me that this was a direct effect of the commentators' proximity to the audience.

There is certainly no doubt that the quality of commentary and presentational media at MLG were top notch - Day9 and djWHEAT were very informative and entertaining, and it was a pleasure to watch the pros take StarCraft to new levels on the projector screen. However, as a dedicated StarCraft fan, I personally enjoyed my experiences in Korea and at BlizzCon more than at MLG because there was more high quality commentator interaction with the audience and, by extension, a different feel to the event in comparison with those watching from home. I would highly recommend that MLG take these presentational differences and their effects on the audience experience into consideration when planning future events. But, in the end, it was great live StarCraft, and I was not disappointed.

Christina Kelly has been active in the eSports scene since 2008, when she started covering the professional scene in South Korea for the site SC2GG. After a brief foray into commentary, she opted to stay on the journalist/promoter/organizer side of things and became Head Staff at SC2GG in addition to starting her own company to promote StarCraft through online media. She was instrumental in founding the North American Collegiate StarLeague (CSL), which now counts over 130 university StarCraft 2 teams as participants in its fourth season. As an eSports journalist, she has covered the StarCraft and WarCraft III scenes for the likes of Fnatic, Gravitas Gaming, Starfeeder, and others. More recently, you can see her in a brief cameo in the first episode of the new Korean documentary of Lim Yo-Hwan aka SlayerS_BoxeR's return to the professional scene "BoxeR's Wings." She also occasionally blogs on TeamLiquid and casts SC2 events for the professional team VT Gaming.

The Lessons eSports Should Learn From The Recession

By Marc-Andre Messier

It's no secret that the recession hit the electronic sports pretty hard: prize money went down, sponsorships went down and leagues went down. A lot of industries and companies weren't „ recession-proof „, and electronic sports certainly weren't invincible either. Sure, the recession has been a hard hit for us, but wouldn't it be lazy on our part to blame eSports' current struggle entirely on the recession? Can't we learn lessons from it instead? Is it normal that without big sponsorships, our sport can't function properly, or even survive altogether? It seems that in the last year or so, we've been seeing something that looked more like random gaming tournaments and contests than actual organized electronic sports. The years 2009-2010 have been very different from 2008 and the prior years, where we had major attempts at bringing eSports to the next level like CPL, WSVG and CGS. Things have really slowed down with the recession.

It's not like the gaming world stopped with the recession though. Videogames players didn't stop to play or compete nevertheless. Still, sponsors considered electronic sports to be too risky to invest during the recession and we weren't really able to live up to our old standards of visibility and buzz in the mainstream media that we had during the last few years. No one would dare to say the current eSports scene is getting as much hype as the CPL did when it was at its prime for example. What's a bit more worrying is that it seems that the big pre-recession investments in eSports might've just been excessive mis-spending by all those sponsors. Hardware companies realized that spending heavily on eSports wasn't a very good investment except in very profitable periods, so they backed off. ESports was probably the first on every companies' list to be scratched to get more liquidity, and that's alarming. I wonder when we will see a company brave enough to pull off a 1 000 000\$ World Tour again...

Still, the recession might have given us a few lessons that might've made it all worth it, if we seize the opportunity that is. I think we need to make some changes on how we manage and think about electronic sports, based on the following 3 lessons:

- 1) We need to build our sport on a real, strong base, and to become self-sufficient as an industry.

What base do our sport stand on? Just how strong is the organisation of our sport? Looking at how the recession was easily able to take us down, it has to make us wonder.

Why do I doubt in the organization and structure of eSports? Well, the ups of electronic sports seem to go along with the ups of the sponsors and the downs come as sponsors back off. There seem to be way too much correlation between the two, leaving us looking like an electronic circus only used by computer companies when they have extra money available and want to show off a bit with their high-end products. We seem to only be that risky stock some people are willing to bet on in hopes of making big bucks in 20 years, but it shouldn't be so.

There's not even an electronic sports industry right now, we just seem to eat off other people's hands...

”We need to build our sport on a real, strong base, and to become self-sufficient as an industry.“

It is fine to rely on sponsors to leverage our sport, but it is totally wrong to rely on them for survival, which is practically the case right now looking at how things went during the recession. We functioned very poorly during the recession without these usual big gifts from sponsors. We need to at least have a base of spectators and supporters that can keep our sport alive without the sponsors' checks coming in for a while. We made no real mainstream push whatsoever in 2009 and 2010, and it won't happen again any time soon if we keep waiting for the sponsors to give us the big gifts they used to.

If you're still arguing we're not eating off sponsors and that there's an electronic sports industry fully functioning right now, get your head straight: if there was really an eSports industry, every element in it would be valued properly and right now it's not. From the player salaries to prize purses, money is still thrown all over the place without calculation even after a decade of eSports. This is a big sign that our sport is not self-sufficient right now. If we were self-sufficient as a sport, we would know the value of everything from players salaries to spectator tickets. Instead, we just manage the money that our parents, the sponsors, are giving us. As a sport, were just as self-sufficient as kids right now. No allowance from sponsors: no eSports.

When I was a player, I always wondered why an organization would put 300 000\$ on a World Tour instead of 150 000\$ and save that 150 000\$ to make our sport survive? Why did Lan events pour in 50 000\$ for a two day tournament, and then whine about financial difficulties when they could've just put 25 000\$ and attract the same player and teams that would've still traveled? Well the answer to these illogical spending is that we're not even an industry. If we were an industry, wouldn't it be in the best interest of gamers (everyone in fact) to cut the purses in half to keep their leagues alive and out of bankruptcy? I mean, nothing was calculated or representative in eSports so far. The CGS paid 30 000\$ as a base salary to players, but was that what they were worth on the market? If you made an auction between teams, would it go as far up as 30k? I doubt so. And would these players really demand 30k per year to play games full-time, on top of the many winnings there's to be earned? Besides, I don't get how the CGS can complain about the recession and call it „ An idea that came that came too early for its time „, when they didn't even spend according to basic offer and demand logics. CGS blow up their whole money like a kid using its first parent allowance.

In fact, I've seen no electronic sports league spend according to offer and demand logics when it comes to professional gaming. We constantly see astronomically huge prize money for no reason in electronic sports. Consequently, we see astronomically disastrous downtimes, pretty much like we did during the recession.

So what exactly makes electronic sports more than an eccentric dream shared by a few individuals and companies that throw money in it without any calculation? Well, instead of completely relying of sponsors from now on, we have to define what makes electronic sport attractive, and start selling it for real. If you take money out of electronic sports, what is electronic sports all about? Are electronic sports only about playing a videogame game for money, or is it more than that?

We need to stop relying on others and finally pinpoint what are our assets as a sport to get out of this hole.

2) We need to pinpoint our assets and attract a true audience

We need a real following, a real audience. A real audience that will go towards electronic sports itself, not the side contests and sweepstakes forcing them to watch the matches. We need to drop the necessity of « amazing the gamers » with our prize money for them to show up and play. It seems electronic sports always needs to be in « I want to impress the world mode » in order to generate some interest... We also need competitive players that won't need astronomic prize money to show up and play.

”The answer: an incredible spectator and social experience, for an accessible competitive hobby (videogames)“

The best representation I can make of what a real audience is what MLG is currently doing with their professional/open bracket system (and MLG does still rely on a lot of sponsors still). They are one of the rare organisations in the history of eSports that hold a real audience. What they’ve done with all their live tournaments is a huge open bracket tournament that then forms their audience (since they are eliminated) for the professional matches that follow. The open bracket teams fight for only two spots in the professional bracket. It is genius, or common sense rather. After they get a taste of the competing and spectating experiences along with the social experience, these open players show up at all of their events, despite no hopes of winning big prizes. They legitimately want to watch these pro games and play their hearts out. MLG made a real link between an audience and their pro-scene, something I had never seen before, moreover in North America. They get these gamers at the events to play their tournaments, where they’re put right next to the professional gaming product: the big stage. They love what they see when they spectate, and more importantly for the league, they then start spending. They’re not in it for „, what they get out of it „, or because they want to be professional gamers themselves (some are, but most know they will never make it), they are really going back to MLG because they enjoy the real assets of professional gaming/electronic sports. So what are our real assets?

The answer: an incredible spectator and social experience, for an accessible competitive hobby (videogames)

Could it be that simple? Yes. We don’t even to give gamers false hopes to become a pro-gamer or promise them that they will win some huge prizes to sell eSports. We simply need to provide the social and spectator aspects of electronic sports and sell it. That’s what our whole electronic sport idea should rely on.

How often do we see « professional tournaments » shelling out 25 000\$ for a tournament that has no competitive/social aspect to it? There’s absolutely nothing worth economically in only having the top 25 players in a room play-

ing for 25 000\$. Without the spectator and social aspects, that 25 000\$ will never see any growth whatsoever.

However, when you bring in the open players from MLG that are there for the social and spectator aspect, you get a lot more out of your 25 000\$ given to the pro teams on stage. You get people that look up to these teams, that have fun with their friends watching the matches, that live something unique screaming in the stand after a great shot and that dream that maybe at the next stop they will end up in that pro brackets facing these gaming giants. They start spending too.

Let's also not forget that our hobby is very accessible. We need to play that card: young adults all want to compete and be social, but no everyone is able to do so through sports for example, but almost anyone can pick up a mouse or controller. This is a real crazy asset we have here. You don't need any specific physical abilities, boys and girls can play together, etc. to play games. We have the hugest possible audience.

With all those assets, it really makes me wonder why electronic sports haven't made it to mainstream yet

"If we want electronic sports to shine as a true global sport, we will need to stop pushing our own little game forward."

I know the higher staff of some gaming leagues would all come back at me explaining how the sponsorship game works and that I don't know anything about it, but that's exactly my point: maybe the whole sponsorship game we're playing is broken. I'm no sponsor shark by nature, and I genuinely think we need to focus on our own assets and sell them to an audience instead of relying on gift money coming from all those sponsors. They should only act as leverage for our sport.

Right now everyone is looking for money higher in the pyramid: players look up to teams, teams look up to sponsors, tournament organizers look up to sponsors, but is that really all we're capable of in eSports? Look upwards for money? Why can't we create a legitimate customer base that will bring money? Why can't we look downwards and get money from an audience that really watches our matches because we really present something that's worth paying for? What about making the experience at our events something really worth paying for? What if for 50\$ you can get a great competitive experience, social experience and spectator experience all at once? Maybe we wouldn't

have to wait for these checks from sponsors to come in if we could be able to raise the prizes of our events, without gamers whining about it because they would know they'd be getting something that's worth more than an NFL game ticket experience wise.

3) We need to consider gaming as a whole

Lastly, we are into so dire need of unity in eSports. Even with the recession and the constant collapse of leagues such as CPL, WSVG and CGS, it's shocking that there has never been a real and anonymous panic alarm that rang about the struggle of our sport. All leagues closings throughout eSports history have sounded like good happy headlines on eSports news sites. Interesting.

It seems the collapse of each league approximately made just as much happy people than it made sad ones. This is not unity. Everybody in eSports has their own camp right now and this is wrong. It seems like every electronic sport supporters only supports their own game or little cause, while we should be all working together. We need to fight for gaming as a whole, and when a league worth a million dollars such as the CGS collapses, we should all realize how this is going to hurt everyone in the long run, instead of screaming „ epic fail ! „, and being glad that they failed because they didn't choose your game. We're all in the same boat and we're all losing when gaming takes a big hit, no matter if you considered CGS, CPL or WSVG to be fake or not. Yes, we are allowed to protest and demand a new league to take over when the current one is poorly representing us, but we can't delight ourselves when an organization of our own sport goes down. Come on.

I'm always saddened when I see the demise of each league being seen as a catastrophe by some and a blessing by others. For example, Quake 4 players disliked the demise of the WSVG while Quake 3 players chanted like their greatest enemy just got killed... Guys, if we really succeed in pushing electronic sports into the mainstream, the right games will end up being the main ones one day or another, don't worry. In the crazy turnout of events that the WSVG would have become the electronic sport reference around the world, do you Quake 3 players really think they would have stuck to Quake 4 until 2020? There's no need in panicking over game choices in an emerging sport such as ours. In fact, there's no need in panicking over any short-term choices that affect you negatively. We've gotten into the bad habit of putting down, disrespecting and killing our own leagues over short-term decisions such as game picks and this needs to stop. Let's work together for the long-term success of our sport.

Lastly, I would also like to point out that before the recession, we had the „ best gamer in the world „, crown with the CPL World Tour and best gaming

team in the world with the CGS, and that kind of represented us as a whole for a while, but we lost that since the recession. The recession seems to have split gaming world back into our separate games once again. I believe this is a serious step back in eSports. We currently seem to lack unity and play in our own separate game communities. All there seems to be right now is a Quake Live champion to be crowned, a Counter-Strike champion to be crowned and so on. I know some people don't like a Painkiller player getting crowned as the „ best gamer in the world „, but I think that title reflecting „ gaming as a whole „, gave us a feeling of unity that allowed us to go farther into the mainstream compared to what we are doing now. Our reach doesn't seem to go beyond our respective games anymore.

If we want electronic sports to shine as a true global sport, we will need to stop pushing our own little game forward. Those eSports soldiers that are in fact fighting for their own little gaming community need to step up and fight for the honor of our big game. Let's stop thinking about our own paycheck, let's put all the controllers and mice and keyboards in own big basket and head out to fight and show the world that we really are.

We're not the eSports scene we currently see, we're not the CGS, and we're not the CPL either. I don't even believe these leagues made justice to what eSports can really be. We're something more. No matter how negatively you might have taken my words in this piece, I truly believe the best days of eSports are ahead of us, not behind, and with the recession plunging us into this darkness period, I think we realized that working together is our only way out, and up.

Marc-André Messier is a former professional gamer from Canada known as "4 Glory" who played in a variety of games. He notably placed 2nd at the 2007 CPL World Tour Finals for F.E.A.R. and played with top North American Call of Duty 2 team eGe. He is now working on an original book project called the Game Changer Project, which aims to give competitive gamers motivation and true tools to improve their performance in video games.



The Globe of eSports: Our Cultures, Our Worlds

By Jasper Mah

‘The hall was filled with a large audience waiting in anticipation as the last round starts. The sounds of flashes and clicks went by as dozen of journalists armed with their cameras get ready to see both teams duke out on the virtual battleground for the exclusive cash rewards and the title of the champions.’

‘Young gamers make headlines playing video games on a professional basis’
‘Jonathan ‘Fatal1ty’ Wendel becomes one of the the world’s highest-earning professional gamers by winning \$150,000 from the CPL World Tour 2005’

‘WeMade FOX signs ‘Jang “Moon” Jae Ho’, five time world champion for popular game title, Warcraft III, for a contract of 700,000,000 won’

‘Abdisamad “SpawN” Mohamed of SK-Gaming announces his temporary retirement from professional gaming’

‘Manuel „Grubby“ Schenkhuisen, well-known professional Warcraft III gamer, proposes to girlfriend, Cassandra ‘PpG’ Ng, and tie the knots of marriage’

These headlines might be stranger to those who are not from the eSports scene, but to a certain group of people in the world, these are the type of news that they read daily. From getting the latest updates of their favorite professional gamers, to the scores of the latest matches played by their favorite professional gaming teams, and from the latest patch notes of the updates to their favorite game titles, to the intricate details of the daily lifestyle of their favorite gaming personalities, eSports has become a very powerful influence across the globe, not just being a past-time for some, while as a reason for others to game competitively, but a culture which has makes its footprints across the different continents of the world.

When I mention a culture here, it is not what just simply seen as how we express ourselves to the world outside, but also how the idea of eSports has become part of our everyday lifestyles, from being a gamer who plays from his home on a mouse and a keyboard, to matters such as our future careers being etched in the milestones of eSports by being an organizer for tournaments and events happening in your home country. The amount of influence the culture of competitive gaming has encompassed has shot up in multitude over the years, and is no longer just a playtime activity for many of those who have joined the eSports scene as one of their careers.

For a normal competitive gamer, to be talking about the whole eSports culture globally might not be something you expect to see as a topic on the dinner table, but for myself, I always enjoyed the interaction with others who shared the same passion in eSports like me, and discuss what we actively feel that would best represent the perspective of the eSports cultures that are taking place worldwide.

Ideally, our opinions are not the representation of what every individual who have been involved in the competitive gaming culture might feel, but as an exchange of cultural opinions, thoughts and discussions across a global level. Before I started writing this article, I spoke with Julia, the very same editor of the eSports Yearbook with Tobias, about what I feel are the perspectives that generally represent how the competitive gaming culture diversify across the different continents and parts of the world.

To begin with, I start with the two most similar countries that have a huge influence surrounding the competitive gaming culture, South Korea, and China, which also brings focus to the continent of Asia. For many whom might have known, South Korea is one of the few pioneering countries that took on the idea of eSports to the most extreme levels to make it a global impact by having gamers who participate in gaming tournaments and leagues, to make a living out of winning the events they participate in. The country of South Korea also intensified the culture of competitive gaming till the point that the young generations who were growing up in the past decade, can look forward to being part of the eSports phenomenon where the best gamers are earning thousands of dollars from a single event. Especially for many in the RTS scene, the critically acclaimed Blizzard Entertainment title, “Starcraft”, became one of the most played games competitively in South Korea, where leagues and tournaments are formed around the game itself, as well as the amount of marketing, media exposure and popularity given to those who regularly participated in all of the eSports events and made their names as the winners.

Over the years, the eSports culture in South Korea intensified, and many professional gamers were born from it, from names like the ‘SlayerS_`BoxeR’, to ‘n.Die_Jaedong’, who were frequent tournament winners as well as gaming celebrities in their own countries. Cult following started developing among all these professional gamers, and they were seen as equivalent to pop idols in Korea, that the best of the professional gamers are as popular as the latest pop idols from within their own country. They were seen as celebrities who would have their own autograph sessions, commercial endorsements as well as the amount of televised materials on these gamers appeared on the two

main paid TV eSports channels, ONGAMENET, and MBC GAME, which featured their live matches and replays for the fans and gamers who subscribed to these channels.

”For a normal competitive gamer, to be talking about the whole eSports culture globally might not be something you expect to see as a topic on the dinner table...”

For many years, South Korea was seen as the pinnacle or the epitome of what the competitive gaming culture should be, where professional gamers can make a living out of playing games, gaining fame and popularity, and the willingness of sponsors to be part of the competitive gaming culture to sponsor gamers to go overseas for tournaments, paying for their accommodations, travel expenses as well as their salaries.

Until in 2010, the whole eSports scene in Korea was hit by a snag in the prospect of professional gamers who delved onto the negative aspects of eSports by engaging in illegal activities such as match-fixing, involving in illegal betting websites as well as deliberate losses in the gaming leagues in Korea.

One might be wondering the amount of influence eSports has become in South Korea, to reach the point where professionals have engaged in illegal activities because of their own intentions, but yet, it is also at the same point of time, creating a ‘Hollywood culture’ among the international eSports scene. Is Korea still the ideal representation of what eSports should be like?

The reason of calling it the ‘Hollywood Culture’ for South Korea, and China as well, is the idea of creating icons of celebrity status in eSports till the point where their equivalence of pop idols play a large influence on how much of following the gamers have generated.

A gamer who has won a tournament, gets a lot of fans who support him and provide sponsors with the opportunity to endorse him and get the largest exposure of their products to the fans, no matter what type of backgrounds they come from. It is definitely ideal for the investors and sponsors who have been involved in the event, just like how a movie star has the amount of fans who buy his or her products which are made by the investors and sponsors of the film. The fans might not be necessarily a gamer that plays the same game

as his ‘gaming idol’ but follows suit because of the idolization of his or her favorite gaming personality. It creates a negative influence in the sense those gamers who want to be like the ‘gaming idols’ on television have to be as good as their idols, or else it is a zero-opportunity situation for them who are new startups to the whole eSports scene. The betting scandal also erupted into the gaming academies that provide such opportunities to new gamers into the eSports scene, and the idea of graduation becoming the ‘signing of contract to become a professional gamer’, and for those who does not succeed, it backfires upon them. When it backfires, it provides a negative image that competitive gaming culture has an area in which you either ‘make or break’. The situation does not look positive and will only reduce the amount of people who would be interested in eSports.

”All these events and the establishment of the teams, organisations and players largely became role models and examples to follow...”

The mentioning of China in this part of the article is because of the similar situation in China where professional gamers are seen as celebrities. Teams like World Elites and Wnv.Gaming has made their names upon the international scene, and is seen as celebrities in their own country with their fan clubs. Although there are no mentions of scandals that might plague China as a country that supports eSports, the similarities are also prevalent, and might not be what the global competitive gaming culture should be having.

As we progress on, it would be good to look at Europe, one of the continents that played a huge role in the eSports scene. Europe is made up of many of the European nations of different languages and cultures, yet is united by a common passion: eSports. The amount of effort among the different nations spent on promoting eSports has been astounding, and is well-looked upon to be the next eSports continent to set the examples for others to follow.

Europe, although a small continent among its siblings, is a powerhouse when it comes to eSports, especially when the influence of eSports transcends to not only to the gamers and the event organizers through an event, but the prospect of established professional gaming teams and a very well-defined landscape through the multitude of events that took place have shown how Europe had

contributed in terms of shaping the competitive gaming culture to what it has been today, especially in the past decade. From the rise of professional gaming teams like SK-Gaming, FNATIC, mTw, mousesports and many others, they also set the milestone in eSports that countries like Korea and China are not the only places where eSports has its own popularity and influences.

Take a look today at the Intel Extreme Masters, one of the most successful tournaments run worldwide at different locations around the world. It actually originated from Germany, where its parent company, Turtle Entertainment GmbH, is also the company that created the ESL, also known as the Electronic Sports League that runs with 2 million users across the whole of Europe. Another glance will bring you to France, where the ESWC originally started. Many might remember ESWC, also known as the Electronic Sports World Cup, as one of the events that developed a global presence over the years and became one of the few highly acclaimed tournaments for its popularity, and one of the key events many gamers got the chance to participate in and win. Sweden also then became one of the known countries to be supporting in Europe for eSports, with the presence of the Dreamhack Digital Festival, where gamers and participants from around the world visit the event as one of the biggest LAN parties and eSports events taking places at the same time.

All these events and the establishment of the teams, organisations and players largely became role models and examples to follow, and also bring a large difference to how Asia had differences in terms of their support of eSports, versus the support of eSports in Europe. If you realized for a while, Europe was the continent that became supportive of many eSports titles and the varieties available, and also propelled other countries around the world to follow suit. In Korea, as many would notice, was heavily shaped by the influence of one very game called, 'StarCraft'.

At the same time, many would also realize that there are certain cultural differences, not only that the communities were different this time, but also the way that eSports culture is built. Korea was built on an extremely competitive landscape, which make the prospect of eSports becoming a cultural hit by influencing the amount of recognition it receives, and also the idea that eSports was extremely established in Korea. For the European nations, it was a different story. Many of the European countries does not take to eSports as an official activity that they themselves would readily support, due to the effects of video gaming being commonly associated with harmful influences such as sex and violence, and that eSports was not built around the prospect of making it a career or a business, but for its communities that supported the large amount of games in the world to be made into eSports titles. If one

would like to know, the roles and influences of eSports had played in Europe was the stability and the communities that worked around eSports from the media, the events, the gamers, the companies and also the support from game developers and publishers.

”Many places around the world are influenced by the culture of eSports, with many nations also developing their interests in the idea of competitive gaming, which is a positive turn for the global eSports communities.“

What about the United States then, if one may ask, when it comes to relating it to the idea of eSports?

They were, and were once the location known for its gaming communities as well, especially with the idea of eSports taking a positive turn at the start of the 2000s era. From known names like Fatal1ty, to teams like Team 3D, Complexity, MIBR, eSports was very well-recognized, having its share of popularity across many platforms such as the Internet, newspapers, TV highlights and also a very united community.

Many would know of the CEVO and CAL, especially those in the United States, as these 2 leagues became one of the main following in American eSports for its events and leagues that featured an astounding number of participants, whether it was the amateur ones that catered to everyone, to the known professional leagues that top teams took part in. The CPL, also known as the CyberAthlete Professional League, was famous for its prize money and the presence of being the pioneers of video game tournaments, also originated in the United States.

Also then came along in 2007 was the Championship Gaming Series, a televised video game league that originated in the United States as well, became what was seen as the first few video gaming leagues out of Asia and Europe being broadcasted throughout the world.

Sadly, all these known American eSports events did not have a good pro-

spect and ended before 2009. From problems like prize money payouts to over expanding their franchises, these known events slowly became lesser accepted names among the eSports community. The culture in the United States in terms of competitive gaming was the over-reliance of the media and TV broadcasts to enhance the image of eSports, which also requires large expenses and only weak plans were made in the way eSports was promoted. Excluding the known Major League Gaming MLG, many of these companies that organized eSports events were not capable of sustaining a proper community that revolves around the gamers more than the over-reliance to bring eSports to TV without a proper foundation to support.

The eSports scene in America bask in its glory days while only the Major League Gaming still operates with success due to the amount of exposure it receives, but a stronger focus on the American gaming communities would definitely help in making eSports properly accepted again, especially with the intentions of the National ESL and Major League Gaming.

A discussion on the big names among the eSports continents focused intensively on the stories of behind them, but there are other places around the world which are making their names known, and also developing a stronger competitive gaming culture so that it will also become a following in the future for many to accept.

From the Commonwealth of Independent States comes the organization Arbalet, which organizes a series of eSports events to build up the communities in the different Commonwealth States, it is one of the newly accepted events among the eSports global community to follow, especially with the amount of support it receives from the people behind it.

At the same time, From South-East Asia, is the presence of gaming tournaments like the SMM in Malaysia, which builds up a strong community of gamers for eSports titles like DotA and Warcraft III, and the Asian Cyber Games also in Malaysia, which are running a series of titles like Counter-Strike and Left 4 Dead, as well as ESTC, an event in Thailand that constantly feature different seasons of its events throughout the year for most of the South-East Asian countries to take part.

Many places around the world are influenced by the culture of eSports, with many nations also developing their interests in the idea of competitive gaming, which is a positive turn for the global eSports communities. Although we might differ in the cultures that we come from in eSports, it is also a common passion that brings many of us together. It is seen that the people in

eSports does not necessarily require a physical bonding to be able to associate with each other, to make new friends, to compete in a good environment and to help in building a stronger and well-sustained community of people from around the world.

If I were to give my opinions on the prospect of a common eSports culture that is globally accepted and seen worldwide, I would say that we are still at a very early timing for the development of eSports to reach its maturity. To make it happen in the years ahead, a common ideal must be held among the different places in the world to work together to help in building up the image and foundation of eSports, not just for their own countries, but to develop it in a holistic and a globalized mindset through the different groups of people involved in eSports. I believe in a better future for many of us all, who have been there before, but also for the future generations to come, to believe in the eSports culture that many of us have built for the people around us and for the world.

I have reached the end of my article, and would like to express gratitude to those who have read it. There is no right or wrong opinions if you would like to express one, which I would largely welcome as many would have your own perspective of how eSports have been for you. I enjoyed the times where I spent on this article, which gave me a lot of reasons to know more about what has been happening for eSports, and that it not only concerns myself, but a world out there who shares a common passion. eSports.

Jasper Mah is the one of the few event managers in Singapore that has worked on eSports, video games and technology events with names like Intel, KODE5, World Cyber Games, as well as numerous hardware companies in supporting their campaigns with tertiary institutes of educations in Singapore. Since 2006, he has been supporting the competitive gaming scene in South-East Asia, and have also worked with known MMO titles in designing their eSports capabilities on behalf of the publishers. His experiences and knowledge in the gaming industry as well as the eSports industry for the Asia Pacific region complements each other and have been constantly working behind-the-scenes to promote the image of eSports for the communities. He can be contacted at jasper.mah@gmail.com.



Philipp Saedler



The Golden Five and its' Impact on Polish eSports Scene

By Tomasz Nowik

Team Pentagram, MYM or Frag eXecutors. Each of you know these names. Each can list their biggest achievements. Each remembers beautiful plays and dramatic matches. But does anyone know how one of the greatest teams of all time was formed? While reading this article, you will learn about the origins, ups and downs and the silent heroes of the Golden Five.

The period from 2002 to 2004 was a time of great competition for control over the Polish Counter-Strike scene between Aristocracy (zibi, LUq, TaZ, SplAsh, SHEEN) and SpecSter (Rerum, RR, Neo, Mirrom, pitrek). The struggle to dominate the scene led to a large rivalry, with many supporters either side, the matches were fierce struggles and full of powerful emotion - tournament after tournament, match after match, frag after frag. However, the domination of those teams on the Polish scene had no effect in the European Counter-Strike scene. It is also worth mentioning that SpecSter received an astonishing (for those days) 60,000 zloty (~\$21,000) from their sponsor - SteelSeries.

”For all these things, I would like to thank them. Thank for giving me a great passion and love, which is eSports.“

Small success at tournaments in Riga and in the Czech Republic gave the teams food for thought. April 8, 2004 can be regarded as a landmark date in the history of Polish eSports, the spectacular merger of the two opposing teams. PENTAGRAM.conneXion was founded with a line-up of: TaZ, LUq and zibi (arcy), nEO and Pitrek (SpecSter). The clan, supported by Pentagram Company, Electronic company, was to conquer the world of Counter-Strike, and their first big success was the triumph at the Lehnitz LAN. Team Pentagram with line-up of TaZ, LUq, zibi, Neo and MiRRi beat German team mousesports in the final after an exciting match. Their next step on the way to the top was the WCG 2004 in San Francisco. Players remember that they were not yet prepared for such a big tournament then, and it became evident, as the Poles had were eliminated in the groups of WCG 2004.

„We won over the first opponent in the group too easy and we became over confident. We lost to Norway and, as only one team advances from each group, we had to say goodbye to the tournament. We were lacking experience, we had a great potential but we couldn't direct it properly, that's why we were destroying one opponent and losing bad to another.” Said Wiktor ‘Taz’ Wojtas.

After their return to Poland, they went to the Czech Republic for Euro Invex LAN. Marek ‘miRRi’ Radecki told Maciej Śliwiński that he considers it the crucial tournament in the team history. That is when Team Pentagram beat a very strong Finnish team, Destination Skyline. This opinion shared also Taz, who said:

“We believed that we could beat top European teams. That was a great step in developing team mentality. Thanks to hard work and dedication we have achieved the level, which allowed us to win “quite a big tournament as for those days”. Big satisfaction and motivation for future work.”

miRRi left the team in early 2005, and many thought that he had a great impact on their future achievements. Players remember him fondly:

“Mirri was a great idler, but he was talented in case of CS. I would compare his style to Loord's these days. Marek could and wanted to lead our team, that's why we wanted to him to stay in the team. Unfortunately he chose another way of life and we couldn't have kept him. Then, CS was not profitable, we could go to 2-3 foreign events a year and these were our only goals, possibilities to show our hours of practices, for some it was not enough. Although I admire Mirri's decision, he didn't want the whole team to suffer of a lack of his dedication. He preferred to give a chance to another player and us as a team.”

His successor was Bartosz “Napalm” Skorupa. With him, they won Samsung European Championship, beating a mighty SK Gaming in the final. Interestingly, Team Pentagram were called “Internet heroes” by posters on the SK-Gaming website.

After great success, it came time for big changes. At first, Adam ‘ruloN’ Wiśniewski replaced Napalm. Soon he got substituted with Mateusz ‘Motyw’ Oryl. A short time after, sad news spread around the eSports scene.

The pillar of the team, Filip ‘nEO’ Kubski got an offer from an unknown German team, ID Gaming. Filip wanted to try and play with other players without telling teammates. When the Pentagram players found out about his secret, the team's atmosphere became poor, as they had nearly reached their

goals. Luckily it didn't happen, and Taz remembers:

“It was first offer like this for Filip, I think, and know, after some time I am not surprised that he wanted to try something new. At those days we hadn't earn big money and the thing that held us together were our successes, dedication and common goal for the future. We lost at Kode5 in Germany and it put a large question mark at our future results. Everything turned out well. Filip never quit, he only received an offer.”

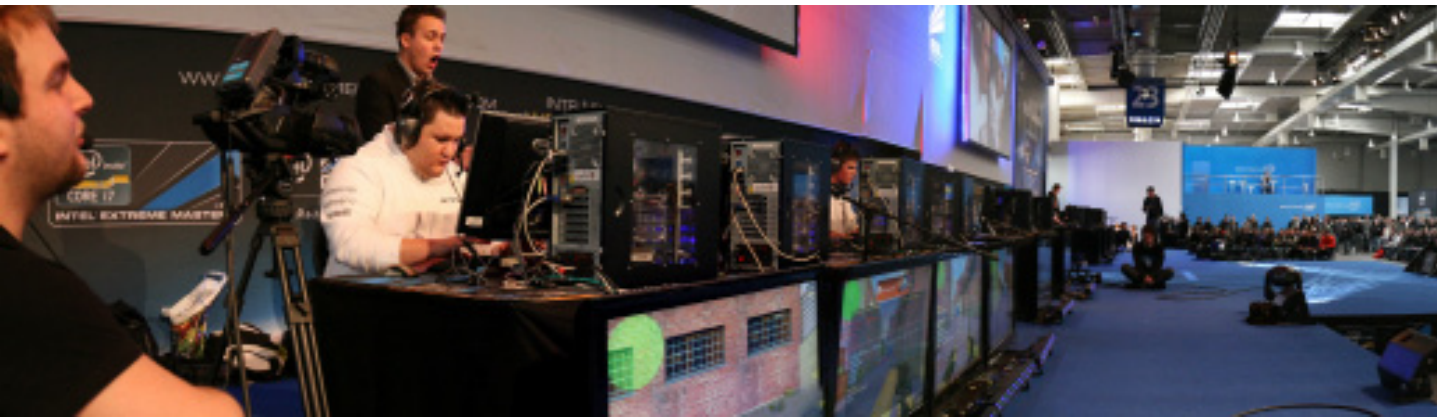
Then a silent hero said goodbye to the team - Zbigniew 'zibi' Rudnicki finished his career. Many still think that he was the best Polish tactical leader ever, and with his departure, Mariusz 'Loord' Cybulski joined the team.

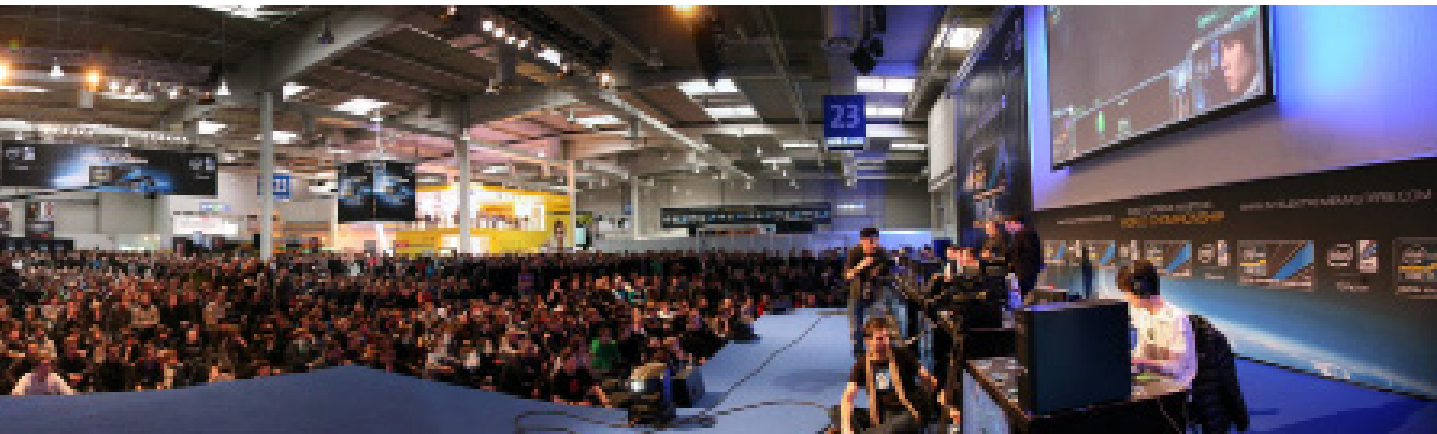
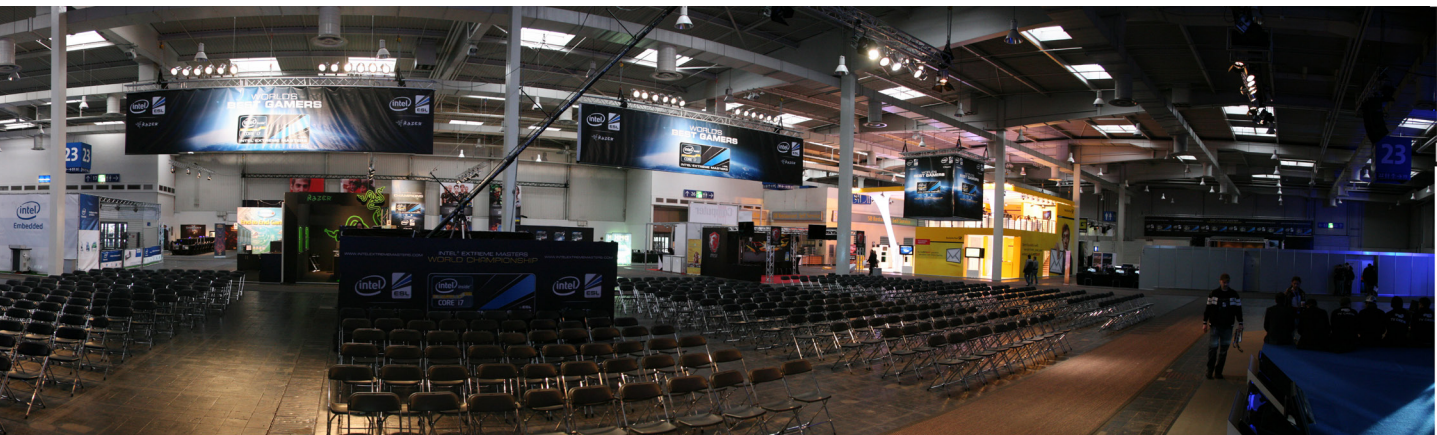
A last change in the team is an addition of a great player – Jakub “kuben” Gurczyński, who replaced Motyw. His entry to the team was very controversial, as he was caught cheating in a match before joining Team Pentagram. Jakub was considering finishing his career after this situation, but he decided to stay, and that is how the best team in Counter-Strike was formed.

It is hard to imagine a shape of my local eSports scene without their contribution. It is thanks to their success that people started to get interested in CS. It is thanks to them that the eSports subculture was created in Poland. From a small group of hotheads, we became a large society of gamers and fans. We were linked by common passion and goals. We have spent many sleepless hours watching their amazing games during WCG and other tournaments. They provided us with lots of fun and pride, along with disappointment, which often were forgotten quickly. They gave us the love of our lives! No one did more than they did. Maybe some will be surprised with my words, asking: “what about Darky, Hayabusa, Guandi? Where are the great of Polish eSports?” Where would they be if not for the Golden Five.

For all these things, I would like to thank them. Thank for giving me a great passion and love, which is eSports. I am certain that most of my Polish friends will agree with me and will simply thank, because their influence on our community is priceless. Thank you.

Tomasz Nowik an 18 year old high school student from Poland. Since 2007 he has been involved in eSport. In 2009 he became a MeetYourMakers editor. Electronic Sports is his biggest hobby and his dream would be to have a career in eSports. He can be contacted at denowiko@gmail.com .





A Cinderella Story

By Christian Warnholz

„That’s so great!“, Grzegorz Komincz says while being constantly amazed. “A dream would come true if I could play on this stage!” The 16-year-old boy from Poland has just entered the DreamArena and taken his seat in the audience. The DreamArena is like a theater with a stage and 1.100 seats. But there neither is there scenery or an actor on this stage. Instead there are two rows of tables with flatscreens on and chairs behind it. In a few minutes players will take their seats and start competing against each other in the real time strategy video game, StarCraft 2 by Blizzard. Everything is new and exciting for Grzegorz. It’s his first time at DreamArena, his first DreamHack and his first time being far away from home.

The DreamHack Winter 2010 is, as the book “Guinness World Records” states, the biggest LAN party in the world. Over 10.500 young men and women, mainly from Sweden, pack their monitors, computers, mice, keyboards and everything else you need for gaming and travel to Jönköping. In Jönköping’s exhibition halls the DreamHack takes place from 25th to 28th of November. It’s already the 7th edition of this mega event and by now there’s a summer edition as well as various side events all over the year.

”Over 10.500 young men and women, mainly from Sweden, pack their monitors, computers, mice, keyboards and everything else you need for gaming and travel to Jönköping. “

Most of the participants of DreamHack come to meet their friends, play together and have fun. But a small number of people travel to Jönköping for a different reason: The prize tournaments. 60.000 euro along with all kinds of hardware are at stake and ready to be handed out to the best players of Europe. For StarCraft 2 more top players are gathered as for other games like Counter-Strike 1.6, Quake Live, Tekken 6, Street Fighter 4 and Heroes of Newearth.

Grzegorz Komincz, better known with his gaming pseudonym “MaNa”, also wants to compete in StarCraft 2. He plays for the German clan mousesports, which also contracts players that are much more famous than he is.

While his opponents have already attended many events, everything is new for Grzegorz. After he convinced his parents to allow him to get on a plane to Sweden and after he explained to them that the sponsors of mousesports cover the expenses for the trip including his stay, they finally let him go. For the first time in his life Grzegorz flies with a plane and for the first time he sleeps in a hotel. Together with his team mates, who before that trip have known each other only via internet, he stays there. And when the young Pole does his first step into the halls of DreamHack, he instantly knows that he’ll never forget the upcoming weekend.

In contrast to his team mates, the Intel Extreme Masters 5 GamesCom champion Stefan “MorroW” Andersson and the 18-year-old Finnish talent Santeri “Naama” Lahtinen, Grzegorz wasn’t invited to the tournament by the DreamHack organizers. That’s because he hasn’t got a long list of achievements yet. Hence the mousesports player has to attend a qualification cup where he competes with amateur players to get a spot in the pro tournament. Not being able to bring his own computer, he manages to win the qualification without losing a single map on the PC of his teammate, Stefan.

But it’s now Grzegorz will face the real challenge. He has to compete with the pro gamers, who have much more experience than him. In the group stage of the tournament he must face Dario Wunsch, who stayed in Korea for two months to practice with the best players in the world. But Grzegorz is well prepared since he practiced over the internet for weeks and discussed strategies with his teammates. But he sure is the underdog in this tournament and not at all in the group of favorites.

Grzegorz focuses, he knows how to play to beat every other player of his group. But his first opponent is Dario, the strongest player of his group and a favorite for the final. But Grzegorz does what nobody expected: He wins against Dario. Very happy and highly motivated, he goes into the next two matches. He wins one and loses one. Grzegorz is now qualified for the play-offs and has already done more than he ever dreamed of. His two friends and teammates, Santeri and Stefan, have also advanced from the group stages and are qualified for the playoffs as well.

But something unexpected happened: Grzegorz has to play Stefan in the round of 16. Only one of them can advance to the next round and the other out

of the tournament. Grzegorz once again isn't the favored player in this match. Stefan is from Sweden and the crowd that has taken their seats in front of the casters who are streaming out the matches to about 35.000 internet viewers, cheer for him. That's not a good condition for Grzegorz. But the group stage has shown that he is on one level with the other players and that has strengthened his confidence. He succeeds – wins against Stefan and advances to the quarter finals.

Grzegorz is now unstoppable. He wins the quarter final against the German Giacomo "Socke" and the semifinal against Jian "Fenix" from Peru. Therefore he stands in the StarCraft 2 final of DreamHack Winter 2010. Nobody has expected that, not even Grzegorz himself. It's beyond belief what will happen if he even manages to win the final. 11.000€ would be his. What would his team manager say, his parents or his brother who is also a StarCraft 2 player?

Meanwhile on the side of the tournament bracket there's another surprise. After Santeri beat the German Jonathan "DarK.FoRcE" and the Dutch Thomas "ServaNt", he manages to pull off a victory against a Korean player after being down 0-1. That's a surprise because the Koreans are known as the best players in the world and Santeri was for sure not the favorite in this match. Kim Juang Hoon, better known as TOP got beaten by the mousesports player in a close series.

"He leaves Sweden with the wisdom that you can achieve everything, even if nobody believes in you. You only need to work hard and have the right support."

So there's an all mousesports final at DreamHack. Santeri against Grzegorz, Naama against MaNa, the Finnish against the Pole, the known talent against the underdog. Of course it's already a huge success for mousesports because one of their players will win the tournament for sure. After Stefan won the Intel Extreme Master 5 GamesCom, mousesports takes away both major European StarCraft 2 tournaments.

It's getting serious now for Grzegorz. In a few minutes he will stand on the stage of the DreamArena. The final is going to be played there. He will sit down in front of a computer and be watched by at least 1.000 people live.

He's obviously nervous but very excited at the same time. At the moment the most famous StarCraft 2 commentator, Sean "Day9" Plott, gives an introduction to the audience. Finally Grzegorz name is called and he walks on the stage. He tries to stay cool but he can't fight he permanent grin. Grzegorz survives the pre-match interview and the game starts. Before that the two team mates shake their hands fairly. It's going to be five matches and who wins three of them is the winner.

Grzegorz doesn't get a good start because he loses the first two matches against Santeri. In the third match he can finally turn the game around and beat his opponent in the last seconds. The audience is cheering for him now. They are applauding and shouting when Grzegorz makes good moves. That motivates him to also win the fourth match to even the overall score. A final like a textbook example. The last match decides about winning or losing the final. Grzegorz tries his best and everyone in the audience seems to cheer for him. If he wins this, it would be a huge sensation.

But that doesn't happen. In the deciding match Santeri obtains strong. But Grzegorz doesn't mind. He's so happy, keeps grinning all the time and isn't disappointed. To be second at his first big tournament in a foreign country against one of the best players in the world is a sensation. When the prize money of 3.000 euro is handed to him he's very happy and thanks the audience for their support. He has shown what he's capable of and he's ready for more. But he won't be the underdog next time. But as he says himself he doesn't care about that at all. The commentator names the success of Grzegorz a "cinderella story". He travels to Sweden only with his mouse and his mousesports shirt and takes 3.000 euro, tons of respect and sympathies from the viewers from Sweden and all over the world back home.

„That's so great!“ he says afterwards and doesn't want it to end. He can't wait to meet his teammates again and to play in a big tournament in a foreign country in front of an audience. He leaves Sweden with the wisdom that you can achieve everything, even if nobody believes in you. You only need to work hard and have the right support.

Christian Warnholz is Assistent Editor in Chief at mousesports since March 2010. Before he was hired by the German organisation, he made a name for himself through five years of journalistic work for the biggest German eSports coverage site readmore.de.

Kee Ahnström
A Life Well Wasted (Part One) www.keeahnstrom.com



About Me and My Art

By Kee Ahnström

I still think back to when I painted my first masterpiece next to the railway. When I slowly go back home so I thought that thousands of people will see it when the lights slowly go up in the morning. The same emotions I have now ten years later, every time when I have hung my paintings on the wall. and thousands of visitors will see them when the doors open and lights come on next day.

Ten years ago, they actually paid people to get rid of my paintings from the wall, but today, they pay me to hang my paintings on the wall. is it irony? No it is fate.

I am a creative person with great love for games. My first love was Ben in full throttle:). My childhood superhero. my captain on the ship, my role model, it was time for me to go my own way and live on my way, just like Ben did. it is the best game I've played to this day. I love you Ben:)

I'm a geek, a proud hardcore gamer freak this is my art. a mixture of styles. digital art with traditional art. photo, color, digital printing. I do not want to show the world how good an artist I am, but I want it to feel a sense of the game. I want to get a feel „I remember when I spent hours and hours of gameplay in that game and I want to go back there now.“ if I feel that way after I finish a painting, I am happy.

More about **Kee Ahnström** can be found under **www.keea.se**.

What Can We Learn from Starcraft

By Tobias M. Scholz

One thing that interests me for a long time now is: What can we learn from video games? Especially in the case of Human Resource Management and Organizational Behavior. I did some tentative research in the games World of Warcraft and Counter-Strike. That is the reason why I will have this particular lens on, as I am writing the article.

There are some interesting findings, however, one thing is essential - those games teach similar ideas in case of motivation and persistence. Counter-Strike teaches the ideas of flat hierarchies, World of Warcraft teams (guilds) are always seeking leadership, and without it they fail. With Starcraft there is a completely new environment, one with the focus on the individual.

Interestingly the five principles of game leadership I stated in a paper presented in two conferences can be found in Starcraft as well. They are maybe not life lessons, but they are necessary to tackle for Human Resource departments in order to attract and keep the workforce of today and tomorrow. First we have to “bring fun back”! Especially in Starcraft it is necessary for the player to train, playing many games, however the gamer plays because it is enjoyable and thereby learning intrinsically. Following up one essential part is to “keep raising the bar”; this is something Blizzard included into their game design principles. A game has to be easy to learn, but difficult to master. The players see their progress in Starcraft, mainly through their placement in leagues, but also by realizing that the mistakes they make are getting fewer in number. This principle of keep raising the bar is a perfect motivation for the gamer as well as for an employee. If the implementation of such a feedback system or just the feeling of being promoted in a company could succeed, it would motivate the employee massively as it motivates the gamer in Starcraft. Living on the edge implies that there is space for trial and error. The gamer needs space to risk new ideas and thereby fail at this as well. He needs the chance to learn from the failure and uses this new knowledge for the next game. Finally we have motivation beyond money. Something obvious for a gamer, but especially for a company this is necessary to tackle. There is only a window for money as a motivator, everything else has to be done with other tools and Starcraft or any other successful game is a great inspiration for that.

After the game leadership principles, I will go into Starcraft and look into some principles player can learn from that game. Some of them can be included into the general principles introduced before, however they are explicitly fitted to the Starcraft game. But based on them, some pretty neat skills can be derived for day to day life, and more interestingly for the work life.

First, we have the principle of waging probabilities. Starcraft is loosely based on a rock, paper scissors model, and so a unit like a Banshee is perfect against ground units. However, introduce a Phoenix and the Banshee has to flee. Therefore for a good Starcraft player it is necessary to think about unit compositions and counter measures. Not only does the gamer have to internalize every unit and counter unit in the game, the gamer has to change tactics immediately when a new situation evolves in the game. This is an essential skill for a member of the working force. With the globalization, digitalization and the general fast moving world, employees have to wage their chances as well as their skills. Knowing their strengths and weaknesses is important and furthermore eradicating the weaknesses is becoming a necessity for high potentials.

”It amazes me how pro gamers can work so well with such scarce resources in hand.“

The next principle is similar. A good Starcraft player has to be prepared for all possible encounters and adapt to new situations quickly. It is evident that the gamer cannot survey all possibilities, however they have to know as much as possible, this is the knowledge necessary to act and react to the opponent.

It amazes me how pro gamers can work so well with such scarce resources in hand. They rarely have overmint and it always seems that they exactly know when and where to invest their minerals and gas. While I am not a good player at all and my last game was some months ago, the talent to know when to invest is a great skill. Starcraft on a micro level is a game of maximising the return on investments. The minerals I invest now in a Marine instead of an SCV is a setback for my economy, but can ensure the survival of the my base.

In every game the player is facing several decisions, however this happens in a limited environment. The player has to work with scarce resources and learn how to handle and work effectively on a budget. This is an essential skill not only for the working world but also for the real world. You can't spend more

money, minerals or gas than you have. In addition, you always need some reserves to react on unforeseen situations. By waging the pros and cons of an investment and not blindly spending the money the player gets a competitive advantage in the game and out of the game as well.

Recently I watched a game where the one player had so much pressure on his opponent that he had no chance to scout anything in the game. Interestingly the opponent never scouted the main base and always reacted on the force the player sent into battle. Although you can play and win a game based on your tactics and mechanics, scouting boosts the probabilities of winning in general. If you can figure out the tactic of your opponent you can start counter-measures and exploit the weakness of this tactic. Especially in the current competitive job market it is necessary to scout for opportunities, and scout everywhere. Exploiting your strengths is not only an advantage, but a necessity. In addition, scouting also means to scout the opponent in every situation, e.g. the company you applied for a job or the member of the project you will work on.

”Companies need to identify high potentials quickly and a Master League player has the skills for becoming a high potential worker, much the same way they have high potential in Starcraft.“

Time is the scarcest resource we all have, so it becomes handy to know when the battle is lost. A good Starcraft player knows when a tactic is not working, and when there is no chance to win the battle - so why stay in the game? Accept the defeat; learn from your mistakes and prepare for the next battle. This is probably the hardest lesson to learn: admitting defeat. But why invest more resources than necessary into a lost battle? Trained through Starcraft, the player is used to handling the situations better than others. Sure it is comparable to real sports, however it is intensified in Starcraft by the many possible ways to win or lose.

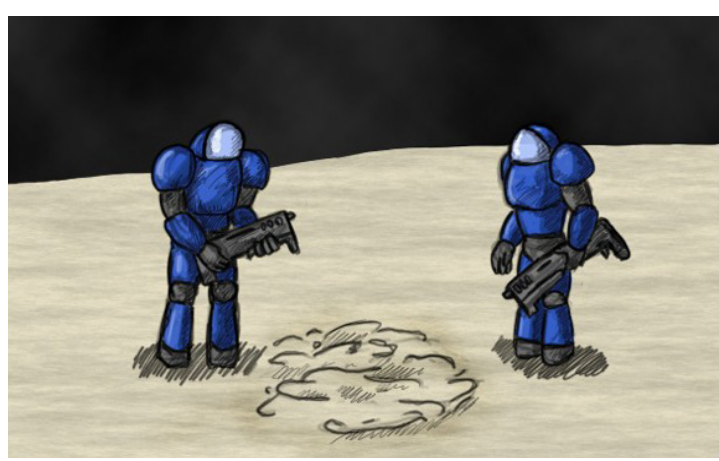
Something that is always important for the virtual world as well as the real world is manners! I love the general “gg” at the end of a game; it shows manners and appreciation for the game in general. Although it is a battle, it gives the situation a gentlemenly touch. In a game and in the business world

it's clear that we are mostly working against each other, but in the fast paced world today loyalties switch. So to be on the safe side, be mannered and people will appreciate you. A player like IdrA is infamous for his "bad" mannered style, but he is pushing it too far. The contrary is Grubby, who is extremely adored by the community thanks to his friendliness. After ten years of eSports it should be clear that there is no place for trash talk. Simply be mannered and you will have no problems in the game and in the working world.

Finally the Starcraft player has to be flexible in every situation and has to move quickly. The player has to assimilate new ideas and tactics and adapt to new environments and situations. A simple balance patch can change long trained tactics and make them obsolete. Especially in the fast paced world today it is necessary to adapt and assimilate to new environments. The quickness is essential today and also the preparedness of changes gives the player in Starcraft and in the working world a competitive advantage.

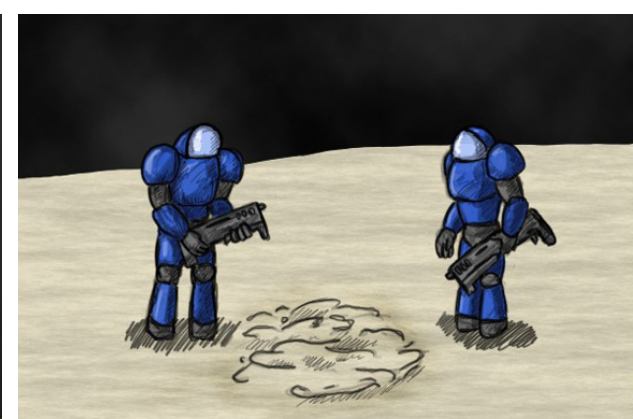
As we can see, under the lens of Human Resources, Starcraft trains several important skills for the working world. However this happens intrinsically it is essential to realize that we are already learning many skills from video games. Due to those successful video gamers they will have a competitive advantage in their jobs much the same as successful athletes have. Now that the research is finally looking into these things, companies will realize the potential of the video gamers too. On the one hand, nearly everybody of the young workforce has played video games and, on the other hand, the war for talents is increasing furthermore. Companies need to identify high potentials quickly and a Master League player has the skills for becoming a high potential worker, much the same way that they have high potential in Starcraft.

Tobias M. Scholz is a Doctoral Candidate at the University of Siegen. He works as a Research Assistant and a Teaching Assistant at the Chair for Human Resource Management and Organisational Behavior. He can be contacted at toby.scholz@googlemail.com

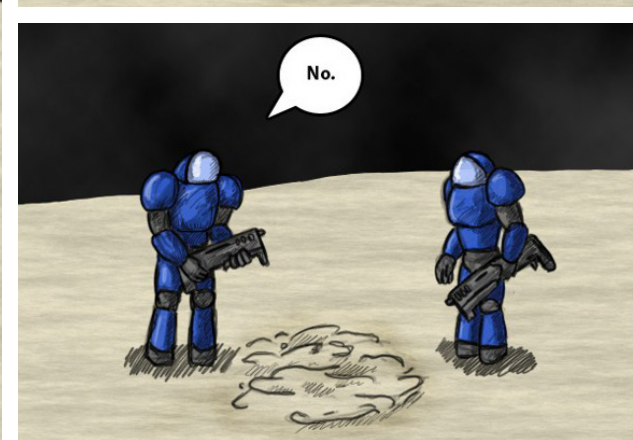


Well..
It's obviously
right underneath
that sand.

You think
we should keep
firing at it?



No.





BanelingBBQ

With Emil Erlandsson

Hello Emil, can you briefly introduce yourself?

I'm a Swedish guy in my middle 20's. I work as a manager at an information company here in Sweden, and my interests include (but are not limited to) Starcraft 2, Brazilian jiu-jitsu, hot girls and drawing BanelingBBQ comics!

How did you get the idea of writing a web-comic about Starcraft?

I really love the Starcraft 2 scene, and felt that I wanted to contribute to it in some way. I've always enjoyed drawing and I've been experimenting a bit with comics before, so I decided to give it a try. It has worked out pretty well. :)

What race are you playing and how good are you?

I play Protoss in the Platinum league. The thing is, I enjoy watching exciting games more than playing them, so I don't really have the motivation necessary to improve further. I play exclusively to have fun (and to beat my younger brothers with various cheese tactics).

Where do you seek inspiration?

I get many of my ideas right when I'm about to fall asleep. Other times I "construct" them, meaning I think of a certain unit's ability, and try to think of a situation where that ability would come into play in an unexpected way. I came up with the comic "This is awkward" that way. Sometimes I get ideas from my good friend Elias, and it was actually he who came up with the basic concept for "Strict orders".

You've recently gained a large audience, how did this change your perception to the eSport scene?

I love it even more. I'm pretty much only following the Starcraft 2 scene, but it excites me a lot that the eSports scene is growing steadily as a whole, and even accelerating. I'm positive that eSports will be just as big as any other major sport in 10-20 years. That makes me happy. :)

Any big plans coming up with BanelingBBQ?

Many readers want BanelingBBQ to update more often than once a week, but instead of updating with more comics, I'd like to take it even further. I'm planning a leap into animated entertainment in the future (while still producing at least one comic a week of course). The theme will still be Starcraft 2, and everything will be published on the BanelingBBQ website.

How can your fans get into touch with you? (e.g. website, facebook etc.)

The BanelingBBQ website (www.banelingBBQ.com) is the best way, everything is continuously updated there. I also have a Twitter account and a Facebook page.

Do you want to share some last words?

You there! Yes you! Keep on being awesome!

Why Cheating Is A Crime – The ESL Wire Story

By Julia Christophers

Why cheating is a crime and how it almost destroyed the ESL

The ESL community has suffered from cheaters for many years. Aequitas was our Anti-Cheat tool for years, a tool we had developed ourselves, but unfortunately we had reached the point where we realized that it simply was not effective at detecting cheats any more.

Cheating is a crime. It is a crime to use a program that helps you to play better than other players, and it is a crime to let someone else play your game for you. Why is it a crime? Because you did not have to work hard to get good results. Other players prepare for their matches, they spend a lot of time practising, while cheaters just install a cheat and then kick their ass.

If people take drugs to become a better cyclists, they at least still have to train hard and risk causing severe damage to their bodies. This is still widely accepted as cheating of course.

But cheating on a PC is worse, in my opinion, because you do not have to train at all and there is no risk of physical harm. You annoy your opponents and therefore make playing less fun for everyone. Cheating is a really bad thing to do.

I have another idea of why people might feel good about themselves when they use cheats: if you buy a cheat and install it, it feels like you are a hacker, because you modify your files. Then you go on the server and you can e.g. look through walls. Do you feel like James Bond now? Yes, maybe you do!

And at the same time you ruin the evening of your opponents who have trained hard. He is probably thinking to himself: "I feel like watching TV would be even better than playing this game right now, even though I hate watching TV!" The truth is that people who buy cheats are not hackers. If they were hackers they would write a cheat themselves. I actually know a few hackers who do good things with their abilities instead of trying to be a pain in the ass for everyone who tries to enjoy a nice game of Counter-Strike with their friends.

Cheating costs a lot of money. While cheaters have to pay for good private cheats, ESL had to spend €500,000 on the development of their new tool to catch them, Wire Anti-Cheat. The new tool is based on Anti-Virus technology. Putting this kind of money in the development was a big effort. We had to employ good coders, pay for a good scrum master and spend a lot of money on servers. Such an investment could have ruined ESL. Imagine if the investment would not have worked out and the new tool would not have been successful or we would have run out of money before we could finish the tool.

But we were lucky, the people we employed are really good and they were willing to work hard to develop something revolutionary. What is the solution? Our new tool is like a cupboard. Just open it, add a new cheat to it and our tool will be able to detect it. It works similar to anti-virus software and can even detect cheats that have been modified a bit.

How do people react to the cheat free environment?

For each “bust wave” we publish news in which we post a list of the cheaters we have detected and banned. Since the release of ESL Wire in September 2010, over 1000 cheaters have been busted. More and more games can now get Wire Anti-Cheat support.

We started with the main titles such as CS 1.6 and we then we have added more and more games. When we add a game, we first have to collect cheats and add them to Wire. Once we have enough cheats, we can make WAC’s use mandatory for a game.

*”Wire is the best!.” - funatrix
(<http://www.esl.eu/eu/wire/news/153221/>)*

Supporting us by paying for ESL Premium is not obligatory. People can decide for themselves whether they want to contribute a small amount of money each month (around €3). People who support our development get extra features. They can play more gathers and they have cups for only Premium users like themselves. Also if you want to play in our pro leagues such as the ESL Pro Series you have to have a Premium Account. We cannot allow professional gamers to play without Wire, and running a Pro Series is expensive.

I have had feedback from other companies that even asked why we have not

increased the price. But right now we think that we have to give the users some time to figure out for themselves whether or not we now offer an almost cheat free environment in which they are happy to play in.

Alongside Anti-Cheat, our coders are working on tools that can create matches and tournaments more easily, tools that enable the users to run their own cups. At the same time the first positive feedback for ESL Wire Anti-Cheat is coming from our users. There are already some players who have started playing again because they like our new features.

I have been talking to many users personally, because the best anti-cheat tool is worth nothing if people believe we are still polluted with cheaters. I think ESL has become much friendlier in the comments.

”Today when people write ”I did not cheat”, other users will not believe the busted guys any more. “

Only under the bust news we have lots of unfriendly comments. Often it is cheaters who flame us and complain they have been busted although they claim were not cheating. This phenomenon of course always happens when there is a bust news: people cannot handle losing respect in front of the community. They cheated but they refuse to admit to it, even when it has been reliably proven by software.

Then there are users who are afraid Wire’s success will only be temporary. They are afraid cheat coders like organner will develop something new and the cheaters would come back to ESL.

While the anti-cheat development going on was one measure against cheating, we were able to start our cooperation with the Deutsche Post AG. With their help we were able to establish “Trusted Pro”. To get Trusted Pro players, need to open an “E-POSTBRIEF” account with Deutsche Post and prove themselves at a post office with an id. If people have been busted with their Trusted Pro account and IP address, it becomes almost impossible for them evade with a new account. Their account is connected to their identity and IP address. The only way to get around this is to use the ID from someone else who is not in ESL and move house. Too much effort for making a new account and for a lot of users impossible.

There has been a revolution going on in the comments that I would like to describe: Under the first bust news, people would fall for cheaters who write something like "I did not cheat! ESL busted me although I was clean!". They would sometimes believe these others users and get angry. But the trust in Wire has grown.

Today when people write "I did not cheat", other users will not believe the busted guys any more. Additionally, there are even a few people who think it is cool to pretend to be a cheater (funny thing right? some don't want to be seen as a cheater, some make a lot of effort to be seen as a cheater even though they are afraid to really use cheats). They research on cheats and post: "this and that cheat is safe now, you can use it, I used it too and it worked and I am still not busted".

I often think that they want to trick others into buying cheats and getting busted as well. If we see someone writing such nonsense, we often talk to them individually and punish them with penalty points if they really do not understand that it was not only a joke what they said.

Sometimes the people who write stuff like that are already busted and write from a fake account, therefore it is important to have a close look at them to be able to delete fakers if necessary.

As you can see, anti-cheat is not only about busting cheaters. You have to take care of players who try come back with a fake account even if they are not cheating again. They can pollute the community again, this time not with their cheats but with their hateful opinions and wrong information. If you take an ESL account away from the cheaters, they will not just leave. If CS and their stats were not important to them, they would not have become cheaters in the first place.

We at ESL know that and therefore you can write a letter of rehabilitation to our Anti-Cheat team. If they like your letter you will get some questions you have to answer. If people take the task seriously and really regret what they did, they can get their account back after a few months. Normally a cheater is banned from ESL for 2 years.

Few people can convince us to give them their accounts back, and there is no way we can forgive everyone in these cases. Notorious cheaters especially cannot get their accounts back. In the beginning I wrote that we spent about €500,000 on Anti-Cheat, and you have to see this number as part of the damage cheaters have caused our company.

Here are some fun facts about the work that cheating causes

Since the release of ESL Wire Anti-Cheat, our team has had to check over 5,000 possible fake accounts and then either leave them alone or delete them. We had to have a look at 30,000 user sessions. This means there were 30,000 cheat suspicions that we had to check manually. On average, we bust a cheater after playing three matches with a cheat. There are over 1600 cheats in our ESL Wire Anti-Cheat (cupboard ;) database.

About 70% of the ESL users believe that ESL has clearly become a safer place in which it is harder to cheat. 80% of all ESL users are satisfied with ESL Wire's cheat detection. 85% of our users believe that our development team for ESL Wire Anti-Cheat is doing a good job. Overall 90% of our users gave us positive feedback in our survey.

Surprised about our reaction?

Now that you have heard how much time and effort we invest in anti-cheat, you will understand why I have to send players away when they beg for mercy at our events. I sometimes have users come, even with presents, who want their accounts back. One guy was really clever and even asked a manager of a clan to talk to me. He wanted to do voluntary work for the clan and he let the manager say to me: "he is such a nice guy, how can he do voluntary work for our clan and do something good for the community if he is busted."

I had a look at the rehabilitation letter and it was poorly written and I did not see where the player regretted his cheating, he described it as if it had been an accident, he said he was at a party and people whispered in his ear that cheating was kinda cool. Additionally the cheater claimed in his article that it was the ESL's fault that cheaters wanted to cheat because they offered the leagues and ladders and did not sue the cheat coders often enough. Mercy in this case was out of the question.

We show no mercy to the cheaters, they can destroy our company, the ESL and all its leagues - they can cost us our jobs. We certainly have no mercy when they beg for forgiveness and at the same time have the nerve to imply we did not work hard enough. Having now developed the best anti-cheat in the world, there is no need for us to be modest about the tool itself. It is really good!

Things to be modest about

We gloat about WAC, but at the same time we have a very humble "work work!" attitude towards everything else and the further development of it. I believe being humble and open minded is the only way to run a successful business. ESL has always been a very modern community with many bright minds in it, a place where you can play games but where you can also discuss politics, new gadgets and meet nice people. Something like that is precious and it is fragile. Therefore we are working on the modernisation of our website and of our Wire tool every day. There is no way we could just leave the page as it is and run away with bags of money. A web platform in my mind only stays interesting if it changes and if there are people on it who put life into it. There are no bags full of cash with only a few thousand players paying 3 euros a month. The ESL is not flickr or Facebook - we are here only for gamers, therefore we are exclusive and THE place to be if you want to be in a social place for gamers. I promise we are developing really awesome tools/features right now which you would not have thought you needed or wanted, but as a gamer you will soon see and in a few months say: "Wow, I needed it and it makes my evenings in front of the PC so much cooler and I can focus on the game and on my friends way more now thanks to the ESL"

Being an almost cheat free league and having established this huge crew of incredibly talented young programmers AND having established a crew of highly motivated and experienced community managers/game heads, we are now in such a good position to pick up the pace!

"But our main business is to offer the best possible gaming platform and anti cheat for everyone, please do not forget that! "

I would like to say one last thing: We are not a pro league only. We are the biggest league in the world for pro-gaming, but we are also the biggest for gaming in general! Intel Extreme Masters and ESL Pro Series are cool tournaments to watch, I love to see how the pro-gamers perform and who doesn't like to be inspired by their strategies.

But our main business is to offer the best possible gaming platform and anti cheat for everyone, please do not forget that!

There is hardly any other sport in which you can play in the same tournaments as a the pros, learn from them and even play against them. You can enjoy playing your game casually, or mess with the best, our platform is flexible and full of life and the reason for this is the gamers.

Those people who come to ESL, choose a game and compete, share their experience with others, make friends, train hard or enjoy their games casually without any „training“. Because in my mind, gaming is an interest that many people share, and the way we do it - with people around the globe on our international and national platforms - we are all shaping an environment where you can make friends, get to know other cultures and have fun. (Feb. 6th 2011)

Update, July 16th 2011

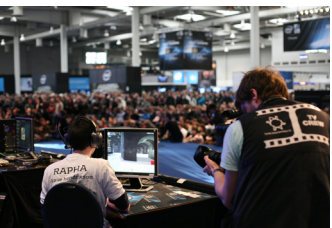
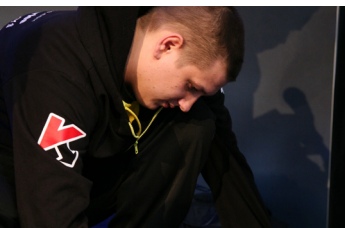
A mysterious “?” button has appeared on the ESL website. It will direct you to our new gaming software, “VERSUS.” After the Beta, it will be a gaming tool for almost all eSports and competitive gaming titles.

One third of all gaming activities in the ESL network worldwide are already taking place via VERSUS. I is easy to understand, easy to run and you will find matches exactly at your skill level in no time. VERSUS. finds a balanced team and a team of opponents for you to guarantee a balanced matchup within minutes. You will be able to enjoy one or more games and you needn’t bother to find mates and fitting opponents before you can actually play.

Right now we are working on the party play function: join with your whole team or only one or two friends and allow VERSUS. to fill up the match for you with players at your skill level. Finally this is a skill matching system and match making system that can work for any game and any game can be added to VERSUS. as long as it can be played competitively. If you like to, you can try it on esl.eu, consoles.net, esl-asia.net or in the US at nationalesl.com. Have fun!

yours
Julia

Julia Christophers was born in 1983 in Westerstede, Germany. She established eMAG – an online eSports magazine – with Tobias Scholz in 2004. She has been a working student at the Electronic Sports League (Turtle Entertainment GmbH) since Feb. 2006, achieved her Master of Arts degree in International Comparative Literature and Media, English and German at Bonn University in June 2009 and has been working at ESL since. As Game Head Coordinator she is involved in the development of ESL’s tools and the website. She is supervising the Game Heads who are running tournaments in ESL’s most played eSports titles. She can be contacted at: julia.christophers@googlemail.com



This year's issue contains articles about many major eSports topics in 2010, StarCraft II for example. Jasper Mah and Colin Webster chose topics that focus on Asia and South Africa. And we are proud to present you some beautiful eSports and gaming art in the eSports Yearbook for the very first time, as art is a very important cultural area in eSports media. Hand-picked artists Daniel Andersson, Kee Ahnström and Emil Erlandsson are starring in this book. The eSports Yearbook is a collection of academic articles and columns about eSports. It is published every year. Contact us at: contact@eSportsyearbook.com

