

INTERVIEW

Do you think that eSports are steadily growing worldwide? Are there chances for serious TV coverage?

eSports have definitely been increasing hugely in popularity in the last few years and I don't see it slowing down any time soon. Gaming in general is reaching a far bigger audience because of how more accessible it's been made to people of all ages, which in turn is also excellent for competitive gaming. We're also seeing a rise the rise of the "free to play" model like with League of Legends, which makes it very easy for one to get into games. And from there, it's up to the player whether he wants to get any further.

There have already been some TV channels dedicated to eSports, broadcasting Counter Strike tournaments for instance, but I think it'll take a bit time before eSports gets a place in your average news channel.

If we compare eSports to traditional sports, how many parallelisms could you draw? Are there any important differences?

Well as the name indicates, eSports are "electronic sports" which means they revolve video games. So naturally many would like to argue that they are not exactly sports, as sports usually involve some form of physical activity. However I feel that the strategic and competitive elements of sports (which are the most fun aspects in my opinion) are present within eSports. One can learn, improve and compete just as much as they would in any other sport but without the physical requirements, which is nice because it makes it accessible to everyone. Not everyone is born to be a basketball player in the NBA, but anyone can get his hands around a controller or on a keyboard and become excellent.

Right now League of Legends, StarCraft and various FPS and fighters are the main stars of eSports (if I'm not mistaken), but can eSports set a change of mind of present day's western society towards pro gaming (and gaming in general)?

Well, I think the perception towards gaming will improve on its own as more and more adults will have at least enjoyed some form of video gaming in their lives. I think it's also a question of whether eSports can brand themselves as a healthy hobby to get into and an entertaining spectacle for the average viewer. It's hard to say for now.

How often and how far do you travel abroad to tourneys?

It depends heavily on my schedule but I'd say at least once every month or two months. I've traveled to many countries around the world like Japan and the United States, in particular for Super Smash Bros. tournaments.

Of all the pro players that you know – that includes from any game – how many minutes/hours would you say that they invest in practicing (on their own, mostly technical stuff) on a daily basis?

I think that heavily depends on the player, what game he or she plays and what kind of training regiment works best for him/her. I don't know too much about RTS/MOBA players but I can give you two fighting game player examples.

MCZ|Tokido, a Japanese player is one of the greatest fighting game players of all time, is excellent at a huge variety of games such as Street Fighter, King of Fighters, Marvel vs. Capcom and he has stated in an interview that he spends about 70 hours per week practicing to stay in shape.

Cloud9|Mango, an American Super Smash Bros. Melee legend is generally more of a relaxed person. He doesn't practice much at all, especially now that he has a son but he still gets the top spots at tournaments.

Why do you think that some characters (I don't know about SSFIV: AE, but take Falcon in Melee for example) are cheered up more often and some are more criticized (perhaps MvC2 Magneto)?

Well it's all entertainment value and it's something that can easily be compared to other sports. Generally, defensive strategies such as Morrigan/Doom in UMvC3 or characters such as Jigglypuff in Melee are not cheered on as much as most people enjoy fast paced and aggressive gameplay more. It's similar to how the Spanish national football team during the 2010 World Cup was considered boring by many football fans due to their extremely precise passing heavy playstyle and their 1-0 wins. Of course, knowledgeable players will recognize the skill that goes behind those strategies and be entertained but that is not necessarily the case for the average viewer. The average viewer wants to be excited and thrilled.

I do feel like there is more "top tier hate" than there is "playstyle hate". Cammy in SSFIV:AE for example is a rushdown oriented character, but she gets more backlash than any other character in the game due to her being often considered overpowered and "cheap". Other characters such as Hakan who widely seen as a low tier often get the crowd pumped because they get to be treated to something they rarely see.

What are the main aspects that define a good gaming community? How do women usually interact in the different gaming communities that you know?

To me a good gaming community is a community that is accessible and welcoming.

My favorite community is the Smash community because it's an amazing group of people from all walks of life who banded together through thick and thin behind a series that was never meant to be competitive. Their love for the game has no rival.

Women are still not very common in the fighting game community and it has been reported that there are still some instances of sexism, though I think an effort is being made in the right direction.

Some brands, such as Red Bull, Intel or other electronic brands, often sponsor major gaming tournaments or top players. Apart from their logos and such, what other forms of influence do they have in such events?

Sponsors are a huge part of gaming tournaments. They often provide a great deal of equipment for tournaments such as PC's/consoles, monitors, headsets and all sorts of other things which is crucial to running a successful event. They sponsor top players which allow them to travel more often and makes for a higher level of competition at most events. Sometimes they even provide pot bonuses for the winners of the tournament. In turn they get some exposure on the streams for their brands so they can sell products to the viewers. Their importance to eSports is immeasurable.