eSports Yearbook 2011/12

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Preface

By Julia Christophers

My name is Julia Christophers, I have been organizing Lanparties since I was a teenager of 13 years.
I started working for the Electronic Sports League in 2004 as a website editor for hardware and gadgets on the GIGA website (GIGA Tech editorial staff) and TV host for Unreal Tournament at NBC Europe (GIGA Television).
In 2004, I was the German Vice Champion in Unreal Tournament 2004 at the World Cyber Games Qualification at CeBit.

Today I am still working at the ESL Office (Turtle Entertainment GmbH) as Vice Director of Community Management. Tobias Scholz and I are publishing this eSports yearbook (You can find all 3 eSports Yearbooks on amazon *hint hint*) our goal is to provide a comprehensive outlook of the year in eSports for students. On www.esportsyearbook.com you can download the free PDF or look at the book with the issuu bookviewer. Tobias makes sure that the eSports Yearbook has got an ISBN number each year. Therefore even “old school[1]” professors like mine (I studied at Bonn University) will accept this book as a solid source.

We make no money with this book, but by publishing it we make sure that eSports can be picked up as a topic for final papers and any kinds of thesis’ more easily. Many of my friends write about eSports and gaming currently at their universities, many ask me for “my book”, which was not really the case 3 years ago. Now in year 3, I get requests from Sorbonne University, from London, from Carleton in Canada, from Boston... everybody uses our book as a source and we get all sorts of amazing eMails, where we get so much love and appreciation and learn so much again that we can use for our book as inspiration, because these students writing to us (and Doctors and Professors even) are interested in the topic or they know loads about the topic already! Tobi and I have become the two people who have the widest network

[1] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oldschool - “Depending on the context and intent, the term can imply a high regard or respect, or be a pejorative” - I have never heard gamers use this term negatively. On Wikipedia, there is no article about the eSports term “oldschool”. Many gamers long to be seen as or long to become “oldschool”. A gamer who is “oldschool”, has been famous a long time ago and is presently being respected for having been one of the first people e.g. ever to win a certain championship, or e.g. the first person to ever create a famous strategy for a certain game. Example “Miou is oldschool, he has been with SK Gaming and won the WC3L when I was about 14 years old. I have always been looking up to him.”
probably, worldwide, for people who write and read about esports, who go into research. This makes me really proud - I am part of exactly THE project I wanted to be part of: I can enthuse people, be a source for them, I am in the center of the knowledge stream, I am having so much fun and yet, I can still manage to answer all the emails with really long replies and help to investigate things for people and bring people together personally. You are those happy few, a band of experts. A band of students, professors, gamers, IPTV moderators, event organizers... you want to do research and share your experience and knowledge; You are awesome, because you are also a friendly source of information to me and Tobi and to everybody out there who might one day hold this book in hands. Whoever reads this book in 5 years, what world will they be living in? Will they have more eSports public viewing bars in their city, than public viewing bars for soccer[2]? Will they sign up to the Electronic Sports League’s World Championship in Call of Duty Black Ops VI on their XboX Live account? Will the ESL automatically get a VISA request ticket if a player qualifies for an event in another country, or will all eSports clans in the future be professional enough to be trusted with organizing their own VISA documents? Which MOBA will people be playing on the highest competitive level in 5 years?

The people who will read this book in 5 years, will they be amused about how rudimentary eSports still was? How small the prize purses were in 2011 and 2012?

I hope they will think that our research was good, I hope anybody ever reading these books will be blown away by the detailed articles by professional gamers who contributed to them. Most of all I am hoping for the huge worldwide eSports hype to continue! Activision running an MW3 tournament with 1 Million Dollars prize purse was only the beginning I am sure. Riot broke most gaming and eSports records in 2012 that I have heard of. VALVE is also investing in eSports with the Dota2 International Tournament, Blizzard are running the SC2WCS worldwide with different eSports services providers such as Dreamhack or Turtle Entertainment. More and more publishers are willing to invest into the world’s most sophisticated Anti Cheat software “WIRE Anti-Cheat[3]” and dedicated servers and admin teams.

eSports is good for the longevity of a game. eSports gives you feedback for

[2] As for example the Cologne Barcraft, which takes place regularly in the Bar called “Kölner” in the southern city of Cologne; or the “Meltdown Bar” in Paris whose owner is also currently intending to open another Meltdown Starcraft II Bar in Berlin Germany.

[3] The WIRE Anti-Cheat software has been developed at the Turtle Entertainment GmbH in Cologne, Germany.
your game that you wouldn’t have if nobody would play your game on the highest possible level. Those companies who create games with a good lan mode and other features necessary for eSports, will be the games companies that will prevail and be on top of the market at all times. Therefore eSports must grow, will grow bombastically in the future, which we can tell from the growth of the gaming market and eSports scene in 2011 and 2012.

Well, hope this part did not bore you to death, but I wanted to explain how I feel currently about the book and how much your eMails and eSports mean to me!

For this book I have written something for you that I hope can give you useful insights into the creation of eSports tournaments. Let’s have a look at a tournament series that I help to reorganize currently and that I helped to create: The Go4 Cup series by Electronic Sports League. I hope you will enjoy that article which you will find in this book and of course Tobi and I want to thank all the other amazing authors who have contributed to the eSports Yearbook 2011.

Enjoy reading!
Creating an eSports product:  
The Go4 Cup series

By Julia Christophers

The idea part one  
(The young adults and the World Wide Web)

Back in 2002, a man named Sebastian Weishaar had a great idea: He loved Warcraft II in the year 2000 so well, that he wanted to run his own cup series. He did not have any prize money, so he first of all called on some friends and ran cups which were named by the WC2 maps they were played on. Running the cups with handmade tournament trees was a lot of work, as you can maybe imagine. Every result had to be written down by hand, results and seedings had to be done with excel sheets. The communication with the players was done in simple chat rooms.

Therefore, administering the cup with a larger number of players was a very time consuming task, even if you were a passionate self-made Warcraft II admin.

Luckily it turned out that one of his friends was a programmer who was eager to design a tournament software with Sebastian, to create a smoother tournament experience both for the admins and players. They could use their experience and gathered data from their cups to know how to cater everybody’s needs with the tournament software they were working on.

When the software was ready to be tested in June 2002, WC3 came out. Sebastian Weishaar, also known by the nickname “Baschi”, asked a famous British player who was known by the name “Tillerman” (today he is a successful poker player) to play in the new cup series with the new software which they from now on decided to call “Go4WC3 Cup Series”.

This was the time when online cups started to define themselves more and more: They got certain names, started at a certain time every week and sometimes also had prizes or even prize money. Go4WC3 was definitely one of the very first cup series ever, which helped to define what we expect today of a well running eSports cup series.
When Sebastian posted a news on Spielecke.de (his friends website, unfortunately not hosted anymore) and announced that Tillermann would be one of the participants, people would not believe that a legend like Tillerman would play in a cup that was solely held online.

Back then, people would consider an offline tournament at a big lanparty or an exhibition such as CeBit with bigger prize money purses as an event worthy for a famous player. Would a progamer play in a cup series (without prize money), that nobody had even heard of before? People did not know yet, that Tillerman knew Baschi and believed that this new software could be the future of professional tournament organisation. He had promised Baschi he’d turn up and theadmins hoped he would.

The rather heated discussions on forums about whether or not Tillerman would be there, became very personal and harsh. Many people were very sceptical about the software and assumed that it was probably a hoax by Baschi and his staff to release a news about Tillerman and the Go4WC3 cup to get undeserved attention.

All this flaming[1] created a huge buzz[2]. Therefore, many people turned up just to see the staff[3] being humiliated or to make sure that the staff would be defended.

"For over 2 years, the Go4WC3 Cup had a full grid every Sunday with 512 players, Baschi was administering it every single Sunday and more and more people from Australia, UK and everywhere in the world came and played against each other."

When Tillerman appeared and played, all fans were united in their passion

[1] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flaming_(Internet) Insulting people on the internet, most of the time an overreaction is involved or even the pure lust in discrediting people which can end in a "flamewar" where it often seems as if a pure celebration of ranting and cursing is happening, often this is also where new “memes” can be created or new words.
[2] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Viral_marketing Marketing students learn at universities today that buzz is a big whirlwind on the internet that gets a lot of attention - it is only logical: the more controversial something is, the more buzz you will get
[3] It is very common in the eSports community to call the admin staff “staff”
to watch such a good player dance through the cup with awesome strategies. This cup without any prize money, instantly became very famous because it had an outstandingly smooth administration and more programes followed the example of Tillerman - as for example, Alucard and Tasteofmycheese signed up and played regularly. But it wasn’t only the software that attracted players and helped to make the cup popular, it was also the fact that the cups were broadcasted on the internet, which attracted many fans of the game.

For over 2 years, the Go4WC3 Cup had a full grid every Sunday with 512 players, Baschi was administering it every single Sunday and more and more people from Australia, UK and everywhere in the world came and played against each other. Therefore, Go4 was the first single online cup series that ran longer than a few weeks and it was also the biggest one, which it is still today, 12 years later.

But before we jump forward in time, we will shortly go into what happened to this young, inexperienced admin crew: they suddenly ran into financial problems, because they were of course not making money: the traffic costs for the website became a big issue, because too many people came. The solution seemed to be simple: “Ingame”, a German website, covered the costs and had Go4WC3 on their website for almost 3 years, plus 200€ of prize money every month. When ingame however decided to give the cup a new name and call it “incup”, Baschi and his friends did not like this idea, because not getting paid for their hobby was one thing, but giving up the name they created was another to them.

Together with Kim “bunny” Phan[4], who works at Blizzard today, and with Niels “karma” Wolter and David “Shawn” Kugelmann (who work at ESL today), they went over to the website WCReplays and ran Go4 there. Unfortunately, ingame said they wanted to keep the Go4 name, so for a time, the cup was named “WC3Masters”. When Baschi had to rename the cup, ingame dropped the Go4 name and called their cup “incup”. It disappeared after less than 3 months, because people followed the admin crew and the cup system instead of staying on the ingame platform - they played WC3Masters instead.

One day, someone with the nickname Almojo contacted Baschi and his Go4 team. He was a Millionaire and loved Grubby[5]’s playstyle. In order to be

[5] Grubby’s real name is “Manuel Schenkhuizen” and he is one of the world’s most famous WC2, WC3 and SC2 players, while his brother Taco Schenkhuizen is a Capoeira dancer, actor, artist and filmmaker. When Manuel was young, he learned to play the piano with both hands. Might be that this practice came in handy when he started to develop his passion for fast strategic games such as WC2. If you want to see the eSports world with Grubby’s eyes, please see his article in the eSports Yearbook 2009.
able to see Grubby compete with great players from all over the world every weekend, he gave the WC3Masters 1000€ of prize money every month: the programmers turned up more reliably, the cup grew even bigger, and Almojo had matches with Grubby in the finals which he could spectate (this was his deal: he would pay for the prize money, if he would have a spectator slot\[6\] in every final game with Grubby).

To round up the early history of Go4, I would like to name some eSports commentators who became famous for collecting their first experience by shoutcasting the Go4WC3 cups:

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\[6\] Spectator slots are limited in many games. When Almojo wanted to “sit in the front row” - it was way harder than today: These days you just type in the name of a player on youtube + the game name or map name and you will find descend recordings, even videos of the gameplay of rather unknown players.

\[6\] On websites such as ESL.eu or Teamliquid.net you can find numerous replay files that you can run with your game.

\[6\] Back in 2003, (youtube came out in May 2005 - there was no eSports streaming platforms such as TwitchTV, ESL TV or Own3d TV) players were not live streaming their practice matches and tournaments. This means that a spectator slot in a high class match by that time was worth way more than today, when you wanted to follow the tournament live. This doesn’t mean that it is easy these days to get a slot - Also modern games have limited slots and players will often deny access: the more people join a game directly, the more likely it becomes that one of the spectators could be lagging (slowing down the game due to crashes/ connection problems). As a professional gamer, you also want to keep your secrets to yourself as much as you can (you already have to reveal a lot through practice with other professionals or through the tournaments or because of your personal broadcasts) and therefore try to keep as much as you can a secret. Probably because of these circumstances in 2003, the idea of Waaagh!TV was born (http://www.esport.de/wiki/Waaagh!TV).
Sebastian “Baschi” Weishaar
third from the right.

Thomas “Khaldor” Kilian
Khaldor was one of the founders of Mystarcraft, Manages the GOM House, was manager at 4Kings.

Maximilian Gstettenbauer
Maximilian Gstettenbauer was a caster for Go4WC3 back in 2002, when Sebastian “Baschi” Weishaar had just started it. Maxi helped to make the Go4 Series a success by his charming shoutcasts and he made himself a name (under the nick: Nexus25 - he also calls himself Max or Maxi).
Today he is a comedian, touring through Europe. His Stand-Up show called “Nerdish by Nature” is about gaming, being nerdy and the perception of nerds in today’s everyday culture.
A short time ago he was starring in “NIVEA for Men”’s World Championship campaign on German television.

Will “Zolex” DeGreyse
Will DeGreyse was GIGA II TV’s first English speaking IPTV commentator.
His career started early with being a regular caster for Go4WC3 back in 2002.
In June 2006 he was hired by the Turtle Entertainment GmbH (ESL TV) to be a shoutcaster for GIGA II where he casted big Blizzard & ESL events such as WC3L with other professional eSports shoutcasters such as Jaczie Lo and Philip “Quish” Hoskinges.
Christopher “WackSteven” Iannitti

Christopher Iannitti certainly became known for being a Go4WC3 caster. 6 years ago, WackSteven casted Starcraft Broodwar with Nick Plott for Blizzard. Today, he is famous for the way he talks on his Twitter and his “Kings of Tin[7]” (Starcraft II) Show with Marcus Graham. Christopher published a Teamliquid Blog entry about Kings of Tin stating:

”[...]I figured I should probably promote the stream, since djWHEAT is so freaking lazy. :D As many of you awesome people know, djWHEAT and myself have begun streaming our team games after we get home from work around 6-7pm EST. We call ourselves the Kings of Tin...as bronze would be a step up from our skill level. We often grab people from chat to play with or bring on guests to be our crutch...I mean... for the audience... We play 2v2, 3v3, and 4v4 and we try to play the game as intended: for FUN. You remember that stuff, right?! We will be having a few days a week that we run the stream, and we are still working out the days that it will happen so everyone knows when to tune in. Until then, we’ll be working out the stream formatting and how we handle guests.”[8]

The idea part two
(The condemned live longer)

In 2009, Sebastian Weishaar (Director International Partners Management ESL\(^9\)), David Kugelmann (League Operations Manager ESL) and Niels Wolter (International Partners Manager ESL) had all by then become employees at the Electronic Sports League, as you could have already presumed from their job positions.

At this point in time they were in the situation where they needed to reinstall an epic cup series due to an epic title which was about to become re-released by Blizzard, a title\(^{10}\) which they wanted to worship for obvious reasons and set loose on the ESL.eu website in a way worthy of this games legacy.

Having known each other for so long, they did not have to think twice and decided to get the Go4 name back (significant moment in eSports history that called for a significant action - and there was this one thing the three individuals had in common).

It was not hard to convince the rest of the company, that Go4 was a good name and had a cool history, it had been established by people who still worked in the ESL so there was not a very long discussion about it.

As you can see, way more than just a few people had been involved in Go4 back in the day and many of these people still work in eSports today, such as Sebastian Weishaar, Kim Phan, Thomas Kilian, Manuel Schenkhuizen and many others.

When Starcraft II was about to be released, we all were really excited and wanted to release the title on the ESL network with a big bang. Therefore, the Go4 name, also for being historically charged with so many great names and great games, came to mind.

It was easier done than said! (!).

We built a Go4SC2 “micropage” (www.go4SC2.com) - We had support from all our partners and subsidiaries. This means that we had the news translated

\(^9\) http://www.esl.eu
\(^{10}\) It is very common in eSports to call a game a “title”.
to 14 different languages, admins from at least 7 different countries at our cups and players from all over Europe.

Go4 used to be every week and had ranking points, so we basically did the same now, just with the huge ESL network and manpower behind it: never change a running system!

Today, 3 years after Go4SC2 was launched by ESL, I have become the product manager of Go4SC2. That might sound a little boring, but at ESL, a product manager is responsible for his product in all regards. As for example, Michal “Carmac” Blicharz is the product manager of the Intel Extreme Masters. In this role, he talks to Intel who sponsor all the online qualifications and offline playoffs at big events such as Gamescom or E for All and manages the people in charge on ESL side for marketing, graphics, IPTV, event management, community management and PR.

In a company with “flat” hierarchies (also comparable to the way VALVE is running their company[11]) - it is possible that one person can be responsible and bring all the best abilities from different colleagues from different departments together to one table rather swiftly. At meetings where such teams form around one product manager or at events where a product manager is in charge of his product’s event (we’d call the Intel Extreme Masters a product, not because we sell it like shoes, but because we use the classical terms from project and product management).

I hope I did not just shatter your idea about what gaming and eSports companies look like. Blizzard, Riot, Rockstar Games, HiReZ, EA, Dreamhack... even Dreamhack... these companies may seem like Christmas wonderland at the north pole when you are young, a place where fairies come from. That create - with every sneeze or hiccup, or with a tip from their magical wand - fantastical games or entertainment trips for you that last hours and days and weeks.

The “cruel” truth is, that we have deadlines, customers, sponsors, investors, mouths to feed in our families as everybody else does. We got our college degrees or were educated at companies that probably were there in the 70s or 80s or 90s. In a big company you need some rules and some understanding about how you want to do things in your department or team. I cannot speak for the other companies but ESL, as I said, has a very open structure which

you could compare to VALVE, but very likely (in my opinion) a little stricter. Our software developers cannot choose what they want to do as often as at VALVE and our job positions are way more fixed in a grid. But apart from that, we have flat hierarchies and lots of “product” and “project management”. I wanted to explain the terms at this point because I have realized myself that it may sound a little weird, when someone refers to the world championship of gaming (Intel Extreme Masters) or a cup series or an eSports ELO System, as a “product”, as if it were a sneaker or an apple. I know people my age who have studied classical literature, arts, English Language and whatnot who would have had at this point not understood why I’d say product. For everybody else: ESL has product management, no fairies, but instead a bunch of web developers, marketing managers, sales managers, stock managers, gfx artists, event managers, video producers, shoutcasters... over 140 people who abide by the rules of Directors, Presidents, CEO’s, team leaders, product managers and project leaders who use SCRUM and the modern school of project leadership to reach whatever aim we have in the pipeline.

It would be interesting (but not of interest for my topic for this year’s eSports Yearbook) to have a closer look at this and do some research, because ESL is clearly not only shaping eSports (by being IPTV pioneers in this sector, by the way we create events and our software and website), but also shaping its sportive terminology and business terminology. One eye-opening example: While photographers worldwide provide what they offer by referring to it as “services”, our contracts usually sell “products” and “events”, which are mostly actually services and not products. We are most likely not the only sector which does that, I could imagine that there would be ad agencies who do this or event management service providers, but we determine the words that make up the eSports business terminology and I know of many of my clients and ESL’s customers in general, who are already used to the way we talk about our products and write our contracts and there is a general understanding about it, as if this terminology had been there for decades.

So let’s go back to my newly earned responsibility with Go4. I already knew Go4 really well because I had heard of it already in 2002. I have to admit that I am not a big WC3 player (I was more into Broodwar, Counter-Strike, Unreal Tournament...).

But I was at least deep enough into WC3 (as a journalist) that I could write analytic articles about the game at the WC3L or WCG CeBit, interviewing e.g. Grubby or Kookian. And I was infected with this tower defense[12] virus

[12] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9UwOGO2EUak (don’t mind the music)
that everybody seemed to have been infected with.

**Starcraft II - An RTS Game**

If you are involved in the eSports scene and you do not know what lumber, gold and supply is and also do not care about it, you will probably not be able to work in the industry, because RTS eSports in a nutshell is very often made up out of these factors: money, supply, lumber.

For those who still do not understand what this could mean, I can sum it up: A good RTS player usually thinks of his actions during the game as his “micro” and “macro”.

Your macro consists of making units, building buildings that will usually be necessary to create units and acquiring two kinds of resources (in WC3 its lumber and gold, in SC2 its minerals and gas). Macro also means, that you build, make and acquire in a way that you always use all of your resources as effectively as possible (e.g. if you order a building to create 5 units, it can still only build one unit at a time[13] and the money for the 4 other units will be taken out of your purse for giving the order, which means this money is “on ice” and therefore not used effectively enough). Macro means the order in which the player builds, and what the player builds, according to the information he gathers about his opponent. This build has to follow certain logical rules (there is mindmaps on the internet for different builds and gigantic threads with never ending discussions about builds). Macro is also the way a player wisely spends or wastes his resources.

I would like to allow the urban dictionary to give a definition of the RTS term “micro” for this article:

”Micro, short for micro managing. Used in rts (real time stratagy games), where the user has to control many individual units, giving each specific directions.

[13] That is the harsh reality of Starcraft II’s virtual reality: A Robotics Bay will give you only one robotic unit at a time (you cannot transform it to a warp robotics bay) and a Barracks can only create one Marine at a time (or if you will, give birth to one Marine at a time). A strategic game has to have certain rules, and these rules only give you a tiny idea about how much you will have to learn to master this game.
Uber, meaning over, above or dominant. If someone has uber-micro, they are adept at managing units, and therefore, can own noobs. I just got owned in Zero Hour, that guy had ubermicro“

Go4 - closing the gap between casual and professional eSports

The Go4 series’ are closing the gap in the Electronic Sports League between spontaneous matches (www.playversus.me - The ESL VERSUS Matchmaking System) and the highest leagues (www.intelextrememasters.com which is the Intel Extreme Masters World Championship - The ESL Major Series www.esl.eu/eu/ems (similar to the soccer Champions League) - The ESL Pro Series www.eslproseries.de (similar to the Bundesliga or Major League Soccer)).

In Go4 anybody can participate by signing up online (www.esl.eu or www.nationalesl.com) one week or a few days prior to when the cup takes place on the internet. There is most of the times prize money (usually provided by sponsors or the ESL) that the participants can win and the players who sign up do not have to be organized in a clan. Other than for the ESL Pro Series or the Intel Extreme Masters, the Go4 Cup-series’ never have a long qualification period and one season is never longer than one month. One Go4 season lasts one month and has a maximum of four qualifier cups.

Players sign up and play to win money and gain prestige for their clan or themselves, or they want to get tournament experience and personally play against the best players. There usually is professional gamers who play in these cups and it would be hard, almost impossible for eSports newcomers to meet these players in person. At Go4, players can meet their idols in the first round of the cup and even have a little chat with them. That is what fascinates me most, since this won’t happen in EPS or IEM and such a thing definitely would not happen in soccer or basketball or most other professional sports.

To summarize it, I would say that Go4 is neither the crown of eSports, nor is it a casual eSports event. Go4’s are being followed on live streams by ten thousands of fans, yet the games commented by professional and hobby eSports casters need not be matches only between the top players. Many a fan has had the fantastic opportunity to be pitied and cheered for by other aspiring gamers.
Go4’s exist for the following games: CS, CSS, SC2, CS:GO, Battlefield 3, League of Legends, World of Tanks, Crossfire, Dota2 and a couple more. Go4 allows people who want to become professional gamers to improve their gameplay and gain popularity. Therefore Go4 is an important level between casual gaming and pro gaming that can make stars out of talented players (if they master this level), therefore Go4 has proven to be an event that helps to grow the eSports scene.

Each Go4 at ESL has a “Game Head” who with his admin team teaches players to learn and understand the rules of professional eSports tournaments, because during each cup, the ESL team is talking to the players in a cup chat where they e.g. explain to the players that they have to be on time, make sure that players use the right game settings allowed for the cup and so on.

Riot Games realized how important Go4 is for fostering the eSports scene. Therefore they have together with the ESL developed a tournament code, which ESL players can use to quickly create game lobbies in League of Legends according to the ESL’s Go4 matches and rules.

Go4 - A tournament needs a platform
(1) Simplifying the design and user interface

To make our website more convenient for all Go4 gamers, I have already registered www.go4SC2.com and other addresses that make sense (we have even release a “Go4 Portal” on the ESL website, that combines all Go4 information for all games and countries in one simple page (www.esl.eu/eu/go4). I would like to give you an idea, how my team is working on a a design to make the final website as convenient for the players as possible.

Here is two kinds of mockups, 1 mockup was a brainstorming with a graphics designer, the second one (the greyish one) was made by a UI designer and then there is the design which we are currently finalizing. Please keep in mind that it is only a “drawing” that helps us in meetings to discuss which User Interface is best.
Step 1 - Mockup

- Go4 needs to be explained, the box on top of the page represents this need to bring all information needs to the player in a few seconds.
- All Go4 Cups needs to be displayed and as a user I want to be able to sign up here immediately.
- Where should the live broadcasts be displayed?
- Where should the overall stats be displayed and how can we put the players and teams in the center of attention without neglecting the sign up information for the upcoming cups?
- We need a catchy idea to make this area special, any ideas?

Step 2 - User Interface based on the Mockup

- ESL TV box below tournaments/ signups box to allow players to find respective broadcasts
- Tournament box as high up on the page as possible because the cups themselves are the focus
- Buttons on the left side to switch the Go4 game the player is looking for
- Current rankings for orientation on the left side - Ranking has to be in the focus because we want to promote the players and teams just as much as we want to have the upcoming cups in the center of attention.
- Clans looking for new squads and players can scout for new talent here. Writers can find the team sheets and player profiles by clicking on the profiles in the rankings. They get there directly and find all information about the player or team as well as the results of past matches.
- Now we have found our “special”, it is a little gimmick: “Go4 stats counters” on top of the page. Thanks to Michal Blicharz I got this idea, to have the focus on this page on the tremendous size of Go4, it has many more matches than EPS & IEM combined. Don’t forget that these are not casual matches you play without admins and rules with some cookies and chips on your couch. These are eSports matches that need the full attention of each player. It is a fun but fierce competition. If you add up all the prize money for all Go4’s, it is a huge number. It is a huge amount of unique players who play and a huge amount of Go4 cups overall.
- What is Go4 placeholder: We want to have a video somewhere on the page that quickly explains what Go4 is and how a player can participate.
- We still have to find a prominent place for the sponsors.
Step 3 - The Go4 portal is ready!

Everything has been created according to the mockup. Feedback from experienced Community Managers and UI designers has helped to keep things as simple and convenient as possible. To show the player in which game he currently is, there is a graphic with the Go4 game and the available prize money and of course, there is room for the sponsor. On this page, CS:GO is the Go4 game and CMStorm is the sponsor. 1.000€ prize money can be won every month and as a player, I can see the current ranking (in each cup each week I can win ranking points if I place among the top players - the 8 teams with the most ranking points after each months 4 Go4 Cups go to the Go4 finals - prize money is not only waiting for the winning them in the finals, but also in the 4 individual cups. If I rank very high in 2 out of the 4 cups, I might not have to play 4 cups to get to the finals, but I still can if I want to).

If the player needs this detailed information about Go4, he can click on one of the news in the Go4 portals sites. If I want to watch the Go4 cups or finals, I can find streams under the cups box if there is streams that are live. Over the rankings will shortly be a video that explains Go4.

This portal now helps new players to understand Go4 and find their way to their favourite Go4 tournament. Once they have clicked on a news or cup, they will end up in the navnode of the game they chose. If they want to, they needn’t come back to the portal next time, if it is only one game they are interested in. Each Go4 game has its own game specific Go4 portal with all the information displayed in this overall portal page. Now the portal page for Go4 is ready and a few minutes ago I have asked our Community team to embed the Go4 portal in the ESL main menu.
How to play Go4

(1) Getting ready

Participating in Go4 is always the same, but every game is slightly different: In League of Legends you have to register on the ESL, enter your LoL Summoner Name and then create your 5 on 5 team.

In Go4BF3 it is the same procedure, but the Game Account is called Battlelog Soldier name.

In Go4 Counter-Strike: Global Offensive (Go4CSGO) the Game Account is the STEAM ID (Format: 1:X:XXXXX).

In Go4SC2 you would have to enter your Starcraft II Name and Character Code (with a dot (.) in between). Go4SC2 is a 1on1 competition, therefore you sign up as an individual person and not as a team.

World of Tanks is a 7 vs.7 game! Therefore you need 7 players in the team you create and each player enters their WoT Gameaccount into their profiles before they play.

(2) Playing the Cup


(3) Watching the Cup

Even watching Go4 Cups on internet streams has been made as simple as possible for anyone who is interested. On www.esl.tv people can find the live Go4 streams, as well as on the new Go4 Portal Page www.esl.eu/go4, sorted by game and language, since there is Go4 streams in all games and in many languages, sometimes even more than 6 languages for one event at the same time.

(4) Reading about the Cup (TL, readmore, ESL … )

There is new articles about the Go4 Cupseries’ on the internet every day. On Teamliquid, readmore, on many Battlefield scene websites, on the Riot forums and just everywhere people are interested in the games that are played
in the Go4 cups. We would like to thank all the editors who do all these amazing write-ups where they analyze matches and praise the teams that are participating.

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Manifesto on SC2 eSports

By Manuel Schenkuizen

First of all.. a huge thanks to everyone for the overwhelming and passionate response that I have received! I have combined the accumulated knowledge from the 200 posts I’ve received in response to my recent ‘fatigue thread’ on TL. I’d like to write my opinions on the various hotly debated issues.

1. Tournaments

» Tournaments need to develop their own identity, so that people may begin to discern between them. What is the meaning of winning Tournament A? Tournament B? It makes you the best player of what region, what category?
» Tournament organizers do not benefit from schedule clashes. Viewers who have decided they want to follow both events, suffer. They are not able to and feel stressed out, fatigued or troubled.
» Some sub-top players do occasionally benefit, since they get to be at an event where the best players aren’t necessarily present.
» When the time zones differ greatly, occasionally some viewers do benefit, because they get a massive SC2 weekend with anywhere from 2 to 6 events running simultaneously. Some family neglecting may be the case here, but the SC2 satisfaction is guaranteed. These two groups are the only ones that benefit, I think.
» Tournament organizers don’t like to roll over for another organization. Announcing your early is one way of staking your claim, but there are particularly juicy dates that everyone wants to have.
» Without a governing body, there can be bullying, or senseless competition over a date which ends up hurting both tournaments.
» A governing body would require authoritative power over all tournament organizers in order to work. They would also need financial stability (to pay out the people who have the hard work of keeping tournaments in line, and for other reasons), and all this body must be kept objective & fair, mediating and reaching compromises which everyone can be equally unhappy with (the golden rule of compromise). I think I don’t need to tell you how hard it would to found an organization that has all these attributes, no matter how much we seem to want one - and therefore how long it’ll probably still take for one to appear.
» It follows, therefore, that we can only work things out naturally for now.
Step (1) Announce your tournament as soon as possible. Step (2) Communicate behind the scenes to inform other tournament organizers of your intentions - cross your fingers that they are honourable. Skip step 2 if you’re unable to ascertain that.

» A note on prize money. Broad prize pool distributions help the eSports scene. Top-heavy prize pool distributions help a rare few champions. Top-heavy prize pools also occasionally help with hype towards the community. However, the community usually also instinctively feels that it’s not that cool to have $50k for first, and $8k for second, for example. More and more, I think people are starting to appreciate a relatively well spread out prize pool, and this benefits the scene the most in many, many ways. WCS Europe is a great example of a relatively well spread out prize pool which gives every player some pay-off for their thousands of hours of hard work: 2012_StarCraft_II_World_Championship_Series/Europe/Finals

» I alluded to artificially reducing the amount of tournaments in the scene to help with viewer fatigue. Point 2 was the one that dealt with that, from my original post. After having considered all the responses, I believe that this is impractical, or even impossible. First of all because there is no governing body, secondly because it’s basically a free market. I will explain the way to avoid Viewer Fatigue in the third paragraph.

2. Tournament identity

» From what I’ve gathered from the emails, people generally seem to feel that tournaments should either be The Entertaining Type, which I’ll call Type A - or The Professional Type, which I’ll call Type B. HSC and ASUS ROG would fall under Type A, and GSL, IPL, MLG, DH and Iron Squid would fall under Type B. In fact, I’d go so far as to say that GSL Code S is probably Type A & B combined, since Tasteless cracks jokes and Artosis knows his shit. DreamHack’s production of WCS Europe probably also fell under A+B. Forgive me for not evaluating the other tournaments thoroughly, it’s not really the point right now.

» Without going into too much detail, people seem to have no limits on how much they think Type B tournaments should improve their quality. I think DreamHack’s work on WCS Europe was a great example of ever-expanding production quality, and that’s probably part of the reason why it had ~120,000 concurrent viewers. (It certainly can’t hurt?)

» The Entertaining Type has an easier time in terms of how critical people are of its production, but I’m sure if the production wasn’t good it’d annoy anyone, like disconnects, audio cutting out, or lags. The serious atmosphere is less important here, and people enjoy the camaraderie / social aspect of these
events.
» Epic games from the players make any tournament more successful. More on this in point 4.

Avoiding viewer fatigue / viewer responsibilities

» Limit your own viewing to those that you truly enjoy. By selectively consuming, you can reduce the amount of SC2 you consume and add your View to the events that really matter to you. A lot of the people who emailed me are already employing a system where they only watch League X or Tournament Y.
» Fighting for the viewership will force tournaments to improve production quality and their shape own identity.
» The better players are treated, the better they usually play. If tournaments improve player conditions, they are also more likely to create a situation where outstanding plays from players becomes more commonplace. This will make it more interesting for the viewer.
» Contribute. I’ve found that people who contribute in some way besides just watching gain a personal kind of satisfaction. If you like a certain tournament, see what you can do to help them. It may be that you purchase some of their product like subscription or tangibles, but it can also just be to update the Liquipedia page that pertains to that tournament. I get a sense that the Liquipedia people are a great team of enthusiasts who provide a spectacular service to everyone. Liquipedia can still improve, though! - more on this in point 5.
» Give a tournament you’ve never watched or stopped watching a chance now and then. They may have improved, and may pleasantly surprise you.
» Oh, and lastly, on the topic of emailing sponsors... Emailing sponsors with positive feedback, especially those who sponsor your favorite players & teams, IS useful, if for the only reason that they also receive negative feedback from a very small witchhunting minority. I’m not saying these witch hunter people are necessarily wrong in every (extreme) case; sometimes a player does push it too far, and I think players have been getting away with too much outrageus stuff without punishment for too long. However, it does not create a positive atmosphere for sponsorship/eSports for ”us” to focus on the shortcomings of players/teams only - and to email the sponsors straight away without first seeing if the team itself will take punitive action. For the positive-minded people: you can’t stop those emails from being sent, but you can balance it out by showing that there is also appreciation and maturity. (of course, sponsors do care about sales and conversion, but my above point is very valid)
Player responsibilities

» Honestly, a lot of email responses just lamented the fact that the various regions over the world are not proportionately represented. By each country’s playing population, we should have more stars from USA, Germany, France, Russia, etc. Players who are consistent and confident, and beat Korean top gamers consistently and consecutively. There is no one way to force this to happen, but it’s good to remember that the fans simply want someone to step up and perform. To give them someone to believe in.

Encyclopedia Galactica: Liquipedia

» Isaac Asimov himself would be proud indeed: the Encyclopedia Galactica for SC2 eSports is being developed, anthologised and treasured by the population itself.
» There is nothing like Liquipedia around as far as a collection of coverage of tournaments goes. The only thing that could make Liquipedia better, is by being even better and more well rounded than it already is. It almost seems too much to ask, but I think it’s only a matter of time that this will happen.
What am I getting at?
» For example: interaction to be possible on Liquipedia items (comments).
» For Liquipedia to get “Liquipedia TV” which is a show that would combine all the results of the past week into a nice consumable TV show
» For Liquipedia to start listing all of the replays & VOD’s for all the events consistently.
» The entire community wants a one-stop place for finding everything about every tournament.

"Give a tournament you’ve never watched or stopped watching a chance now and then. They may have improved, and may pleasantly surprise you."

» For Television, we’ve got the TV guide. For internet, we have Google. For eSports, there is Liquipedia. I used to think that it would be enough if Tournament X or Organization Y had a personal TV guide/schedule for their own programs, but this isn’t enough. There would still be 10 different TV guides to keep up with - an impossible feat for your average Joe.
» The more people contribute to Liquipedia, the better. It requires passion and
hard work, but it will be much appreciated. If it requires funds, I’m sure TV guides also earn money from the TV channels eventually for helping consumers consume the products (their channels).

» Alternatively, I’m sure many people would feel grateful enough to Liquipedia to donate. I just looked for a donate button myself.

» NOTE: It is possible that we might other objective media besides TL/Liquipedia; in fact, it is likely. I don’t see it happening yet, though, because there are no financial incentives to do so yet. If running a team is a hard way to earn money, then imagine running an active, comprehensive, independent news / coverage website. Our scene is growing, but it is still kinda small in the sense that we need a lot of volunteer work. ESFI seems to do decent enough work, but I don’t know how many people visit them.

» Media should refrain from functioning like TMZ. If there is a story, or a rumour, check sources. Ask all involved parties their story. Never write about just one side of the story. Integrity is the longest path, but ultimately the most rewarding.

Blizzard’s responsibilities

» PART ONE: Keeping the game competitive for hardcore gamers. The authenticity of a game as an eSports is derived from four basic elements: FAIRNESS. DIFFICULTY. LOGIC. MASTERY.

» Fairness: the game must be relatively balanced, and the design philosophy must be sound enough for both players AND fans to feel that everything a player does is significant in terms of influencing the outcome. The races must feel equally strong, and the game mechanics should feel exciting and have enough variance.

» Difficulty: If the game is not difficult enough, the fans will not respect the players’ skill. I have respect for a piano player (One-handed Pirate of the Caribbean - By Wibi Soerjadi) because I admire what I cannot do. Blizzard does not need to dumb down the game, because that won’t get the casuals back. Improving the Used Map Settings / Arcade will get casuals. They just like to play Tower Defense, DotA, Footmen frenzy and so forth - and in between look at Tournament streams on the BNet 3.0 in-game client.

» Logic: There needs to be logic in the gameplay and application of units. 2 years ago, I logically suspected that Forcefields could become problematic because you can lock off the opponent’s ramps with it. I also knew that Protoss’ defensive strength will be balanced around FF, which meant that Protoss would be doomed never to be able to take a secret expansion. 1 year ago, I deduced that Infestors logically should be the single strongest unit in the game.
Yet, it wasn’t seen as such yet. Why was that? Because players’ skill hadn’t caught up yet. People were still attack-moving Infestors into the opponent like so much disposable tissues, after dispensing with their energy. However, we still logically should have known that the Infestor could cover all angles for a Zerg player. That of course creates the problem that Zerg without the Infestor would be doomed to suck, since Zerg would eventually be balanced around it (see recent Fungal buffs and how this is true).

”We need casuals playing games we (the hardcore players) don’t necessarily care about, so that they can watch us now & then and enjoy themselves.“

» Mastery: When superior and ever increasing skill leads to increasingly impressive results, we are speaking of reaching ‘mastery’. It is normal that this level skill is unattainable for 99.99% of the scene’s playing population. That is why we watch the pros at work. ”Mastery” is said to be failing when, after 4 years, the top professionals are still losing repeatedly to easily executable strategies. I don’t have much to add here, because I don’t think the game has run for long enough yet to say that we have already reached Mastery. IMMVP, SKT1Rain and Stephano are showing some strong evidence of achieving certain kinds of Mastery that currently are difficult to replicate by other players.

PART TWO: Make the game fun to be involved in for the casual gamers.

» When making the game more accessible, why do we only consider 1v1? Most casual people will have ladder fear no matter what. No matter how simple it is, or how many workers are shown to be working on a Nexus, or whether the workers start automatically or not.

» The WarCraft 3 pro scene was partly successful because of DotA 1 being popular. While never having played 1v1 or competitive WC3 players, DotA 1 players could still enjoy WC3 pro games because the game play is similar enough for them to understand it.

» Blizzard needs to clean up the custom games section, or ”The Arcade”. Joyfully, they announced something to that effect for HotS & WoL: UI Updates

» Blizzard has done so well in the past by taking the community’s ideas and making it their own. ”Top vs Bottom” from Brood War is a term coined by the community; they proceeded to make it into a game mode. People wanted in-battle.net tournaments; Blizzard created regularly scheduled Ladder tournaments. People like DotA 1; Blizzard at least tries to make their own versions of DotA.
» We need casuals playing games we (the hardcore players) don’t necessarily care about, so that they can watch us now & then and enjoy themselves.
» Conclusion: Blizzard is not perfect, but in the long run, they have never disappointed. Every expansion in each of their franchises has always made the game better. Brood War made SC1 playable, War3: The Frozen Throne made War3: Reign of Chaos playable. Do not lose faith now, ye of little hope! Of course we are worried, and we’re right to be so. We criticize because we care. But we need to give credit where it is due. It’s not easy being Blizzard, but they did go ahead and give us some of the best years of our lives. Let’s continue to keep faith.

Tl;dr: watch what you like, and no more. Be mature. Give positive feedback to Blizzard and Tournament Organizers. Give teams a chance to punish players’ inappropriate behaviours before calling up a mob. eSports media should find out all sides of a story before publishing. Tournament organizers should continue to improve player treatment and production value. Supply & demand will sort itself out accordingly; good quality will be rewarded with good viewership, and poor quality will be rewarded with poor viewership.

» Email sponsors with positivity and real feelings about why you appreciate what they do, this may help offset the witch hunters.

**Manuel ‘Grubby’ Schenkhuizen** is a Starcraft 2 Pro Gamer and former Warcraft 3 legend. He also wrote in the 2009 edition an article about his first tournament experiences. You can find out more about him on www.followgrubby.com and follow him on www.twitter.com/followgrubby.
The State of Play of Team Fortress 2 - A Underdog Story

By Henry Harris

Team Fortress 2 has never made it to the top 5 eSports titles. Many players do not take the game serious for its cartooney graphic style. Another factor might be that the usual setup is 6on6 and not 5on5 as in most other team shooters. Additionally, the Team Fortress 2 scene never really wanted to establish themselves in the Electronic Sports League (ESL), whatever the reasons may be. One of the reasons is probably that a well-run community was founded right after the release - the European Team Fortress 2 League (ETF2L). The number of teams increased steadily during the first seven seasons and then stayed at 350 teams per season. The running season 11 had only 300 signups which is still pretty good for a four year old game that never made the breakthrough. The ETF2L reached its peak with the Valve sponsored Highlander Community Challenge in late 2010 and early 2011 with 900 participating teams. The game mode was 9on9 and the name referred to the famous movie “Highlander” with the quote “There can only be one”. In this context, it means, that every of the nine available classes has to be played by one player.

2011 was a great year for Team Fortress 2 and its competitive community, dare I say ‘THE MOST’ eventful year in our competitive scene’s history. We have had the biggest LAN to date, Team Fortress 2 going Free-2-Play, launch of the new voluntary casting organisation VanillaTV and many, many great matches. It has also been a year of doubt and controversy. The slogan ‘TF2 is dead’ being printed on Team Fortress 2 discussion boards everywhere and still being typed by many there has been dispute and frustration over unlockable weapons, LANs and growth in the 6on6 Team Fortress 2 scene. There has been more gossip, controversy and drama than you will ever see on the worst Wednesday afternoon talkshow. Team Fortress 2 has changed – rising stars of the game have gone ‘pro’, old pros have gone on the Brink of losing interest (pun intended) and leaving the scene. Coverage has changed and developed with new people writing articles, covering events, making videos, volunteering to cast or stream and hell we have even seen a new game mode start to become accepted in Team Fortress 2.

This article was written by a European and will therefore mainly focus on the European scene who is also slightly larger than the US scene.
"Unless TF2 gets a proper LAN tournament in 2011, it will be the last year."
- Rauli ‘Darn!’ Savela (Ex-Dignitas)

January

Jumping back to the start of the year 2011 in our Team Fortress 2 tardis, the big players at the top of the scene were Epsilon eSports and the Marco led German all-star team Button Bashers who would leave the US organisation Blight Gaming that month for troubles with false promises and miscommunication with its CEO Blackfoger.

The first major final of the year was the Wireplay Team Fortress 2 League final, it actually had prize money, £500 for the winners, and we saw Button Bashers snatch the money out of Epsilon eSports’ hands in a surprisingly easy 2 map victory. With the ending of the eighth season of the ETF2L being delayed by dreadful scheduling, January became a month full of play-offs all over with promotion/relegation places being decided all over the scene. Power Gaming (later Team Dignitas) and the then Team Dignitas (now “Old Dignitas” aka Relic) lost out in the play-off semi-finals and fought it out for 150 euros, back then the euro was worth something, which Power Gaming won. Most of the other teams died before the start of the next season making the whole thing kind of pointless, nevertheless it was still great viewing. At the time we also had the best forgotten ‘casting war’ with ETF2L.radio (led by Dave and Byte) and TF2TV (fronted by Pledge, d2m and Comedian) both fighting it out to get the most viewers on the biggest matches, being spoilt for choice was a rare luxury for Team Fortress 2 spectators especially since the European scene had been so starved of coverage for so long.

January 24th last year the game we had all been waiting for arrived – Epsilon versus ButtonBashers in the first ever ETF2L playoff final and it was one to be remembered more for controversy over rules. The first map of cp_badlands was a close affair, ending 3-2 in favour of ButtonBashers. The second map was the custom cp_obscure, tactically picked by Marco with the simple objective of boring Epsilon so they fall asleep and let ButtonBashers take the map. However it proved to be a tense affair, being so close it could only be decided by Epsilon holding the middle point at the end of the 10 minute golden cap round, turtling it up with an Engineer and a Heavy. The spectacle was certainly debated by many and the golden cap rule bought into question. However
we still use the same rule today and this was the only big game I ever recall seeing ‘hold mid and win’ strategy bought into play. Still a remarkable game and it was casted by not only TF2TV and ETF2L Radio but also two or three pirate radio casters, oh man we were spoiled for choice back then.

Other notable events:
- Highlander 9on9 coverage takes off with several casts of the Valve sponsored ETF2L Community Highlander Challenge as it neared its final stages, the month ending with 8 teams left in the 900 strong competition.
- The British team Rej get sponsored by Fleshlight.co.uk in one of the funniest things I have ever seen in TF2.

February

The shortest month of the year and with no active season in any of the leagues, Team Fortress 2 coverage online was focused on randomly organized premiership mixes and the end of the ETF2L Highlander Community Challenge. But February was definitely a great month of LANs with two very good events happening within the space of a couple of weeks. It started off with the Winter Assembly LAN in Finland on the weekend starting the 10th and it was a cracking affair. Three giants of Epsilon eSports, Power Gaming and Team Dignitas attended along with coverage junkies of TF2TV, it really lives in my memory as one of the best LANs to date. The group stages saw over 1000 viewers tune in to listen to the SHOUT casting of ThePledge and Admirable as Team Dignitas faced their Finnish foes Power Gaming in the match of the tournament. Dignitas – who had been sliding down the leg of their once dominant throne – faced Epsilon in the final and showed the TF2 world they were still the best team about by demolishing Epsilon in the final 5-0 and 5-1. So Darn’s boys were still the kings of Europe, but in the United Kingdom another LAN occurred with TF2TV again in attendance and the only two good British teams at the time Infused.Tt and (half-Brit) Monster Munch fighting it out against seemingly endless amounts of ridiculously named UK mix teams. Both teams got through to the final and after taking a map each, Infused proved too strong on cp_gravelpit taking an entertaining best of three set 2-1.

As mentioned the ETF2L Highlander Community Challenge was hotting up as the Quarter finals and Semi-finals were played with Colony, May Contain Nuts, SNSD and Twistedplay making it to the last 4, then seeing Colony crumple up Twistedplay and SNSD taking down May Contain Nuts to set up the final. Also February seemed to be the month for rants and commentaries
on community site VanillaTF2 having a dozen or so in a month.

Other notable events:
- Plans for TF2 @ Dreamhack were publicly announced with an appeal for people to help.
- The ‘old’ TCM lineup (Byte, Haunter, Skinnie, Coinz, Zerox and Numlocked) called it quits but saw the start of the ‘new TCM’ within a few weeks of the announcement.

March

The first day of spring blossomed with about as much debate, drama and arguments as you could ever imagine for a cartoon shooter game. ETF2L announced its Season 9 rule set, adding some new and not entirely popular maps. But, most significantly, announcing the so called “Cinnamon” unlock rule set (Contrary to the demand for the “Vanilla” ruleset which banned almost all unlockable weapons). Now was a time of discontent for many people, especially some of the big names in Team Fortress 2 boycotting the biggest league in protest of the unlocks. The likes of Team Dignitas, Power Gaming and Epsilon announced their intentions early not to participate becoming a sign of things to come. The ESL under Master League Admin AnAkIn was in resurgence mode however – hosting its 7th season, a 1v1 scout cup and announcing its plans to host a long overdue Nations Cup though the biggest news of all was the new “Vanilla + Medlocks” rule set premiership teams had been crying out for. The Wireplay league also made a return, however the lack of sponsorship and unlock friendly rule set did not bring much attraction from the big teams so Wireplay settled back down to its role as a league for Low/Mid teams.

For actual Team Fortress 2 played it was a slow month, though one of the majorly important games in Team Fortress 2 history, in my not-so-humble opinion, was played out on the 5th of March. I am talking about the ETF2L Community Highlander Challenge final between SNSD and Colony which was won by SNSD who began their domination of the 9v9 scene in Europe. The match itself was tarnished by DDoS attacks, and after a lot of server changes and delays SNSD crawled over the line in true public Team Fortress 2 style by winning on cp_dustbowl to take the gold medal. May Contain Nuts beat Twistedplay to secure the bronze medal and so concluded the biggest Team Fortress 2 tournament ever. The LAN scene stayed active with the French MaxLAN, though it only saw 2 of the big European powerhouses travel to France to play it out for beer money: Epsilon eSports losing to ButtonBashers
in both the Upper Bracket final and the Grand Final – a performance that completed the a LAN trilogy of failures for Epsilon; having lost the insomnia 41 and WASM finals to Dignitas and now MaxLAN spelling bad news for them.

Other notable events:
- Big shakeups within the Team Fortress 2 elite: Epsilon began their demise into folding but on the bright side TCM formally announced their return to activity a month after formally quitting with a new generation of Premiership talent.
- FakkelBrigade joined forces with Thermaltake and became known as ‘Tt’, a sad day for the sentimental amongst us as a name synonymous with everything positive about competitive Team Fortress 2 was lost forever.
- The one big online Team Fortress 2 competition came in the form of the Esports Heaven Full Tilt Poker challenge which was won by a newly reformed TCM who beat Team Thermaltake in the final and re-announced themselves as one of the big boys of European Team Fortress 2 by taking down Button-Bashers and RedCode en-route.

April

Infused.Tt beat a legitimate premiership team in Team Thermaltake and won a LAN...April Fools! Ha-ha....wait what it actually happened? Yes it did at insomnia 42 – holding its last ever LAN in Newbury – Infused.Tt pulled off one of the biggest upsets in Team Fortress 2 history in my opinion by taking down their half-sponsors other team, Thermaltake. Exfane and the boys were hot favourites to win this LAN and stormed to the final whilst Infused being the underdogs they are scraped through the Prem/Div 1 mix teams. The Final itself was casted by TF2TV with ThePledge and Oggy but had some technical issues with stream quality on Fileplay which ended up spoiling the game a bit as a spectacle which is a shame as it should go down as a classic LAN underdog story. Infused.Tt scout Greg went huge in the final along with a convincing 2 map victory for Infused who swept in from underneath Tt’s feet with a dramatic cp_badlands victory in the final minute.

The Team Dignitas Alienware cup was the big event of high level fixtures with ESL and ETF2L being stung by inactivity, the tournament was won by Power Gaming taking out Button Bashers convincingly in the final. ESL season 7 did however have one team raising eyebrows though in the midst of many top teams lacking in activity – K1ck eSports returned with Israel’s finest plus welshman Mike. The centre stage for ESL interest was the Nations
Cup. The qualifiers ended and the group stage took place; Latvia proving to be the biggest upset as they beat Russia to qualify for the knockout stages along with Sweden in Group A. The month ended on a sour note with the announcement there would be no Team Fortress 2 tournament at Dreamhack with the driving force Dunc’s internet being scapegoated and so began the ‘TF2 is dead’ chants (again).

Other notable events
- E-drama ahoy lads! RedCode changed their line-up including getting the finnish medic Taimou but not long after, longas left the team and then joined bAdmirable – a team set up by Ireland’s Adimirable. To spice things up further; ESL hosted a playoff match for the Premiership spot between the two teams, the ultimate grudge match! Sadly for RedCode, they had some lineup issues and the pita/potato boys were too strong on the night.
- ESEA regular season had ended with x6 gaming achieving a historic winning streak, going 16-0.

May

ESEA LAN ran over from end of April with CheckSix Gaming, Complexity, eMazing Gaming and Blight Gaming in attendance. Blight went out first in the lower bracket to coL before eMg sent them packing in third spot setting up a rematch of the upper bracket finals versus x6. The unbeaten x6 came in with an overall season record of 18 maps won and 0 losses and took a superb 3-map final after coming back from a map down to win both maps. With an unbeaten season and a LAN trophy in their hands, what could stop x6 being the new dominant force in North America? How about their pocket soldier TLR breaking into the team captain Kalkin’s hotel room and stealing the trophy? In one of the most bizarre scenarios ever seen in gaming, Kalkin called security as TLR refused to give up the trophy with rage, sweat and nerd tears involved for all. Shame nobody videoed this on their mobile phones…oh wait they did, god bless you sir!

The rest of the month seemed to be veering with negativity as we started to see more big name teams fold. Der Kaiser of German Team Fortress 2, Marco, sensationlly quit the game for Brink leaving Button Bashers to die whilst Power Gaming decided to stop supporting Team Fortress 2 altogether leaving Hocz & co to rename themselves as SG-1. ETF2L’s activity was being nullified by ESL which itself was having all sorts of issues with ESL Wire – “TF2 is dead” was the call by many. Near the end of the month though a major day in the competitive scene’s history occurred: almost out of nowhere, TF2TV

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– which had been struggling itself – disbanded with its main contributors joining forces with Byte and Torden to form ‘VanillaTV’. To quote the Mantra in the announcement article – “VanillaTV’s focus will always be on quality over quantity”. And what a first night of quality entertainment in store for VTV as hundreds tuned in to watch the much anticipated USA v Finland ESL nations cup match. The Finns seemed to get ‘drunker’ as the night wore on, originally destroying USA 4-0 with ping advantage in the first map; they arrogantly changed their names mockingly causing USA to challenge them to play on an East Coast server to which the Finns gracefully – or arrogantly – accepted. USA forcefully smashed the Finnish team in the second map so unsurprisingly the Darn-led Finnish side swapped back for the third map which was shockingly won by USA thanks to some great work by clockwork although to this day the Finns will tell you they “didn’t care”. They got what they deserved that night and Team Fortress 2 got what it needed – a fantastic match to begin the new era of VanillaTV.

Other notable events:
- Epsilon eSports called it a day as their legendary old roster packed it in. F2, Extremer, Cube, Sneis, Jh, Shintaz, Predz, Wai, Piece and Night had won both ETF2L seasons of 2010 and come second in the insomnia 40 LAN. It was indeed a sad day for all involved in Team Fortress 2.
- Monster Munch also called it a day, losing motivation after a controversial admin decision to award a default win to Button Bashers, who themselves of course quit sooner after. Three Premiership folds in a matter of week, top tier Team Fortress 2 was crumbling into dust.
- TCM’s new roster was hitting form, winning the Tt eSports Team Fortress 2 challenge, taking the final against SG-1 and going through most of the top teams left in Europe en-route. It was also a good month for SG-1 as well, leading ESL and topping the Cadred top 10.
- ESL Nation’s cup reached the quarter final stages of the upper brackets with Portugal, Spain, USA and tournament surprises Latvia reaching the last 8 along with the seeded pre-tournament favourites: Finland, Sweden, UK and Germany. Whilst USA knocked Finland to the lower brackets, the UK and Germany eased through to the upper bracket semi-finals against Spain and Latvia respectively. Germany had to grind out a result in a superb 3-mapper winning cp_granary 5-4, losing cp_gullywash 6-5 to a golden cap round before holding their nerve to take a long drawn out cp_gravelpit 2-1.

**June**

The birth of VanillaTV had given European Team Fortress 2 a high-class cas-
ting platform but the news that really roused the hearts of every Team Fortress 2 yeoman was the announcement by Valve that Team Fortress 2 was now Free-to-play! As of June 24th, anyone could download and play Team Fortress 2 for nothing, although to get trading privileges you needed to buy something from the Steam store, but that costs about as much as a stick of bubblegum for most people. What did this mean for the competitive community? Simple my dearies – new blood being pumped into the veins of our humble hat simulator, Team Fortress 2 peaking at over 100,000 players at one time, being ahead of all other Steam games. The huge influx of players equaled renewed interest from sponsors and tournament organisers alike, by the end of the month Summer Assembly proudly welcomed back Team Fortress 2 after initial doubts that Assembly had abandoned our struggling game as if we were some unwelcome newborn baby.

It was still as busy as ever in ESL with the Premiership season finishing up with the last matches being scheduled and played, SG-1 booked their spot as number 1 with Thermaltake eventually taking second spot and TCM securing third. The last spot would belong to the sheepishly improving outfit that were K1ck as the weird Israeli/Spanish alliance (+ Mike) crept in at the expense of RedCode. Everything seemed to be building up towards a month of finals for July with ETF2L’s trio of premiership teams fighting it out, ESL play-offs about to begin and the Nations Cup heading into the final straight. The UK booked their spot in the upper bracket final by beating USA 7-3 and 6-1 on cp_granary and cp_badlands. Spain finally nailed Finland’s coffin shut with a shock win in the lower brackets before making it a Scandinavian swoop by playing some amazing play to annihilate Sweden – who had been crushed by the Germans in the upper bracket semi-final – to reach the last four. Their opponents would be Portugal who had dismissed the tournament surprises Latvia before ending up with a sort of controversial default win against the USA. The Americans had won a tightly contested match 4-3 and 5-4 but because some of their players were not using ESL Wire, USA reached the maximum amount of penalty points and they were eventually forced to concede it despite the sporting offer of a rematch by Portugal (after they got awarded the default win by the ESL admins). An unfortunate end for the USA but the show must go on and on it went with Spain facing their neighbours Portugal in the lower bracket consolation final – despite losing the first map on cp_granary, our amigos from Spain rolled the next 2 maps to keep their Nations Cup dreams alive. The final Nations Cup game of the month was the upper bracket final between Germany and the UK, with the history between the two nations played up like it was world war 3, the spectators were treated to two really tense maps ending 4-2 to the Tommies on cp_badlands and 3-2 to the Krauts on cp_granary. The decider map was none other than the distin-
guished ctf_turbine_pro which the Germans took 2-0 as their superior map knowledge shone through. So now the UK would now have to play Spain to book a place in the grand final of the ESL Nations Cup 2011.

Other notable events:
- ESEA season 9 launched with defending champions x6 losing their prime stallion TLR after the trophy stealing debacle.
- Infused.Tt started reshaping their roster with all except boomeh and Greg leaving the UK LAN champions. A new line-up had propped up by the end of the month with bright young British talent in Mike and Flushy joining along with demoman extraordinaire Numlocked being bought back into Team Fortress 2 full-time and mercenary ViQun to complete the line-up. The Dutchman also founded his popular Youtube channel ‘QunTV’ in this time, giving people a chance to see what it was like to play Scout in a Premiership team.
- One big final over in North America was the UGG Highlander final for season three between Classic Mixup and Inglorious Broadcasters. Classic Mixup were stacked with Mid and High skilled players from the top end of ESEA whilst IB were a pubstar team, alas there was no great underdog victory as Mixup confidently took the finals. However Highlander had arrived in America with viewers equaling that of a big 6v6 matchup.

July

This was the month of finals with a whole summer of less important matches building up to their climaxes. We have to start with the big one – the Nations Cup final which was between Germany and the UK with the Brits having won the lower bracket comfortably beating Spain 6-3 and 5-0 on Granlands. Our amigos can be proud of their performance but in the end we got the final we expected; the cliches returned and so did the drama over scheduling the event. Eventually they settled down to play it on July 27th with Team UK (Byte, Numlocked, Flisko, Mike, Fisshu and Greg) looking much more settled and well-drilled after their loss the previous month to Germany (Kurt, Thy, GeaR, KLar, stefan and basH). The Brits were in control of the majority of the final, taking a nervous Granary 4-2 then going 4-0 up on the second map Gullywash with 8 minutes left, the Germans managed to keep it respectable by clawing 2 rounds back but in the words of the immortal JimmyBreeze “the Germans had been ahead about 5% of the match”. Team UK won the Nations Cup of 2011, a fitting prize for TCM’s Byte to take as team captain after some criticism over whether he should have led the side to begin with. I will try to ignore the drama over the last best of 3 map series that was meant to be played and thank the Germans for sportingly defaulting it to the UK due to scheduling
circumstances.

The other event catching the eye of multiple audiences from beyond the usual crowd of Team Fortress 2 lovers was the Free-To-Play Invitational Cup. Ashkan, and some others invited players from some of the top teams in Call of Duty 4, Brink, Left4Dead 2 and Counter Strike: Source with the winners playing a show-match next month versus a celebrity team. The cup was won by the Epsilon Brink team mentored by Admirable and carried by a chap named Rulah who impressed so much he would soon be invited to join a premiership team. On the same night the ESL season finished with K1ck going through RedCode, TCM, Thermaltake and then, against all odds, SG-1 in the final. It appeared the Israeli’s and Spaniards mixed together would be a force to be reckoned with in the future as they held their nerve to win the best of three map series. ETF2L had been hard hit by folding with just 3 teams left in Premiership – Thermaltake and TCM met each other in the grand finale to try and restore some prestige in the league. Not only did both teams restore prestige but they re-invented the term ‘spectacle’ with a thoroughly entertaining match fought over three extremely close maps. Thermaltake won Badlands 5-4 in a tense, back and forth encounter then seemed to think they had won their first ever ETF2L season as they held TCM’s fourth point with 1 minute left on the clock, TCM pushed out in desperation and managed to get enough kills to scare Tt off of second point and with momentum – and nothing to lose – they surged through middle and then Tt second point in 25 seconds before pushing last uber versus uber. Somehow Tt cracked and TCM capped the point with no more than half a second left on the clock, forcing a golden cap round with TCM won with the adrenaline still running. So against all odds there would be a deciding map on Granary with Tt who somehow managed to put the loss on on Gully out of their minds and recovered to draw the final map 3-3 before snatching a dramatic golden cap win to take the season 9 crown.

Other notable events:
- Epsilon returned to Team Fortress 2 with F2, Extremer and Sneis the survivors from their old line-up. They also picked up German superstars stefan and GeaR along with Team Fortress 2 veteran Wltrs to make up the numbers, the team would change over the coming months as i43 approached. New Epsilon instantly struck gold in their first online tournament winning the Excello Big-foot Team Fortress 2 challenge, beating SG-1 in the final.

August

Team Fortress 2 was in a state of recovery after a month of awesome mat-
ches and sudden new interest surging throughout the scene, with i43 impending and a record turnout expected. The only other noteworthy event other than ESEA was the Alienware cup hosted by Team Dignitas. This tournament would prove to be a very tasty little prelude to the i-series event which was happening a few days later – the two finalists being Epsilon – who came through Team Dignitas) and Infused.Tt, who beat TCM in the semis. Epsilon took the first map Badlands 6-1 but Granary proved much closer with a 4-4 tie in regular time but a crucial mid win by Epsilon gave them the momentum they needed to take the cap and the £100 prize money. The win cemented Epsilon’s position as the team beat at i43 but Infused had proven themselves as worthy contenders, making the final without their main caller numlocked.

Before I go on to i43 – big news at the end of the month was ETF2L announcing their 10th season with the notable change being the Vanilla plus Medic unlocks rule set as Europe completely abandoned any unlockable weapons (Wireplay also went Vanilla). This move did finally bring an end to the unlock debate and help unite the community after months of arguing about the items allowed in 6v6.

So to Telford, United Kingdom came thousands of gamers and hundreds of Team Fortress 2 players with an estimated 250 in attendance. Everyone reading who attended the event will have their own personal memories to share from LAN. 40 teams entered the Team Fortress 2 competition but with only 4 teams realistically able to win the tournament, the long drawn out group stages and knockout stages do not seem worth mentioning. That is until we reached the upper bracket semi-finals; TCM managed to end their LAN curse against Dignitas and book a place in the upper bracket final versus Epsilon who themselves took down Infused. With games being played late into the evening there was little time for breaks as we saw the upper bracket and lower bracket finals played simultaneously: Epsilon booked their place in the grand final by annihilating TCM 6-1 and 7-2 whilst Infused held off Team Dignitas, winning the decider map on Turbine 2-0. This meant TCM and Infused would be facing off in the last match of the night for a place on the stage; personally I enjoyed watching the match from behind Infused back with a bunch of other people soaking up the LAN atmosphere but for those who could not be there and caught the VanillaTV cast with ex-QuadV casters Arx & Beta, it was a superb match that went right down to a golden cap round in third map on Granary. Infused engineered an incredible push back from their last point to TCM’s last in the golden cap round to book their spot in the grand finals against Epsilon the next day.

After a night of alcohol and video gaming, we woke up to watch the grand finale at about midday. Due to technical issues with Epsilon Knoxx’s PC, the
game had a lot of pauses and delays but the mood was high within the Team Fortress 2 community sounding more like a football crowd than a bunch of gamers. The first map belonged to Epsilon though, rolling through Infused 6-1 after a tense first half of the map but the second map Gullywash – dubbed as Infused’s “home map” – was much closer and owing to some fantastic roamer skills by Mike was won 6-4 by Infused to set up a third map decider. Tension was high but Epsilon turned it up another level, taking the final beyond the reach of Infused with 10 minutes left on the clock, winning 5-2 in the end. Despite the anti-climactic final map, we still had an amazing LAN with the biggest attendance ever and amazing support for the game. So much for TF2 being dead…

Other notable events:
- Europe’s most successful Team Fortress 2 team in the history of humanity officially announced their retirement. Team Dignitas had been dominant online and offline for nearly 2 years including winning Assembly and i40. It was an end of an era but thankfully it would not be the last time we would see Darn, Agron, Rebeli, Ryb and Bybben.
- Team Dignitas as an organisation did not leave Team Fortress 2 for very long, picking up the ex-Power Gaming line-up known recently as SG-1. They also announced they would be sending a mixture of the Old Dignitas and New Dignitas players to i43.
- It was a big month for organisations picking up Team Fortress 2 teams with a lot of big LANs coming up, CKRAS being the latest team to enter the game by picking up the former Anexis. Meanwhile highlander famed 6v6 outfit SNSD were picked up by Yoyotech; a team with massive potential in every position.
- The F2P’ers from Epsilon Brink (featuring Admirable) faced off against the Team Fortress 2 dream team consisting of: Robin Walker and Jon Lippincott from Valve, Richard ‘Gonzo’ Lewis from Cadred, Youtube sensation Total Biscuit, eXtine from eXtv, Team Fortress 2 pro Macisum, a random Swede with ‘Ashkan’ connections in lwf and finally Yoyotech medic TheSucker. The Brink team managed to win Badlands 3-2 but having only ever played Badlands before, they lost out on Granary and Viaduct but they still managed to put on a great show and their scout Rulah even gave up Brink for Team Fortress 2 afterwards by joining premiership team CKRAS.

September

Summer was over, people went back to their lives of trolling each other behind a keyboard opposed to in person and Team Fortress 2 hit the pre-season
pickup period. We saw new teams form, players ride the roster merry-go-round and old faces leave the scene to do something presumably more worthwhile (like school or Brink). i43 champions Epsilon eSports finally settled on a new roster taking in rising star Randa in place of the retiring Extremer as well as officially recruiting Knoxx who had been playing with the team for some time already. With news of Wltrs not being replaced by LAN merc quad, it would be great news for Infused as not only were they guaranteed a free round against Epsilon with Knoxx officially joining but they could also pick up the Danish pistol machine. (Vi-)Qun stepped aside which meant sadly for all no more Infused comms via QunTV. The i43 runners-up also decided they needed to compete in ETF2L so dropped the banned boommeh and picked up the only other top class British soldier who had recently gone clanless in Flisko – it seemed that the loss to Infused in golden cap was too much for Byte to handle as TCM cut solly pair Flisko and Pena to fiddle around with their roster again. Team Thermaltake were in the market for new scouts as Fisshu quit to commit to Uni and basH ‘mysteriously left’, the loss of two scouts of such ability would eventually see the end of one of the great Team Fortress 2 teams. Thankfully there was no Team Fortress 2 apocalypse as THE best European TF2 team, old Dignitas (Darn, Agron, Ryb, Rebeli, Bybben, Haza) decided to return to the game recruiting upcoming talent Larsa to replace the semi-retired Haza. ESL champions K1ck folded and reformed under the Crack Clan tag with the same line-up bar Matnun to replace Mike and Psunfragga on medic, although the first lady of Team Fortress 2 would soon step down to a backup role allowing the fellow Israeli Royze to join. To complete the pre-season madness, the Swedish/Norwegian allstar team brother returned with most of their old team as well as adding a few new faces to the brotherhood. 

No news came from ESL about a new season as they made an appeal for new Admins which left only ETF2L and Wireplay as competitive leagues for the Autumn season, the latter having a PR nightmare with a lot less signups than it should have gotten (under 100). ETF2L was stronger than ever with all 360 spots filled and plenty of teams on the waiting list so the only thing left to do was host a pre-season tournament to give us all an idea of who was the team to beat. Excello and Zowie teamed up to bring us the Pre-season showdown tournament – exactly what we needed. The tournament had two brackets; open and invite with the prize for the open bracket a chance to play with the big boys in invite. Crack Clan would win the open bracket and move on to the invitational tournament. The top 4 of previous months gone by – Epsilon, Infused, Team Dignitas and TCM – would prove too much for the upcoming Prem teams that were Yoyotech, Relic, CKRAS and Crack Clan in the first round. Epsilon beat Infused in the semi-finals, no i43 revenge for the Brits
whilst Team Dignitas were too much for the new/old TCM lineup, Haunter returning to the team. A few days later Epsilon came into the final hot favourite despite missing their superstar soldier GeaR – santa mercing – and won over three maps, even though they lost Granary 4-3, they took Badlands 3-1 and won the decider map 6-1 on Gullywash taking the pre-season favourite accolade.

Other notable events:
- We all thought ‘TF2 is dead’ rants were…well dead but with the news of Stage LAN (aka ‘Catman LAN’) not going ahead with Team Fortress 2, the old hue and cry returned. Catman for those who do not remember him was a chap who put a lot of time and money into the scene and tried to give Team Fortress 2 a huge LAN with prize money up to $20k. Sadly it never happened, whatever the reason the result was another blow the TF2’s “e-sport” aspiration.
- In actual LAN news though, ESEA season 9 concluded in its usual fashion – with a LAN! Classic Mixup, The Experiment, Area 51 and Prophets ft Dashner (Dashner = Peter Mansbridge, Prophets = former eMg) fought it out for the ESEA invite trophy (now engraved with a hoof mark) and some cash monies. Area51 were the underdogs and showed it by being eliminated first but the game of the tournament came between Community Fortress sponsored The Experiment and Classic Mixup in the lower bracket final; the latter pulling out a surprising 3 map victory to set up a Grand final matchup against Prophets ft Mansbridge. The final itself was a bit to one-sided with the Prophets storming through Snakewater and Granary 5-2 on both maps – clockwork having a particularly great LAN, taking MVP.
- TF2 is a game carried through by certain individuals willing to put a ton of effort in and a bearded ferret-loving American named Salamancer started up his own casting channel on Youtube called ‘SalTV’, making Sal one of the most popular figures in TF2.
- TF2 coverage had a good month, not only was Salamancer casting like a man possessed but Admirable was writing on Cadred like a man possessed. He made a pledge to cover Team Fortress 2 once a day for as long as he lives…if he were to break this pledge could it be the end of Cadred coverage for Team Fortress 2?

**October**

ETF2L season 10 and the Team Dignitas Alienware cup #14, it was a busy month for European Team Fortress 2. In North America teams were gearing up for the new ESEA season with the usual pre-season roster rush. Crack
Clan started ETF2L positively beating Relic, equilibrium, Team Dignitas and taking 1 map off Infused and Epsilon. Old boys Relic had a decent month too, taking down Dignitas and equilibrium as well, joining Crack Clan in the play-off places with the contenders Epsilon and Infused also strutting their way into the top 4. Dignitas had a disastrous time this month losing all their ETF2L matches although they managed to salvage some internet pride by making it to the final of their own sponsored Alienware cup, beating off new German reformed side Adrenaline Rush – Brink went too huge for Marco – who themselves knocked out CKRAS in a game so methodically slow-paced you would think you were trying to teach AR’s Shifty the definition of “irony”. Dutchman Qun found a new home with Adrenaline Rush, really helping me to brush up my German skills on QunTV. Epsilon won the Alienware cup, knocking out Infused in the semi-final and defeating the struggling Dignitas in the final, winning Slick more money to buy his handsome cream.

After months of typing essays worth of text discussing the highlander league – only for RaCio to come up with better ideas – we finally saw the ETF2L Highlander league come into creation launching its inaugural season. Of course the league would not start until next month but still it was a landmark day for our scene as hundreds of new players joined competitive Team Fortress 2 for the first time. Meanwhile, in North America, things were hotting up for the start of the next ESEA season. Former eMg and ESEA Season 9 champions ‘Prophets featuring Dashner’ were picked up by Qantic Gaming. The best team forming to challenge them for the title of ‘best at using overpowered sticks in their gameplay award – aka ESEA Season 10 champions – were Classic Mixup who shuffled Harbleu back to Medic with TLR on pocket soldier to revive the successful x6 pocket combination of 2 seasons prior. Platinum switched the Demoman having had a fairly good LAN and Nations Cup campaign playing the class along with an overpowered Scout combo of death matching, movement and intelligence in Enigma plus Moose. In the words of US-TF2 legend Pyyyour, ‘this is the team to watch this season’. The top 2 was unquestionably these two teams but the other LAN spots appeared to belong to The Experiment who were suffering ‘post TLR syndrome’ (a condition only curable by an intake of Sugar cubes) and Area-51 who switched one of the game’s most deadly snipers, Justin to pocket Soldier. Anything could happen.

Other notable events:
- Ashkan was back and he bought more Team Fortress 2 and internet “celebrities” with him – and some female gamers to escort him to his Swedish palace – to participate in the Valve Highlander mix up match. Robin Walker stepped up once again to represent his favourite gaming love child along with a select
A group of top level 6v6 players, community contributors and some random public players given the opportunity to shine. Inevitably if you have Yz50 on one team and an inebriated Darn on the other, it would get a bit one-sided – typical Robin Walker team stacking – however it was entertaining.

Meanwhile Team Fortress 2 celebrated its 4th birthday on October 10th, finally becoming old enough to go to Kindergarten and wear the big boy pants. Community spirit was high on the agenda this month with Razer and Epsilon hosting a 24 hour charity competition which made insomniacs of many Team Fortress 2 players all in the name of a good cause – I think the good cause being greed to win items in Team Fortress 2 but it sounds better if we made it out that they cared more about the charity.

Popular competitive map cp_gullywash finally found itself an official Valve map with the release of its newest and most likely final version Gullywash_finall. Although many community maps, even those played in 6v6 across the continents have become official, map-maker Arnold deserved the accolade having contributed 2 stock competitive maps to the scene. Enjoy the stamp money buddy.

The early season roster shuffle was still commencing on both sides of the Atlantic. First off Team Dignitas saw two of their players Punpu and Mafu officially leave the team, feigning a lack of interest in the game! Although we all know the real reason is they wanted Hymzi back on Demoman like the old Power Gaming days but the lack of Premiership level scouting talent meant Longas would eventually be drafted in and see Dignitas use all-English comms. Old-Dignitas superstar Haza also joined the team but it would still be a tough month for the Finns/Spaniard. In other news Infused medic Flushy left to focus on University meaning a fight off between the smooth-talking Dunc and just plain-talking-all-the-time Byte as medics, eventually won by Dunc.

**November**

By far the busiest month of the year in terms of official games with the ET-F2L league running 6v6 AND Highlander, with Excello and Esportsheaven holding a cup either end of the month. There is no doubt Team Fortress 2 has had a lot of healthy competition online this Autumn but the mega big LAN the hardcore players were crying out for was not coming as i44 took place with its expected small turnout, although talk of Winter Assembly would soon initiate. Nonetheless Infused took home the guaranteed prize money. The eSports Heaven Sapphire challenge took place over 2 days with the brackets throwing up some interesting semi-finals, the ‘big 2’ in Europe Infused.Tt plus Epsilon faced up once again but with the roster shuffling on Infused Epsilon took a
reasonably easy 2 map win. The other semi-final saw veterans Relic face upcoming Yoyotech. To the final then and with £300 up for grabs Relic and Epsilon met on good old fashioned Badlands which was a fast paced encounter with little separating the sides and lots of individual brilliance shining on both sides – it reminded me of the Old Dignitas in the i40 final against Epsilon. Nowadays though, new-Epsilon are the team to beat and proved themselves once again with a clutch Spy cap by stefan deciding the map. Granary was more of the same with scores tied at 2-2 until Epsilon turned it up a GeaR’.

So some great Team Fortress 2 action to accompany a busy month of coverage on VanillaTV with ETF2L in full flow, Epsilon beating Relic again 6-0 along with Portuguese strugglers Equilibrium. Infused did take down the ESH Sapphire winners taking GravelPit 2-1 and Granary 4-3 with golden cap decider. Crack Clan’s earlier performances in October had more or less guaranteed them a playoff spot so their solitary ETF2L game versus CKRAS ending 3-3 didn’t affect the points but it seemed Crack Clan had lost some of their flair of late, especially after a disappointing loss to Relic. The ancients of Team Fortress 2 themselves booked the 4th play-off spot by beating CKRAS 5-1 on Granary, the second map golden cap win on cp_obscure being the icing on the cake. Reaching two cup finals though for Relic was the cherry upon the icing on the cake, with a close loss in the ESH cup out of their minds they got through Yoyotech (this is too easy come on) and Crack Clan whilst they once again faced their old MGO Team Dignitas for cash money but much more importantly – Finnish/Swedish bragging rights. Diggy were on a roll though, knocking Epsilon (who beat the ‘Open’ cup winners Exotic Island) off their perch in an epic semi-final after taking down CKRAS over two maps and looked in the mood early on Gravelpit, winning both rounds as Relic’s lack of practise was looking exposed as they failed a lot of B pushes. With both teams having between them most of the players from the olden day Team Dignitas (Relic of today) vs Power Gaming (Team Dignitas of today) it had that feel for nostalgia, but the days of Relic’s dominance were long gone as once again bad pushing let them down in the 2nd map which they lost 3-0 on Badlands. So Diggy might have missed out on the playoffs but their new scout combination of Longas and Cookye (who did not play for the team in the Power Gaming days) was starting to mold into shape.

Other notable events:
- With the 6v6 regular season more or less wrapped up ETF2L announced its play-off structure to decide promotions, relegations and the overall winner of Premiership for Season 10! 4th placed Relic would play 3rd place side Epsilon eSports with the winner going on to face 2nd placed Crack Clan for a spot in the Grand Final against Infused who had booked their place in the final by
winning the league.
- A month or so after the last mixup match, the third Mixup match took place ‘behind closed doors’ so to speak with post production VOD released afterwards. With teams of community contributors, Valve staff, top level players and girl gamers went head to head in a relaxed match aimed to be more promotional opposed to competitive.
- Meanwhile across the pond, the MGE cup had reached its conclusion with the two strongest teams in the North American scene, Classic Mixup and Quantic Gaming going up against eachother to win some prize money. Quantic picked Snakewater for the first map and despite being 3-1 up at half-time they lost 4 rounds in a row to lose the first map 5-3 (remember yanks like to play first to 5 caps opposed to win difference of 5 caps). The second map was one of Mixups strongest in Viaduct_pro where they managed to complete the job, taking it 4-2 and snatching the prize money out of cup founder and Quantic medic CB’s pocket.

December

So we’ve made it to the last month of the year and things are certainly reaching their climax as we begin to say goodbye to 2011. The first order of business would be the ETF2L 6v6 playoffs with 4th placed Relic facing off against 3rd placed Epsilon in a good old fashioned top level TF2 clash. Epsilon may have finished behind Crack Clan and Infused but they were still seen as the favourites to win ETF2L but who knows what can happen when Relic are in the mood. However the most successful Team Fortress 2 team ever were nowhere near their best as they got humbled by Epsilon 6-1 on the first map Badlands and although the second map Granary was a lot tighter (Granary being legendary for being Relic’s home map) but with Darn throwing ‘hackusations’ out, Epsilon squeeze through winning 4-3. Perhaps this defeat might have been the last competitive match we see Relic playing together, finally the end of the kings of Team Fortress 2? It was not just the premiership winner being decided this month; Broder and Yoyotech would fight it out in the ‘winner gets promoted to Prem, loser gets promoted to Prem a bit later’ play-off match which went in favour of Broder who got promoted to Prem - along with Yoyotech, who also got promoted to the premier division at the expense of equilibrium. Both teams would change their line-ups as they prepared for the new season – broder seeing their scout Fanva step down and replaced by ex-Thermtake/Fakkelbrigade Soldier Dr Leon. Yoyotech meanwhile dropped Origo in place of Droso and kicked Cyber for Tt veteran Kaidus. Elsewhere Blight Gaming picked up the new German team Made in Germany aka Adrenaline Rush although Marco leaving the scene once more along with basH
leaving for Crack Clan later one would lead to the team’s quick demise, so no
chance for Blackfoger to break any LAN funding promises.

In the other TF2 competitive format, SNSD would run away with the inaugural ETF2L Highlander season, smashing all that lay before them thanks to their immense knowledge of the format, individual skill and TviQ’s extraordinary sniper aim. UGC European champions Turbopoop eSports took 2nd place, May Contain Nuts got the bronze once again and Colony scraped and escaped relegation coming in 4th place leaving the ‘Highlander specialists’ as the real winners of Season 1. Back to 6v6 and ETF2L’s playoffs were in a bit of doubt before it got announced that the 2nd versus 3rd playoff match between Epsilon and Crack Clan would go ahead 2 days before the Grand Final. In the same week community idol Byte would ‘forgive’ ex-TF2TV caster ThePledge as a kiss and make up session turned into a public event for all to ridicule. Good news for us viewers was ThePledge would be straight back casting Crack Clan and Epsilon battle it out for the spot in the final yet the match itself would be one-sided due to Crack Clan having lost EstaniS to real life and definitely losing their earlier jive, losing 4-1 and 6-1 on Granlands.

So the Grand Final would be Epsilon versus Infused for about the fourth event in 4 months and Infused losing all the finals, only beat Epsilon once during ETF2L’s regular season. It would turn out to be a memorable match in more ways than one as the first map, Badlands would see Epsilon take a 3-0 lead and be pushing Infused’s last point with 10 minutes on the clock. However an unlikely push back to Epsilon’s last commenced over the next few minutes and despite Infused looking to have screwed it up – Quad came in and got a cheap backcap giving Infused some hope and momentum which they carried through to tie up the map with 2 more cheap caps by their scouts. With Epsilon losing caps without putting much a proper defence, Infused took the adrenaline into the golden cap round and against all odds turned the map around, taking it 4-3. Most teams would capitulate after being 3-0 up and pushing the last point with 10 minutes left but Epsilon haven’t won 5 out of the last 6 meetings with Infused by licking their wounds and put the game out of their mind and duly demolished Infused 5-0 on Snakewater. Infused were simply outplayed on the map but they still kept the belief that they could pull out the win on their home map Gullywash which would be the decider for the ETF2L season. After one round restart, the map officially got underway and Infused took 2 rounds within 10 minutes to take control but a hard fought 3rd round went in favour of Epsilon who were battling hard to stay in the game – the tension was as soaring through the match with 15 minutes left, Infused pushing last. Push after push for Infused seemed to fail and the clock slowly ticked down to 12 minutes left, 10 minutes left, Epsilon get back to middle but Infused push them back quickly to last, 8 minutes left, 5 minutes left and Infused held the 1 cap advantage still pushing Epsilon’s last point. Then
it all happened so fast: Wltrs managed to get through the lines of Infused unopposed and position himself for a backcap as Infused pushed into last, committing everything to getting that 3-1 scoreline – it backfired resulting in a huge swoop in momentum as Epsilon took the crucial heartbreaker round. 3 minutes left and Epsilon charged into middle and killed 4 Infused players to put them onto their last point, although Infused’s medic Dunc survived it seemed like it would be a nervous 2 minutes of ‘parking the bus’ for the i44 winners but instead they did the weirdest attempt at a push out 6v5 which is hardly worth it with 2 minutes on the clock and got backcapped by Wltrs, securing the cap that would ultimately be the decider. The drama did not end there and Infused went all out on the next middle and forced Epsilon to their last point with 30 seconds left to make a push, they came in uber v uber but in the panic both GeaR and stefan spawned as heavy weapons guys which is against the classlimit rules (you are only allowed 1 heavy active) prompting Infused to initially dispute the incident as time ran out and Epsilon were declared winners. Thankfully after a lot of discussion and the mandatory flourish of community members giving their monies worth to the debate, Infused accepted that stefan did not influence the outcome and Epsilon won their 3rd ETF2L title!

Other notable events:
- Winter Assembly 2012 was in doubt as M0re tried to bring attention to Team Fortress 2 which was coming behind other games in terms of interest from the event organisers. However with CKRAS, Epsilon, Infused, Team Dignitas and Relic – 5 of Europe’s finest planning on attending, surely this would be one of Team Fortress 2’s most competitive LAN’s ever? Why should we not get a tournament for WASM, it is in the bag right?
- 2 sources for any competitive Team Fortress 2 fan closed down this month: the first being “My Gaming Edge” when its creator CB decided to shut the project down after failing to get suitable content on a regular basis. MGE had been a subscription based website for the community which aimed to provide high quality insight videos from top Team Fortress 2 players. Its influence on the community, especially the high standards of the videos and casts they have done will not be forgotten. Also shutting down its Team Fortress 2 news coverage was the gaming website Cadred.org which many had seen as the game’s main chance to show its appeal to wider eSports audiences, a major loss for the community? I shall let you decide.

So that is it, ladies and gentlemen, that was 2011 for Team Fortress 2. We had highs and lows, LAN successes and disappointments, drama and boring days, we had controversies and unity within the community – we had everything
from coke spills to LAN thrills and lots and lots of Team Fortress 2 kills. Finally we had many new faces appear on the scene and some older ones fade away but all in all we had a GREAT year for competitive TF2. I look forward to doing it all over again next year with a huge LAN event in Amsterdam in planning and plans for some US teams to come over the pond for the insomnia 46 LAN in August.

Henry ‘Hildreth’ Harris is an ETF2L admin has been playing Team Fortress 2 competitively since Summer of 2009. He is also currently a contributor to VanillaTV and is best known for his Highlander coverage for the now defunct TF2TV. He can be contacted at hildreth1101@gmail.com.
"It’s a man’s world." - A statement which has redefined the world for any female. But, long went those days when women were considered nothing more than just another household item. Talking about India, a country with lot of traditions, cultures and customs, the country has seen the changes coming time to time. And to begin with – It’s no more a ‘man’s world.’ I go around places and time has surely changed a lot from those which my mom used to recite me describing the miserable life of an Indian lady. Be it any ground reality or mounting a step on moon, females are nowhere less when it comes to comparing them with males and with all fields open for us, women are surely attaining success in every road they take.

One such field I also chose, GAMING. Being a Science Non medical student in school, all my friends went up to pursue either engineering or architecture or such fields which any parent would proudly say in a community gathering and the fields which need no explanation. But, when people ask my parents what is your daughter doing? And, they would ‘Game Programming and Designing’. But it’s like a very mysterious term for them. Being a part of one such course in my college, I was introduced to E-sports and like my parents have always been, they supported me with this too.

Step 1: Pick up a game which you want to play. Well, Counter Strike is what I chose. I always believed that there’s nothing that a women cannot do, no one can stop her, and no one can demoralize her. So finally I picked up eSports and starting playing. At first, I was really bad at it but then with time I got used to it and eventually very good at the game. But one thing which I was unaware of in this field and that was the 500:1 male: female gamer ratio. Lately, I realized that apparently I’m one of those few girl gamers in India who are actually known to a group of people.

Right from the beginning, there were a lot of challenges and a lot of hurdles. Being a game that Counter Strike is, a team was required and luckily I had some friends who started this game along with me and we formed up a team known as a clan. A rookie would obviously take that to be the more than enough for a good start. But, the happy smiles didn’t last long.
My team started off with a very small college tournament where we stood third and we decided to furnish our skills and team work and then we would compete in other colleges and universities. Finally, I came into the big world. A world which now I think I might have stayed away from at that time. Started the game on non steam and I was amazed to see countless number of gamers spread all over the servers. It surely wasn’t a head start. In my country, a girl gamer is not taken as a gamer that can be because of many reasons; probably because Counter Strike is an action game, guys can’t abuse the same way in front of girls the way they do in front of other guys and of course the Eye-Candy part. I started off with my own self, people knew it was a girl gamer behind that gaming nick but as more people got aware of that fact, I was filled up with more stuff.

Every server I used to go to with my gaming nick, people used to ask me for my facebook id, the Gmail account, my email add, my phone number and more than anything it was very annoying to bear all that all the time when you’re just there to play a simple game.

If this wasn’t all, as soon as I starting gaming on Lan, everyone starting knowing me and the first thing they used to do after getting back to their home was to look around for me on Facebook and add me. It was too difficult at the first place to make everyone understand that gaming is all I’m here for. Talking about other college tournaments which I started visiting with my team, I was considered as if I’m there for a fashion extravaganza and I lost my way. I’ve experienced people coming and telling to our clan leader “Hey! That girl is in your team? She knows how to play?” and lately the different kind of reactions from them after the game. No wonder they used to come and shake hands with me if we used to win but what made the situations worse was those same set of guys used to laugh at me and my game when I used to make mistakes or when we used to lose the game. I, in-game as a player to other teams was like an easy bot and that’s where they were mistaken. When I used to be the only one left in any particular round, they use to come running towards me taking this for thought that I don’t even know that we use left click to fire a bullet. But nevertheless, I used to treat them well enough – A headshot!

It’s been almost three years now and I still can’t see the female gaming community of India going up. When I started, we were precisely 4 girls and we are still less than 10. No matter even if we appear in all the big tournaments such as BYOC or WCG, we still are considered good for nothing when we are in-game. There has been just one thing that has changed with time and that’s the acceptance of me as an individual in the gaming industry. Now, when I play
on my steam client, people know that behind that gaming nick, there’s a girl and they accept that. I guess people have realized to accept the girls the same way in this gaming community just like they accept any other guy because when we want to prove them something, we are no less.

**Anamika Misra** - Professional counter strike player and Game Programmer from Delhi, India. Started working for Game Orbit to promote female gaming in India. Only female Cs player who’s been playing with the guys from past four years and has been victorious ample number of times in local tournaments. She can be contacted at ana.misra@yahoo.com

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Dota 2 and Its Trouble in South East Asia

By Terrence Wong

In October of 2009, IceFrog made it known to the public that he was working with Valve in developing a new game. Even without revealing what the new title was, the community instantly jumped at the possibility of it being Dota 2. Come October 2010, four pieces of concept art for the game were released exclusively on GameInformer. Even with the release of the concept art, there was close to no info on the game, but fans from all around the world still managed to crash the servers on all major DotA news websites. Finally in July of 2011, the game was finally shown to the world, and DotA fans from all around the globe rejoiced at the “saviour” of the competitive DotA scene.

But is it really the saviour that we are all hoping for? Don’t get me wrong, the game has a huge fan base, but judging on what is currently known about the game, Dota 2 could fail to reach the heights that competitive WarCraft 3 (WC3) DotA has achieved. Dota 2 is already seeing a rampant pickup by teams from across Europe and America, but over in Asia, it is a different story. To make things easier, only South East Asia will only be discussed here. The Chinese DotA community would require another article to talk about, and as an avid DotA fan from Malaysia, I would really like to see the game replace WC3 DotA in the SEA eSports scene.

DotA fans are a passionate bunch, even more so in the SEA region. The demand for Dota 2 beta keys there greatly outnumber the supply. There are even cases of keys going on sale for $100 a piece. The beta right now is seemingly a bed of roses to everyone, but according to its current development, it may very well fail to be the saviour we have all been hoping for.

First of all, a Local Area Network mode is nowhere to be seen. Rumours, as well as a few sources, have stated that such a feature will probably not be implemented in Dota 2. The rationale behind the decision is probably the same as the reason why StarCraft 2 lacks LAN support as well: to protect the developers. No matter how loud someone may shout about it, having no LAN support will greatly handicap the competition.

Let us take a look at StarCraft 2, one of eSports “saviours” which has yet to
make a significant impact in SEA as well. The game is popular in Europe and America, seeing an exponential growth as an eSports title. But in SEA, the scene is basically dead. There are only a handful of players that can compete at a high level; even then, they are considered to be only B-Class players from Korea at best. Why is this so? That is because Europe and America both have good Internet infrastructure and connections. Anyone that has spent a significant amount of time in the SEA region will tell you that the Internet here is just downright bad. There is just no better way of describing it.

The gaming culture in the region relies heavily on LAN centres or PC Bang culture. Throngs of young people will converge on LAN centres after school to play their favourite games. Internet connections in most of the LAN cafés are good, but they are usually heavily protected by firewalls or routed through numerous proxy servers. This causes a delay to whatever games that rely on good Internet connections. Sure, we can play from home, but the social atmosphere is very important to us.

We want to be able to hear each other scream when we win a match or when someone is killed. Playing at home is just not the same. Not to mention in SEA, we want to hear the trash talk from our opponents. Some may say it is unmannered and unprofessional, but that is the essence of gaming in these regions. I am currently doing my studies in Australia and one thing I always look forward to (besides the food) when I return to Malaysia is playing DotA with my friends in a LAN centre. Some of my fondest memories are of the times when my friends and I would skip school activities to visit a LAN centre. The lack of LAN support is great at protecting the developers primary interests, but if Valve wants Dota 2 to prosper in eSport, it is a feature they should really considering adding.

eSports is all about the events. Adrenaline surges into every fans’ mind when an epic fight takes place; emotions run through the players when they win or lose. Without the LAN feature in Dota 2, we may not be able to see these feelings manifest so often in SEA in the future. This may have been said before, but it’s worth mentioning again. No matter how well developers build their server infrastructure, they are bound to run into issues. Be it server overload or a faulty wire, something will go wrong someday.

Take for example, the Malaysian Dota 2 Invitational that concluded in Mid-December 2011. During game two of the Grand Finals, massive server issues occurred, causing played on both teams to experience a lot of lags and delay. While the game was played to the end, fan boys from both sides debated whether or not the result was fair, because of the server issues. That was just
what happens with some server problems; what happens when Valve’s servers breakdown completely? A whole event would have to be cancelled and it would be very detrimental to the eSports scene in the region.

Let us not forget about the failsafes that developers might implement on their servers. Sendi Mutiara Multimedia (SMM), the official distributor of Blizzard titles in Malaysia, once held a SC2 tournament. The turnout for the event was great, but unfortunately, server problems quickly occurred. When the event started, everyone tried to log onto Battle.net, but among the 30-40 participants in the competition, only 10 were able to log on. This caused massive scheduling problems, and when it comes to an eSports event, every minute if not second counts.

It became known later on that Blizzard built a failsafe into their SC2 servers. which allows only a certain amount of successful logins if there are too many simultaneous login attempts over one single IP address. This was done so as to protect their servers against Distributed Denial of Service attacks. Of course, all of the computers in the LAN centre where the tournament was held shared the same IP address.

Every LAN centre in Malaysia would encounter the same problem. Again, this problem is more or less same in each nation in the SEA region. Fewer Dota 2 events will be held if Valve were to implement a similar login cap, and due to this we may as well say goodbye to the game as an eSports title in SEA. Still not convinced? Take a look at LoL and HoN: SEA is one of the strongest contenders when it comes to producing DotA teams that can compete at a high level. HoN and LoL failed to reach the popularity of WC3 DotA in the region solely due to the lack of a LAN mode.

Honestly speaking, gamers from Asia are cheapskates. If any game requires a payment to play, the majority of gamers won’t bother playing it. Ironically, they would pay to be able to play in LAN cafés, but not pay to own the game. That is the sad reality of how gaming works in the region. Piracy is a big reason for why there is such a wealth of talent in the SEA DotA community. The game is readily available to anyone who looks for it, and anyone can develop into a good player with enough determination, dedication and training.

To illustrate the point, let us take a look at a scenario that an average Malaysian gamer would face with when considering to buy Dota 2 or not. Taking $40 USD as the possible retail price for Dota 2, we convert that to Ringgit Malaysia (RM), which would be around RM120. With the usual demographic of gamers being average teenagers, who would get around RM200 a month
as allowance, Dota 2 would already cost 60% of one’s allowance. Having to pay for Dota 2 would just cost too much for the average teenager. While this scenario is limited to Malaysia, I can guarantee that all gamers in SEA will face the same dilemma. Putting a price on it (no matter how cheap it is) will make it a game only for the “elitist”. An “elitist” game will, in the long run, damage the competitive scene.

That is the direct cost associated with the game; let us take a look at the indirect cost of it. Dota 2 is a great game, but right now it is just too resource heavy for the average player. IceFrog may have said that Dota 2 will be tailored to the lowest possible system configurations, but how low can they get? There is always a cut off point, and with that comes the indirect costs of the game. Gamers from around the region would have to upgrade their computers just to run the game at a respectable frame rate, and that could mean having to invest thousands of RM more. Let’s be realistic here, the majority of the gamers in the region have bad computers. In preparation for “The International” (a promotional tournament for Dota 2 during GamesCom 2011), Valve had to send computers to some of the participating teams just so they could practice. These teams aren’t isolated to just the SEA region. Even players in Europe/America are having issues running it on their old machines. This also applies to LAN centres in SEA: high system requirements for the game would mean that there would be less centres that could run it, which in turn would mean fewer tournaments behind hosted.

WC3 DotA may lack a lot of the features that would make it an even greater gaming experience, but the complexity of the game is something that all DotA fans have come to love. Features such as reconnecting to an ongoing game, a better observer overview and interface, and custom hotkey remapping, make for a better gaming experience. Truth be told, all of these features does not matter much when it comes to gaming in SEA. After all, why would we switch from WC3 DotA to Dota 2 when the former still works, is easily accessible, and - as IceFrog has stated before - will still be developed in the future?

Terrence “MrBlue” Wong is perhaps the most prominent news writer currently active within the DotA scene. He worked with GosuGamers for over two years, during which time he became the head editor of their DotA news section, and his efforts undoubtedly played a major part in making the website the most popular English-language news source for competitive news about the game. Having also attended many DotA LAN events to personally provide live news coverage, his experiences have afforded him one of the most unique and in-depth perspectives within the game’s community. Now working with joinDOTA, Terrence is highly knowledgeable, passionate, and dedicated to his work; all of which are qualities which
The advent of eSports was never an epiphany but progress and that’s what this lucrative industry continues to demonstrate with each event. More avenues have opened up and partnerships such as the one involving CBS interactive, TwitchTV, MLG and NASL have seen the light of the day. There’s South Korea at it and being the shining star that it is in the world of eSports, it has set the example for the rest of the world to follow. It continues to lead with all its passion backed by a strong cultural presence and I don’t see that changing anytime soon. The Koreans have understood that longevity cannot be achieved by living in a cocoon and now have players representing European and American organizations. Within Asia-Pacific, there have been so many changes that it’s hard to keep up at times with the amount of activity going on. However, while everyone’s moving forward, despite having a huge number of gamers India still struggles to put its foot down on the international podium. The Indian gamers have been trying hard to get their piece of the cake but there have been simply too many slips between the cup and the lips. One might think that a country which has the richest cricket board in the world and over 1 billion fans to back it up should definitely be open to the concept of eSports and have the necessary resources in place. The truth is – cultural penetration of eSports is just not possible in this part of the world. It has to operate as a separate entity and rely solely on the people who understand it as a concept. There are several cracks in the foundation. Until and unless they’re mended, it’s just not possible to move on.

**Tournaments**

When you try to do too much, there’s a good chance that you’ll end up doing nothing at all. The key is to have a focused small-scale tournament that doesn’t branch out into something unmanageable, at least not in its infancy. If it is more focused, it becomes much more doable. You could have the biggest budget in your kitty and still fail to organize a good event and the recent IGC fiasco was a testament to this. A more centralized version with Indian teams/players could’ve been the key to IGC’s success with focus on doing it right instead of doing it big. Also, the inability to pay out the teams meant the big
budget declarations and the promises were a faux pas. This was the last thing an already struggling scene needed. The recently concluded Eizo Open was perhaps a perfect example of how a tournament is organized and run. However, many such examples have existed already, and a leaf could’ve been taken from their book of experiences.

Reaching Out

Let’s face it – you don’t get to see an Indian shoutcaster or even a live stream. It’s been that one bottleneck that has kept us from reaching out to the world and showing them the small scale albeit ripe-with-rivalry competitions that take place here. The lack of awareness and effort into making things happen have held us back for way too long. It’s more like a self-inflicted injury and not being able to make-do with what is available rather than chasing what’s not. As a small example, converting demos to videos with/without commentary and uploading them to YouTube is not such a huge task and yet, it still remains an untapped avenue. The entire country plays counter-strike and honestly, very few people outside the sub-continent actually know that. Better internet connections are available but in this day and age, the big players and fiber optic networks are still confined to certain cities or areas of interest to the providers. Things are changing as more and more petitions signed by hundreds of gamers reach these providers on a daily basis but the wheels are turning way too slow when we’re already playing catch-up with the rest of the world. Visibility is the key element here and that’s where things have been wishy-washy.

Social Stigmas

It’s a general notion that you don’t find gamers in this part of the world. A lot of publishers just scratch the surface and miss the strong undercurrent. In addition to the PC and Console tournaments in metropolitan cities which have LAN cafes and decent internet connections, there’s a huge B-crowd in smaller cities which never had to bring back the 90’s. They still inhabit those low-budget yet crowded arcades where you would insert a coin and play Cadillacs and Dinosaurs for hours with your friends. These small joints have managed to survive through these years and continue to provide the gamers with that old school experience which most of us seem to have forgotten. Not to mention the horde of Xbox 360, PS3, Wii and PS2 owners who’ve been swarming LAN parties in recent years.
This region has had rampant piracy and it’s an open secret. However, what
no one talks about is the pricing of the games, consoles and other hardware in
these regions. Not that a Rs. 22,000 Kinect kit doesn’t sell, it’s the games that
are ridiculously priced. A number of people here prefer to buy the original
games because campaign play never cut it for the vast majority. Thanks to the
better internet connections, you will find a lot of active Indian gamers online
who play everything from TrackMania to Modern Warfare 3. The good old
piracy story is losing its glimmer as it no longer matches the facts and cur-
rently is more along the lines of publishers just being reluctant to open their
eyes. If one were to totally ignore the PC and Console market here, the mobile
market could lock horns with both all by itself. The Indian youth is tech savvy
and splurges a lot on latest cellphones and handhelds. Their favorite pastime?
Games of course! Manufacturers like HTC are doing well here because they
understood how crucial pricing can be in this region. Also, they spent a good
amount of time understanding the pulse of the youth here.

However, when it comes to eSports, the faith runs thin in anything Indian and
it is a convenient assumption that the sub-continent is just not the right place.
While the inexperience in being a host to such events is its biggest downside,
the possibilities are endless.

So should we all just sit back and pray for a miracle? No! We have 2 choices – Organized Chaos and Order. We have to pick the latter and run with it. It
has to be consistent and even if it starts small, it can be that stepping stone to
the next game. India as a market has a huge potential for games of all kinds
but their cultural impact is minimalistic. This could actually be a blessing in
disguise because organizers then don’t have to please a different demographic
with each event.

"We are what we repeatedly do.” - Aristotle

IGC was not the end of the road for the Indian gaming community. In fact, it
made us even more determined to show the world we’re way better than that.
It has to start from the drawing board until a nearly perfect event is delivered
within the country. Perhaps a central entity is needed that divides these events
into weekly/monthly cups. Once a single region is conquered, feasibility stu-
dy can be conducted for the other regions. Online tournaments can aim for
perfection, no matter how small they are. At this moment, any start would be
a good start and any kind of help would matter. We are a nation full of re-
sources and talent. It is up to us to either let it go wasted or use it to make our
presence felt on the international stage.

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dustry for the last 6 years in the Quality Assurance field. He’s also an eSports journalist who has written several articles for Duskbin (Asian eSports organization) and ProGamingTours (eSports website). Apart from writing hardware and game reviews for Indian tech websites and magazines, he also maintains his own blog www.g4menation.com and can be reached at aparmar@g4menation.com or deepaman.p@gmail.com
Spain is Waking Up!

By Ángel Quintana

Until relatively recently, Spain has always followed its own path in the world of eSports. It could even be said that the country has been somewhat isolated from the general progress being achieved in the field of video game competition in other parts of Europe and the rest of the world.

This self-imposed solitude has been caused by a number of social barriers, of which three merit particular attention: firstly, language; secondly, apprehension; and thirdly, inexperience.

This will come as no surprise to anyone but people speak Spanish in Spain. English has already become a far more integrated part of society in other parts of Europe whereas Spain required a longer period of adaptation before starting to implement English as a standard second language.

This means that any international industry in the field of entertainment must adapt to the situation in, for example, the cinema industry (people only watch films that are dubbed into Spanish).

Apprehension arose from a cultural framework in which, until very recently, the Spanish industry was mostly managed by people of a certain age group who, for the most part, had little knowledge of the video game industry or new technologies. Even the Internet has taken longer to reach the same level of popularity as in other European countries.

This, together with the lack of entrepreneurial spirit that exists in the majority of Spanish regions, means that the Spanish industry is slow to react and tends to stick with tried and tested business models of a less risky nature in which eSports are unable to establish themselves with any ease.

Consequently, many of the initiatives that took a gamble on eSports a few years ago in Spain have stumbled over an obvious lack of experience that has, once again, slowed down the growth of our sport.

This inexperience has been reflected in the sometimes hopeless instability of the teams, the enthusiastic but occasionally uncontrolled organisation of com-
petitions and the growing lack of confidence among sponsors in the eSports industry, which has been giving out the erroneous image of being managed by young, futureless nerds with nothing better to do.

Up until this point, I have only spoken about the shortcomings in my country with regard to the popularisation of eSports. However, it is not all bad news for Spain – far from it.

We are proud to have shown the world such success stories as those provided by GameGune at the Euskal Encounter, as well as the highly popular Campus Party or the constant and important role played by the Spanish branch of the ESL.

Spain does indeed have its strengths and one of those is its passion. There are very few countries on the planet where the world of sports competition is followed with such emotion. This has been reflected in a growing eSports fan base that now seems to be truly gathering speed and snowballing. But have the Spanish competitions finally managed to arouse the level of passion that characterises the people of Spain?

The answer to this question is not so straightforward. For years, the professional-focused approach adopted by eSports has attracted a type of audience that enjoys the entertainment provided by the best national and international players, but that does so in silence. However, two competitions in 2011 made great strides in bringing eSports to a wider audience: Dreamhack Valencia and the Liga de Videojuegos Profesional (LVP or ‘Pro Gaming League’ in English).

Dreamhack Valencia wrote Spanish history at its first large-scale nationwide event by becoming the first electronic eSports event to be broadcast live on television in its entirety (Canal+ Xtra). Furthermore, it attracted the attention of the rest of the world with its excellent Starcraft II competition in which some of the best international players took part, including DonRaeGu, Hero, IdrA and HuK.

Broadcast in three languages (English, Spanish and Swedish), this event showed the world how much potential exists in Spain for pulling off spectacular and attractive events at the same level as those we have been enjoying elsewhere for years.

Broadcasting the event in Spanish also catered to the more casual audience
while not forgetting the expert viewers, fully aware of the new type of audience that can be reached through such traditional media as the press and television.

The LVP (Liga de Videojuegos Profesional) has also followed the same course. Open to the public in early 2011, it made an equal commitment to both entertainment aspects and the quality of the competition. With continuous coverage of the competition through attractive content for all types of audiences, it has taken inspiration from the success achieved by the MLG in the United States to rapidly consolidate what is already one of the best exclusively national leagues in Europe.

Two events in particular stand out from the first seasons of the LVP; the first FinalCup in Barcelona in September 2011 and the second in Madrid in March 2012. The latter was also broadcast live on television.

These two FinalCup events made a firm choice to elegantly bring the world of eSports entertainment to a type of audience (the Spanish audience) that, despite the strong appeal, was not fully aware of the competitive possibilities offered by the games to which they dedicate such a large portion of their lives and of the potential to be unleashed when approaching their hobby from the right angle.

In short, it can now be said that the Spanish passion has finally been awoken by these new competition events. The people of Spain needed DreamHack Spain and the LVP to release their emotions and find a new hobby that finally seems to be taking off in our country. The great success of these events has brought eSports to a new type of audience that already loved video games and that can now experience the thrill of competition.

Spain is finally waking up, slowly but surely and eagerly looking forward to the new day. We are prouder than ever to be enjoying competitions in our country that can match anything they have been doing on the rest of the continent. Let’s hope that 2012 continues on down that same path.

AUTHOR
What Happened to Quake?
A Though Year for Our Most Beautiful Game

By Marc-Andre Messier

Quake is great. Quake is like at the top of the video game food chain. When it comes to competitive elements found within a game, Quake is pretty much unmatched — fast-paced gameplay, pure aim expressed through very different weapons, an armor system that’s mentally demanding to control, but above all, Quake is an infinitely deep game that allows FPS players to express their playstyles more than any other shooting title out there. Quake literally looks like a sport in an alternate reality where two human could wage war in an armed bodykit, jumping around a dungeon at blazing speeds and fire each other with the deadliest weapons around. Its association with eSports is stronger than simple numbers of game units sold. Yet, despite all those qualities, Quake still generates a very moderate interest in mainstream gamers and its latest iteration, Quake Live, holds an average-at-most importance in eSports leagues worldwide. Why is it so?

Those facts started to get confirmed at this year’s Quakecon, when Quake Live was officially stated as “not a business success” by ID Software’s John Carmack during his keynote… not necessarily something you want to hear if you wish to see the old eSport classic back on top. With such a promising project as Quake Live somewhat failing, eSports purists might really start to wonder where our ”most beautiful game” is headed. To the grave?

Of course, this isn’t breaking news for anyone who knows about Quake and eSports — Quake has always been said to die. Thankfully, through its ups and downs over the years, the Quake scene has always been able to find a sponsor or a league to keep itself alive. However, 2011 has put pressure on Quake like never before, in fact maybe even more than it can handle to recover as an eSport… The news were especially though to swallow this time around...

The main hit came on June 27th 2011, when Quake Live was announced as officially out of the of the Intel Extreme Masters circuit game roster – Counter-Strike, Starcraft 2 and League of Legends were the titles chosen. And as
we watch Quake getting the boot, there’s no sign of a thriving Quake community anywhere around the globe, at least nothing compared to the magnitude of a game like LoL, who rightfully took that vacant spot in the ESL due to its huge popularity. And then around the same time period at the beginning of the summer, the ESWC would announce that it had wrapped up its game lineup as well… without even mentioning Quake Live. To the total disbelief of Quake fans, Quake Live had just lost its two spots in the two main eSports leagues around.

With these kinds of news, comments from the people around the Quake scene have a more alarming tone this time around, if compared to the other Quake “down-periods” in recent years… Reading Michal “Carmac” Blicharz, the man in charge of the ESL and former eSports/Quake reporter, state “A game that does not produce new stars is not the healthiest esports game” when explaining his decision to remove Quake was both painful, and true. Coming from one of Quake’s most dedicated supporter, this one has to hurt. Blicharz went on to say that if it was for his personal feelings, Quake Live would still be in the IEM lineup, but that he couldn’t ignore the rise of a game like LoL and the fact that its publisher is already putting up huge prize money for tournaments. Star player Alexei “Cypher” Yanushevsky also attested of Quake’s struggles in his end of year interview with SK-Gaming: “Where are these 13-15 years old lil boys who are looking forward to being champions, to feel what we felt? Until there are some of these youngsters, Quake has no future.” It is indeed true that, for several years in a row, professional Quake tournaments like the ESWC and ESL have seen just about the exact same 16 pro-players or so, with little newcomers stepping in.

And if we’re really honest with Quake’s popularity, keeping the game in the ESWC and the ESL during the last few years pretty much came down to an insider decision. The call resided in the hands of people like Carmac to give Quake another year or not, as an actual demand for the game wasn’t getting really felt out there for some time. ESWC was acting out of tradition, respect and insider influence when it kept choosing Quake on top of more commercially successful games and so was the ESL, but it seems like our fairytale just came to an end this year. Even Quakecon didn’t seem to have their usual enthusiasm in preparing their 2011 Quake Live duel tournament… initially announcing a ridiculous 16 players bracket and no open tournament for all other Quake fans to attend. Quakecon later reinstated their decision by extending the bracket to 32 players, but still no open tournament was to be found… News aren’t too good in the big picture as well – the momentum of the fast-paced shooting genre is at an all-time low and Quake 5 is far from release. Some might start to feel like we’ve extended Quake’s life to its maximum
capacity and that it’s going to fade away for good. How did it come to this? How did we lose this beautiful scene?

Of course, Quake’s downfall wasn’t only caused by the eSports scene itself, as there are a lot of problems that lie around the game itself as a product, but as 2011 comes to an end, it seems appropriate to look at what led us to getting arguably our highest quality game for both spectators and players out of the eSports forefront. Quake’s struggles aren’t to be taken lightly — if eSports doesn’t want to forever be at the mercy of the AAA titles out there as an industry, it needs to take a close look at how it manages gems like Quake, because this kind of competitive game doesn’t come out yearly. eSports can’t really afford losing its best spectators games to the benefit of other games, because then the sport loses quality as a spectator product. The scene needs to learn to act properly if a similar game ever comes around again. After all, most eSports connoisseurs will agree with the following — Quake is the best gift we’ve been given by the video game industry to display our skills as gamers. It is probably also the game that has the most natural reach to mainstream audiences, being visually easy to follow and appreciate. How did such a perfect competitive game get so unpopular towards both casuals and purists to the point of major tournaments organizers dropping the game?

Quake and eSports in recent years: a scene poorly put together in order to popularize the game

If we refer to Carmac’s and Cypher’s comments about Quake not producing new stars anymore, it would be wise to look at Quake’s timeline and take note when the lack of new blood exactly began. Some might say Quake died that as soon as Quake 3 started getting dropped in favor of newer games, but the Quake 4 scene and the World Series of Videogames (WSVG) of 2006 actually did generate some good new talent: we witnessed Rafik “Lost-Cauze” Bryant’s inspiring story, the young Cypher and Maciej “av3k” Krzykowski made their memorable first marks in international events, and new names were commonly popping in the top 10 or so — James “TooGood” Harding and Ivo “Forever” Lindhout are two good examples of relatively new players who would give a fresh feeling to the tournament bracket every once in a while. Have the WSVG didn’t happen, it’s also to wonder if 2GD would’ve ever casted today’s matches... The investment to be made in the WSVG was worth it enough for new players to give the Quake/1v1 scene a shot back then. It did leave a legacy and produce new players, despite a very unpopular game in Quake 4. A few newbies saw some a great opportunity in that games, and went for it.

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We can’t really say the same of the scene from 2007 to 2011 though. We did witness incredible matches during recent history, but the scene barely evolved and new talent was barely non-existent during 4 years straight if we look at the recent Quake Live events of the ESWC and ESL. We did see a new star shine in Shane “Rapha” Hendrixon, but it was more of a case of a single player rising to mastery than a bunch of newcomers knocking at door of the Quake scene. All props to this incredible player, because he was able to thrive in a very weird period for the Quake scene, where there hasn’t been much else but old-schoolers attending events. And no newbies means danger for the future of our game.

The last ESWC, IEM and Dreamhack events felt like the same throwback tournament being played all over again… always involving the same 16 players or so. Although of extremely great quality for spectators, those star-packed tournaments based on invitations seem to have used up our scene to the point of getting the boot in 2011, an understandable reaction to the lack of interest of the lower tiers of the community and the mainstream audience towards Quake. If we look at the Quake calendar for the past few years, it was anything but attractive for new players willing to step in — from one-time “throwback-type” tournaments series like CPL’s 2006 Quake 3 run to invite-only tournaments new players could not attend like the ESWC Masters, the Quake calendar was uncertain and very complicated to understand, and yes, hard to invest in for any new competitor. Even a yearly event like Quakecon was hard to plan and invest in for a new player as Qcon’s tournament announcements are traditionally very late-notice. And then there were sponsor-based tournaments like the MSI Beat-It or EG Master’s Cup Series, but you wouldn’t necessarily expect to see them again the next year, and they looked more like “one last gifts” to the community rather than signs of stability. Indeed, with over 4 years of these type of tournaments, no new players rose to fame and less and less players got involved in the Quake scene coming from lower tiers.

In fact, looking at the timeline, the WSVG has probably been the last time Quake has been a “wise investment” for any new competitors willing to come in the big game and travel — a real circuit with a planned calendar and rewarding point system. Some might point out that Quake Live had the Intel Extreme Masters, who might appear as a World Tour equivalent at first glance, but under the surface, all the IEM was is a one-time qualifier for each region (the American and European Championships) culminating in a World Finals — so only 2 guaranteed events to attend all year, at most, for a newcomer. We’re far from the 5 to 8 guaranteed events of the Painkiller World Tour or of the WSVG. The ESWC also held a few successive Quake Live events at some
point, but you often had to be on the invite list, which only gives out spots to the elite and established players. Again, new players were left out in the dark. It’s no wonder the young boys are nowhere to be found now. In 2006 and the years before, new players could invest in a guaranteed series of Quake tournaments in the WSVG or CPL World Tour, but from 2007 and onwards, players needed to sit on their computer and watch the events announcements periodically, hoping and wondering. That might’ve been the breaking point for the Quake scene — new players never knew if an investment in Quake was worth it at any given moment. You just had to really love the game, play it year-round and cross your fingers… But then again, with user-friendly games like Black Ops and Halo getting the complete full-circuit treatment in a league like MLG, it doesn’t come as a surprise that today’s youngsters didn’t go towards Quake to satisfy their hunger for glory and competition.

To me personally, this is the same reason why Fatal1ty hasn’t come back since his epic 2006 WSVG Quake 4 Finals loss against Toxic — no series of tournaments year-round that are worth the investment. Mr.Wendel isn’t the kind of guy who will practice 8 hours a day without even knowing if anything major is on the line. Fatal1ty plays to win the big championships and lengthy seasons that are worth the investment — not lonely throwback events like Dreamhack, the short Quake 3 CPL run of 2006 or 2 tournaments per year like the ESL or ESWC. Fatal1ty has been waiting for a long time on the sidelines now, and one can only wonder if a proper occasion might ever show up for him to come back now. Fast-paced shooters are nowhere to be found on today’s gaming landscape and Quake’s reputation to crown the world’s best gamer isn’t really getting felt anymore, simply because the public isn’t into Quake. Quake seems to have gotten replaced by a balanced mix of different games now sharing the eSport throne. Today’s teenagers are looking at other kinds of games and other types of gaming stars like in Starcraft 2 or simply gamers specialized in today’s biggest game hits that are coming out. Does the removal of Quake mark the end of the subjective “best gamer in the world” title Fata1ty craved so badly? Will the world of eSports move on to more instantaneous stars who will fade as quickly as when their game title gets replaced by another one?

Good intentions gone wrong?

However, before saying anything else, we really have to thank Michal “Carmac” Blicharz for his efforts in delivering more high quality Quake tournaments for spectators in recent years. Through his influence on the ESWC and his position at the ESL, Carmac helped Quake stay on the map for several years even if the business decision didn’t make much sense. The inevitable
then happened in 2011 with ESL’s decision to replace Quake with Leagues of Legends. I can’t believe how he managed to keep making a game like Quake look like a wise-investment to the people around the management table when it came time to discuss game picks, but he definitely did this for the fans and the spectators. There was no money to be made in that decision.

However, this have been good intentions gone wrong, because setting up all these all-star packed tournaments like the ESWC and the IEM through invitations and tight qualifications literally closed the door to all the aspiring players who wanted to step in and join the fun. Basically, from 2007 to 2011, we’ve just given the same prize money to the same elite players who just grew older and older. With not much prize money spread to the lower rankings, and only the top 3 cashing at most events (ESWC and Quakecon, amongst others), even gamers hungry for money went looking elsewhere. The Quake newbie must be telling himself “If I want to see any money, I will need to beat either Cypher, Rapha, Av3k or Cooler to finish in top 3, so yea, I’m not going”. And considering travel costs, only a player capable of reaching the top 3 and sponsored by a team of the G7 could dream of making a good profit in these kinds of circumstances. Really, the Quake scene had no charm at all during the last few years when it came to attracting new competitors, and it turned into a sort of closed competition only accessible to the established elite.

The Quake scene could’ve urged itself towards to a system like the MLG open-bracket system to address the issue or found solution to motivate the lower tiers of the community, but instead it concentrated on providing the best spectator experience possible by arranging these superstar stacked tournaments, and it ended being a double-edged sword. The incredible tournaments we watched over and over again weren’t even enough to convince the up-and-coming competitive gamers of this generation to join Quake. And with little promotion by ID Software for the Quake Live game title itself, even the flow of new casual players got problematic. All we had to bring in more competitors and promote Quake Live were pretty much dedicated people like Shoutcaster Rob “Slasher” Breslau, who was basically working around the clock to convince people on and off the air that the most awesome game in the world is still awesome (!) Sight… Quake lovers did what they could to save their game, but without the mainstream machine, it is still a very difficult task. It seems like the flaws in the scene and the weak mainstream appeal of Quake got the best of what once was eSports’ top dog.

Still, thanks to people like Carmac, Slasher, 2GD, Alessandro Avallone (with his Ultimate Gaming Championship), year after year, we got to see an all-star packed roster of Quake legends battle it out on the big stage despite a
slumping scene. The Quake community and its pioneers still deserves some respect for pulling that off. It is unsure if Quake will surmount the big odds against it and come back to eSports forefront, but if Quake does really fade away, at least we will have plenty of legendary battles to remember, thanks to those people and the last few years of Quake that were given to us. The last fights between Rapha, Cooller, Cypher, Av3k and the others are all forever on YouTube for the world to see, and I hope they see how much this game really rocked and the special connection it seemed to magically make with casual spectators. Lastly, let’s thank casters like TooGood, Joe Miller, Marcus “DjWheat” Graham, Stuart “Tosspot” Saw, the QuakeLiveTV/LevelUpTV team of casters (and everyone I might’ve forgotten) for providing a voice for all these magical moments, hoping that they can continue in some shape or form as we step into 2012.

Extra: 2012 and going forward with fast-paced FPS games – any hope?

ID Software finally got off their Rage project this October and might put Quake back up on their list of priorities after Rage’s very average success (at least for the 6 years it took to develop and monopolized ID Software’s forces) but Quake 5 is still a very long way down the road. But the current situation isn’t only about getting a new hit game, but also in totally revamping the fast-paced shooter genre for today’s generation. ID Software will probably need to pull off innovations as big as the one they did with Quake III back in the day to become relevant again. But on the positive side that could very well happen — with the disappointment of Rage, we could very well see ID Software want to invest in 1) one of their safer, established franchise and 2) the one that their staff is the most hungry for, and yes, that would be Quake. Quake III is still being mentioned as the developers’ favorite game and it is the ideal franchise for ID Software to take its revenge after Rage’s results. One can only imagine Quake 5 being a super-eSports version of Quake 3 with a dose of added mainstream buzz behind it (compared to a more underground free-to-play game like Quake Live). All jokes about CPL’s Severity being put aside, the world might actually be ready for a mainstream eSport game after more than a decade of eSport exposition through so many channels.

Also, if ID Software wants to go small with a new Quake game, they could look at how Trackmania is being marketed. Nadeo is still doing alright with how they popularize the game in tournaments around the scene, so ID Software might also be interested in a smaller niche, and one they got on lock down — the competitive scene.
Then we have the Unreal Tournament franchise, but it has yet to show any new sign of life, as Epic also seems to be years away from a new version. They’re not in a hurry to step back into their fast-paced series, and with the miserable 33 000 or so copies sold of Unreal Tournament 3 for PC during its first week, the long delay is understandable. And these mediocre PC numbers bring another question: is there still enough interest for a new PC fast-paced shooting game? It seems like the fast-paced shooters for PC are like the music and CD industry — desperately trying to reform itself into products people will want to pay for again…

This year we might get a preview of how fast-paced shooters could be revamped when the little Nexuiz (www.nexuiz.com) project see the light of day — a 9.99$ game for 360, PS3 and PC that mixes our beloved old-school genre with a presentation that’s more likely to relate to today’s audience.

In 2012, we will also see Tribes: Ascend make its debut in the NASL, a fast-paced shooter still in beta with an open-environment with a unique controlscheme very remindable of Quake as well as an in-game currency to purchase upgrades.

But then again, these two games could be classified as very minor news for the fast-paced FPS fans looking to see their genre back in the big picture. The genre desperately needs a best-selling title, and it looks like it will need to drop the mouse/keyboard combo to do big numbers because a project Tribes isn’t expected to be any earthquake in the industry. It really looks like we have a huge puzzle to solve if we want to see Quake and fast-paced shooters at the forefront of eSports again. Let’s just keep hope on the fact that all these developers and companies hold people within their ranks who aged up and grew with these fast-paced games like Quake III and Unreal Tournament and understand what they represent.

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.
League of Legends, Mass Market Product or Great eSports Title?

By Marvin Horstmann

One is for certain clear: League of Legends is an important title and indispensable for the electronic sports today. Often adapts for me the question whether this game is only a mass market product for casual players without a sense of today’s electronic sports but this question answers herself with the following lines.

Who has been able to suspect this rapid development of the game? The answer is: Surely nobody could suspect this development. What I personally also find very beautiful is simply the development of the electronic sports with this game. The chance must be understood to integrate the media like the TV or social media, so League of Legends and the electronic sports can get even more popular.

From my point of view the discussion between Defense of The Ancients 2, Heroes of Newerth and League of Legends is completely senseless because League of Legends is not to compare with other games. The game has developed into an independent game with own details, rules and laws in the course of the time. It cannot be compared with the other games. It is often described as edge-game, but does the eSport not live on the change? Straight also with the new game mode Dominion, which also was published on the Gamescom event in Cologne, a completely separate part also joined in the year 2011. This mode also makes the game even more thrilling. Dominion brings a lot of fresh game fun and conversation for in between times and in addition, a round does not last mostly too long. So Dominion is exactly the right thing for people who do not invest too much time in the game and want to play a round only from time to time.

"The game unites casual players and professional eSport very well."

My result is simple that LoL is a blessing for today’s eSports society. The passionate playing moves into focus and makes it more professional and it makes fun for looking at games of the DreamHack, the World Cyber Games,
the Intel Extrem Masters and other leagues. Definitely the unbelievable view-
er statistics are great because it is really unbelievable over 200k viewer for the
eSport. In addition, the development is clearly recognizable because the price
monies rise intensely in all tournaments. What at the beginning of ”only” one
hundred thousand dollars increases to incomprehensible five million dollars
now and a great incentive for international eSports teams is exactly this deve-
lopment of the price money. League of Legends is friendly for new beginners
and for advanced players because the game fully and completely corresponds
to today’s specifications.

The summer was overshadowed by server problems. In the course of the year
every European player surely knows the special report ”It’s over 9000!”
By the middle of the year the company RIOT made 32 servers available for all of
Europe. At that time, this obviously was not enough. Almost every LoL play-
er complained and was surprised why RIOT got the problem not solved faster.
What was going on in the heads of the responsible persons? How often was
the normal player outsourced on American servers and got high pings. This
was a pain for every player but a practical solution of the problem followed
on this soon, too. The plattform spitt in EU West and EU Nordic & East was a
great success. A splitt was carried out to solve all problems but at first it very
often came to server works. RIOT had overcome all problems after some time
again and it could go further normally. The company RIOT has made much
right unlike his competitors. League of Legends was free from the beginning
but Dota2 and HoN need less pre-experience. Just here League of Legends
has an advantage because it is free!

But RIOT also makes some mistakes from my point of view. Almost every
week becomes a new champion publish and the problem is here often. The
new champions simply are not compensated for under each other! Still very
much backlog for the next time is here. In addition, the Jungling system was
changed too strongly. The new system makes for new beginners easier but for
professional players it is partly too unpretentious. Instead of concentrating on
new Skins, RIOT must be respected more on Balancing.

My presentiment will be another increase in the player numbers although
over 30 millions registered accounts are already very considerable. But how
many players will play League of Legends in future? From day to day it gets
more and the end is open. And this factor is just good because the communi-
ity is brought to the eSport directly. The professional players are only a very
small portion of the League of Legend’s community but this small portion
fills the masses with enthusiasm.
"The standard increases further and further - to become a professional player is very hard."

In the year 2011 could the standard in League of Legends unbelievably rise. To be a successful player in LoL, is much training, much ambition and motivation necessary. However, LoL on the highest level is always very team dependent and not underestimate, too. Not only the large price money has got attractive but definitely the numerous spectators on the Livestreams are a motivation. The Livestream matches are an addition to tension, emotions and passion. Which player does not like to have several one thousand or more Viewer behind himself daily? The players become real stars. In my opinion the Streams are simply the future and this is what a sponsor wants. Good work is done behind the scenes and the electronic sports profits from it. My personal result League of Legends was the highlight for the electronic sports in 2011 and that title can get even more successful.

Marvin Horstmann is a 18 years old German editor from SK Gaming. He already has written at several German eSport websites and conducts some smaller fun teams in addition. He also has worked in the public relations area and community management next to the editorial staff. Since 2008 he has been involved in eSport. He can be contacted at the e-mail address destroyer@sk-gaming.com.
New Broadcasting Ways in IPTV –
The Case of the Starcraft
Broadcasting Scene

By Tobias M. Scholz

Introduction

Broadcasting, especially classical television broadcasting as we have known it for decades is currently undergoing major technical and structural changes - to be able to please new audiences, which TV might have lost to internet piracy or the depths of the world wide web in general.

Regarding digital migration (Watkins, 2009), inherent inertia[1] (Berman et al., 2007), new competitors (Bouwman et al., 2008) and lack of solid business models (Evens, 2010), the broadcasting industry is facing an uncertain future. Even more broadcasting operators currently cling to their current system and invite the competition on the field of digital broadcasting (Curtin, 2009).

Systems like Youtube and hulu currently enliven the discussion about potential ways of digital television. Furthermore with Smart TV platforms from Apple, Google or Intel the competition derives from strong players in the internet world. Only slowly companies are opening up to this new internet world, however still in a protectionist way (e.g. regional constraint) and threatening way (e.g. copyright law).

But broadcasting companies are neglecting one important fact: they are battling on a new market with new rules and new technologies. Furthermore they seem to be ignoring the fact that they are facing a base of potential customers who are often used to easily find the media they would like to consume on the internet. The key to success if you want to prevail on today’s media market clearly is accessibility. The reason why iTunes and Steam succeeded is not because of them having the strongest anti-piracy policy - quite the opposite

[1] The phenomenon of „dullness“ in a complex system (in this case the television industry) – Even if you change something inside the system that might be accepted immediately by every participating individual, it will take a certain amount of time until the change will have reached every border of the system.
philosophy is the case: They have done everything to be known and to be as easily accessible as they possibly could.

Video pirates often win the competition for viewship because they are easier to reach\textsuperscript{[2]} and sometimes they are working in a monopolized environment without any competition of broadcasting companies at all (Remo, 2009). Even more competition evolves from the gaming sector (Olson, 2010) and many companies developed an infrastructure entirely independent from classical ways of broadcasting. They use the so called Internet protocol television (IPTV) (Xiao, 2007).

Video games and in this case competitive gaming (eSports) are a perfect example of how to harness every new possible technology to make a product better. With expertise from over ten years, eSports has a vast knowledge of the audience TV broadcasters are currently struggling with. While different eSports companies are producing more and more content, they are increasing their viewer base and thereby generating a solid financial structure.

eSports is generating content that viewers mostly want to see live, but they are also usually offering Video on Demand (VoD) as a service\textsuperscript{[3]}. Viewers want to participate in a discussion about the live broadcasts to share their personal views and emotions. Many broadcasting services therefore usually have chat rooms included in their web interfaces. Time-zones differences or travel-expenses are no hindrance for eSports fans. eSports audiences are enthusiastic and generate traffic, buzz and live-crowds; they are generating content, coverage and interviews. eSports is easily accessible and watchable wherever the audience is, even on mobile devices.

Starcraft II gives a unique insight into the scene and its broadcasting possibilities. Blizzard, the developer of the game, has a broad history in eSports and with the predecessor Starcraft Brood War it is the powerhouse in the eSports Mecca South Korea. Furthermore Warcraft III has been a strong eSports title for the last seven years in Europe and China. With Starcraft II Blizzard succeeded in merging the European scene with the Korean scene - while stabilizing the scene in North America and also merging it with the rest of the world. New professional game casters started making a name for themselves with their shows and live commentaries, while uniting people from all over the world in their personal fan bases. Masses of new tournaments were esta-

\textsuperscript{[2]} e.g. for European customers who want to see an OV of an HBO product as soon as possible instead of waiting up to a year to be able to purchase a dubbed version.

\textsuperscript{[3]} This can be helpful for viewers who’d like to watch replays of shows of the high-class matches to get inspiration for their own strategies.
lished and today you can watch Starcraft II nearly 24/7 or watch VoDs you missed.

We can learn from Starcraft II’s vivid scene by having a look at it as a case study. Some ways of attracting new customers are also the usual methods for the classical broadcasting companies; others are completely new for them. In this paper I will present these ways and describe their effect and success on the scene. Furthermore I will give an overview about the scene’s key players and thereby depict some critical facts anyone should keep in mind who’d want to compete in the IPTV market.

**Theoretical Framework**

**eSports**

Electronic sports or competitive gaming currently lacks a valid definition, at the moment a general term for that field is also differing vastly. Competitive gaming can be called pro-gaming, eSports, e-Sports, E-Sports and ESPORTS. None of them dominates the scene. In this paper the term eSports is used, as this term is the most popular one in Germany.

A prominent definition for eSports originates from Wagner (2006:3): “eSports is an area of sport activities in which people develop and train mental or physical abilities in the use of information and communication technologies.” Another definition is: “Passion, training, reflex, intelligence and teamwork … if it’s not sport it really has its taste” (Arnaud, 2010:11). Currently the community is working on a history of eSports (Syrota, 2011) and Starcraft (P. H. O’Neill, 2010).

Looking at research in the field of eSports, the following review reveals that eSports is currently under-researched, however it slowly attracts an academic audience. Research targets currently several diverse fields; popular topic is the comparison of eSports with sports (Con-way, 2010; Jonasson & Thilborg, 2010; Moeller et al., 2009; Thiborg & Carlsson, 2010; Thiborg, 2011; Witkowsi, 2011). Another popular approach is looking into participants at LAN parties (Jansz & Martens, 2005; Mora & Héas, 2003; Taylor & Witkowski, 2010) or spectators at tournaments (Kelly, 2011; McCrea, 2009) and also communities in general (Stald, 2001; Wagner, 2007). Further research was done about the governing bodies in eSports (Salice, 2010; Thiborg, 2009), the interaction with media (Hutchins, 2008) and gender (N. T. Taylor, 2009b). Counterstrike was used several times as a case of eSports (Kane, 2008; Rambusch et al., 2007). From the technological background in eSports, researchers looked into strategy prediction based on Starcraft (Lewis et al., 2011;
Weber & Mateas, 2009) and based on the findings looked into Artificial Intelligence (Weber et al., 2010), furthermore the game was used for looking into data-traffic (Dainotti et al., 2005). Other researchers got more involved with social and business topics, like commercialization (Soumokil, 2009), emotions (Schmierenbach, 2010), leadership (Scholz, 2010a), learning (Scholz, 2010b), professionalization (N. T. Taylor, 2009a) and proficiency (Reeves et al., 2002). An extensive view on eSports can be found in the forthcoming book of T.L. Taylor (2012) Raising the Stakes: E-Sports and the Professionalization of Computer Gaming. As it can be seen in the review eSports in general is an emerging scene and due to technological breakthroughs the growth is today steady but steep.

**Starcraft II**

An article by Upson (2011) states that a general academic interest in Starcraft II is slowly emerging all over the world.

Starcraft II is a Real-Time Strategy game designed by Blizzard Entertainment and was released in July 2010. “StarCraft II is the ultimate competitive real-time strategy game, and the sequel to the hit original, StarCraft. The game will include three completely distinct and balanced races, the Protoss, Terran, and Zerg, which have been overhauled and re-imagined with a number of new units for each, as well as new tricks for some of the classic units that are returning.“ (Blizzard, 2011).

“eSports is an area of sport activities in which people develop and train mental or physical abilities in the use of information and communication technologies.”

- Michael Wagner

Attention in terms of eSports started in the Beta-Stage (game testing with the community) and Starcraft II was integrated quickly into the eSports-habitat. Tournaments were established (first day first tournament), professional gamers were introduced and signed by clans. Even though Blizzard was still in the process of balancing their game, it already became an essential part in eSports during the Beta-Phase.

To be able to understand Blizzard’s success in game publishing, it is essential to look into their Game Design Principles (Scholz, 2010b). Their most impor-
tant principle (as stated by Rob Pardo) is “easy to learn, difficult to master”, only with that Blizzard reaches the majority of gamers and allows them to have quick successes but also endless ways to master the game and become the best, in this case, in Starcraft II. Furthermore “gameplay first” reveals that a game needs to be fun and that fun is an essential criterion for players to play, gameplay however is a great way to achieve fun and lowers the frustration of gamers. Randomness is necessary for a game, but “control is king” and in the case of Starcraft II essential for its worldwide success in eSports. Warcraft III a predecessor of Starcraft II had a high degree of randomness in the game, however worldwide success (especially North America and South Korea) was not possible due to that.

Starcraft II is not the dominant force in eSports, however it is a constant part of it. Most of the tournament operators have some kind of Starcraft II in their portfolio, contrary to other games, where competition is available. With this unique setting Blizzard positioned Starcraft II on a market with competition in-house (Starcraft and Warcraft III). Even more due to dominance since the beginnings of eSports, Blizzard established high market entry barriers for competition but not for the eSports community and thereby allows a unique and interesting research setting.

**Method**

Chosen for the research was the method of Case Study (Myers, 2009; Yin, 2009) as a fitting method of analysis. Especially in the case of eSports it is still difficult to analyze data systematically over time due to the ephemerality of the scene. Furthermore Starcraft II is still relatively new and constantly growing.

Based on the six sources of evidence (Yin, 2009) several sources were used. First, directly from big league operators and by tracking featured video streams from teamliquid.net. Another source was the community and talking with casters, organizers and viewers. Different community pages, press releases and videos also helped to gather data. Finally the last source of data is my ethnographical point of view, by reflecting critically own experiences in the scene; being involved since 2000 it is possible for me to get a clear but critical picture of the scene.

As analyzing method the theory of critical hermeneutics (Thompson, 1981) as an integrative framework was used, combining interpretive and critical elements (Myers, 1994). It is a combination out of pure hermeneutics (Rad-
nitzky, 1970) and critical theory (Poster, 1989). Interpretation of subjective
data was objectified through data from tournament operators and viewership
data; thereby the objective interpretation was strengthened.

IPTV in eSports

The history of IPTV even precedes video-sharing platforms like Youtube. It
was already possible to watch in-game content in the beginning of 2001. At
that moment video streaming per se was not possible due to the lack of ca-
pacities in the infrastructure and the costs of server and technology for strea-
mers. So eSports needed cost-efficient but accessible ways of broadcasting
and that required some work for the viewers. An example for the complexity
is a typical Counter-Strike match at that time. Viewers needed an address for a
server and needed to connect to that server within the game itself. Furthermo-
re they needed to connect to an audio stream to listen to the commentators. On
the plus side viewers had complete control over camera and thereby had the
chance to be their own director. At this scenario people were sitting at their
computers and had the chance to simultaneously communicate with others
via chat (mostly IRC), newsgroups and bulletin boards. These tools were
allowing operators direct interaction with the audience. At that stadium the
technology was contradicting the general idea, stated earlier, of easy access.

Throughout improvements in technology these eSports companies sharpened
on easy access. In 2003 first IPTV stations were established which offered
both a video stream and commentary of the game. Because of the success of
eSports several incidents of cross-media interaction occurred. In Germany
the broadcasting station Giga regularly produced eSports content. Direct TV
produced the Champion Gaming Series in 2007 in USA. Both concepts failed
and attracted a low amount of viewers. Recently the German public television
ZDFkultur began to broadcast complete play days[4] of the German National
eSports Championship (called ESL Pro Series). At first only as a pilot project;
but then they bought the broadcasting rights for a whole season (after they
realized that they had a viewership percentage of 0,3 which was therefore
significantly higher than their usual 0,1). Communities in eSports are even
discussing if classical broadcasting is worthwhile or IPTV is the future for
eSports (Onofrio, 2011). Furthermore Youtube is now including Starcraft II
broadcasting into their channel START (Gaudiosi, 2011).

Sendung/
Another giant technical leap happened around 2009 when video broadcasting was possible for everybody through platforms like Twitch.tv and own3d, etc. If we consider how difficult it used to be to stream eSports matches properly on the internet, these platforms were the first who allowed easy access for viewers, the first who had an integrated chat for interaction between viewers and streamers and they were the first who generated revenue through commercials and stream apps/ plugins for mobile phones.

By making streams as easily accessible as possible for viewers but mostly for streamers themselves - a vivid habitat of broadcasting has been established by these few above mentioned pioneers.

**Tournament Operators**

In Starcraft II there is currently a huge amount of tournament operators with a diverse set of competitions. These tournaments are the driving force behind IPTV in eSports and they are not solely concentrating on Starcraft II. However Starcraft II currently has no competition on the field of Real-Time-Strategy games and therefore most of the tournament operators currently competing have some form of Starcraft II tournament in their program.

Tournaments can be separated into premier events, major events, team events, monthly or weekly events and show matches as well as smaller cups or qualifiers (TeamLiquid, 2011). The premier events are generating the highest amount of viewers. In this paper I am looking into the tournaments of Dreamhack, Global Starcraft II League (GSL), IGN Pro League (IPL), Intel Extreme Masters (IEM), Major League Gaming (MLG) and North American Star League (NASL). I chose to have a closer look at these, because they make up a complete set of Starcraft II’s most perceived international tournaments.

The companies behind the tournaments can be regionally classified into Europe (Dreamhack, IEM), USA (IPL, MLG, NASL) and South Korea (GSL). Audiences for IPTV can be found mostly in Europe and North America. Most strikingly, when having a look at the unique viewers statistics, the Intel Extreme Intel Extreme Masters (IEM) have their followership evenly spread out all over the world (About 20% of shares or less in all countries). Quite differently is the case of the Global Star League (GSL). In the viewer statistics of the GSL, the USA & Canada have nearly 50% of the shares.

Data from the GSL in South Korea is unfortunately not available and data from China can also not be confirmed by the Korea based organization, which
is especially unfortunate for this paper since it is very likely that the GSL would probably have significant shares in South Korea. The ranking based on market shares in table 1 teaches us many things if we go into a tournament-focused comparison. USA, Germany and Sweden are major driving forces for Starcraft II and they are the target audience for tournament operators.[5]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Dreamhack</th>
<th>IEM</th>
<th>GSL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian Federation</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Ranking for audiences split into countries

Furthermore problematic is the lack of explicit and consistent ways of counting viewer numbers. Currently there are five ways of measuring the success of a tournament:

- Peak number of concurrent viewers
- Average number of concurrent viewers
- Gross numbers (every time somebody is opening the stream)
- Absolute number of viewers
- Absolute number of viewers plus Video on Demand viewers

Even though the data collection differs from operator to operator, some data will be presented to get an overview of the market’s dimensions. The tournament Dreamhack Summer 2011 had over 1.5 million absolute viewers. GSL

[5] We have valid data for the three mentioned countries, while we cannot include China and Korea. But we also know for a fact that eSports companies focus on USA, Germany and Sweden mostly, since their viewers guarantee the highest possible CPM’s.
Team League in February 2011 had a peak of 377,000 viewers in the final game (Gnarles, 2011). Furthermore the GSL announced for the period from 2009 until June 18th 2011 that it had over 53 million viewers (live viewers and VoD stats combined).

Interestingly the GSL is calculating their viewer stats for China by subtracting the stats for South Korea from their total stats for that mentioned time period. The result of this would be 12 million viewers. IEM is using gross numbers and there had nearly 4 million contacts. Looking again on the peak numbers Dreamhack Summer had roughly 65,535 viewers, NASL finals 84,323, IPL 3 around 65,000 viewers at their peak.

While these numbers seem significantly low, it is necessary to put the data into perspective. eSports is a niche industry and Starcraft II is only one part of that industry. It is a significant part but not the biggest contributor to eSports at the moment. Furthermore it is normal in this industry to hire famous casters who are currently under a competitor’s contract; tournaments, casters and professional gamers are competing for the audience; there are many high-class tournaments and it even occurs that the market can appear oversaturated at times, with high class tournaments clashing at the same weekend, fighting for their audiences; in addition, time zone differences are lowering the potential number of viewers. Numbers of 50,000 to 70,000 concurrent viewers are easily possible for any sort of interesting Starcraft II game on a normal week-day.

Professional Gamers

Throughout the improvements in video streaming it became an interesting new approach for gamers to position themselves as their own brand in this new market: Professional gamers are streaming their training sessions, commentating and analyzing their own games, and participating at special events. Due to the possibilities of interaction in chat or via social media platforms, gamers are as available for their fans as e.g. a basketball player or Olympic swimmer could never be.

In general this means watching a professional gamer not only playing Starcraft II but also listening to his favorite music, watching him arguing with friends, stroking his pet, discussing strategies with his opponents on chat but mostly just playing without him or her commentating. Some players have a webcam or an overlay with their team or sponsors. The numbers of viewers are differing vastly between professional gamers, mostly due to their popularity and slightly because of the music, interaction and other criteria. In gene-
ral popular players attract around 500 to 1,500 viewers, but players like Greg “IdrA” Fields (Top US-Player) average around 10,000 viewers.

Another revenue stream for professional gamers is coaching; where people can buy lessons from the professional gamers and thereby stay reachable for fans. Some players are using their fame to hold charity events. For example Shawn “Sheth” Simon (Top US-Player) and Dario “TLO” Wünsch (Top German-Player) streamed marathon sessions (up to 24h) and thereby generated $2,684.00 (Sheth) and $2,487.97 (TLO) (Simon, 2011; Riptide, 2011).

Some professional gamers are also commentating and even though the style of it is not professional like a caster, it gives essential insights into the game. Gamers as casters can go into more detail about strategies and tactics; it is comparable to the experts in other sport broadcasting.

Professional gamers are currently struggling with the masses of competition and, due to current broadcasting style, only few ways of lasting recognition. It became necessary to have a special feature to stand out of the crowd, be it cocky, rude, or super creative. Facing that problem, professional gamers strive to merchandise themselves and need a strong organization (namely clan) behind them to stay in the competition.

Another interesting fact is that some professional gamer seek the vicinity of other gamers. In the western world there are already several team houses (e.g. Evil Geniuses in USA), furthermore professional gamers from the West are traveling to South Korea to train in their team houses. In that competing environment the players seek the best practice possibilities and have the chance to train and discuss with fellow colleagues on location.

**Casters**

Most beneficial was the technological leap for the casters; with easy access to good games and live tournaments it became easy to start a casting carrier. Furthermore these casters had the chance to promote themselves and thereby generate an own fan base plus own platforms. Nowadays tournament operators pick from a pool of around 20 casters and through that selection have the chance to attract more viewers. Sean “Day9” Plott is one of the most famous casters and is therefore traveling from tournament to tournament. Even more casters don’t cast exclusively for one tournament operator, for example Kevin “Rotterdam” van der Kooi is employed at Turtle Entertainment (operator behind IEM), but casts at events like the NASL. Caster are positioning themselves in this market and similar to professional gamers have the chance
to get a competitive advantage on the market.

One example of efficient positioning is Dennis “Take” Gehlen who established his platform TakeTV and became one of the dominant casters in Germany. Furthermore he hosts with the Homestory Cup, a novel tournament still unique to the eSports scene. Set in a huge apartment refitted for a tournament, professional gamers compete in a homely environment. Furthermore the audience on location had the chance to watch the games in the pub beyond and had the chance to interact with the gamers. Regular commenting from professional gamers in several combinations strengthened the unique environment. Though their casting was not so emotional compared to professional casters, the audience preferred this kind of calm analysis mixed with a deep knowledge. Dennis “Take” Gehlen established himself strongly in the scene and with apartment with stream and tournament possibilities he positioned his product TakeTV in a unique and novel way.

Problematic in that current broadcasting environment is, that casters have the most time on the stream and are viewed in brakes between games. Casters are at the moment in that broadcasting environment the center of the stream, however the professional gamers should be center of the stream. As mentioned earlier professional gamers struggle to be remembered, casters have it easier. With their constant presence viewers know who they are, especially through the current development of choosing the same casters for nearly every big tournament. It doesn’t even matter anymore, if viewers don’t like them. In general viewers watch tournaments despite of the casters, but fans watch tournaments because of the casters. Currently eSports is coping with that new environment of attention, but realized that they need a shift of focus from caster to professional gamer (Blicharz, 2011).

**Viewership**

Looking at the viewership there are three things that describe them. First the BarCraft movement, second the interaction through communities and third the coverage done by members in the community. The phenomenon of eSports has one important situation that became common for the digital natives. In order to get involved you just need to work. Gamers found most of the companies in eSports and until today nothing changed about that. Therefore it is necessary to look into viewership. Only with the viewership projects eSports can rise and flourish, with-out that support a project will definitely fail. One of these projects or better-said phenomenon is BarCraft. Blizzard defines a Bar-Craft as: “An event is basically a gathering of individuals in a
public setting such as a pub or restaurant for the purpose of viewing live or pre-recorded StarCraft II competition, or any Blizzard gaming action for that matter, while enjoying some good grub (hopefully) and good company (hopefully)“ (Malarh, 2011). This definition sounds familiar to the sport events in bars happening all over the world, however for the field of video games this is an amazing development.

The phenomenon of BarCraft started in Seattle in May 2011 and was initiated by a user named o_Oskar (2011). Since then BarCrafts were instigated all over the world and table 2 shows the driving forces behind BarCraft, explainable as these countries are dominant forces in eSports (WorldCyberGames, 2010). However exact numbers are not available, due to the easiness of setting up a BarCraft.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Barcrafts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Barcraft Listing Top 5 (Xifan, 2011)

The core audiences for eSports are people sitting at home in front of their computers and watching the stream. With BarCraft these people are now sitting at a pub or restaurant and watching Starcraft matches with other enthusiastic fans.

Due to the collapse of the LAN-Party movement (Vogelgesang, 2003), eSports shifted in recent years to mainly digital participation of the audiences contained by their own homes. Only few tournaments, mostly combined with a big exhibition, could attract an audience. Especially some tournament operators are focusing on distinct areas for their tournaments and therefore potential audiences are facing long routings. BarCraft allows the audience to have short travel distance and therefore get an audience celebrating the games.

Even though Blizzard is supporting BarCraft and many tournament operators are offering the licenses for free, the future of BarCraft will be interesting. Especially it is a new field for eSports and novel approaches of generating revenue can be anticipated (Böhm, 2011).
"Journalism in eSports is a difficult field. Struggling with autonomy to the tournament operators and problems with financing independent coverage cannot always be guaranteed."

Necessary for any eSports title are the communities and the interaction within the communities. Driving forces in Starcraft II are teamliquid and reddit. Both communities allow easy interaction with other fans. Teamliquid established here a platform for the streams as well and is one of the first sites to surf on to get the stream link. Furthermore the community is also sharing articles and foster the Starcraft II Wiki called Liquipedia. League operators, gamers and casters use the platform for information sharing, reach their target audience and get feedback. Reddit is more unstructured based on the platform technology; however it is better for motivating people, for example reddit is the main information-sharing platform for BarCraft. Another example for the passion in that group is the case of the Korean Player Lee "MarineKing" Jung Hoon. His clan Prime couldn’t afford the travel expenses to a tournament of MLG, so the reddit community collected money and donated it to him (P. O’Neill, 2011).

Journalism in eSports is a difficult field. Struggling with autonomy to the tournament operators and problems with financing independent coverage cannot always be guaranteed. Furthermore with the communities and the masses of free and motivated contributors it is difficult to compete with them. An example for quality coverage is E-Sport Fans International (ESFI), though it needed time for the planning in advance. However they currently discuss if their coverage in general is not critical enough (Radford, 2011). Real journalism in eSports is also a discussable topic (Ottey, 2011). Observation reveals that tournament operators, clans or communities (especially teamliquid) do the coverage. Independent and unbiased coverage sites are currently on the counter-march and lurch in finding a survivable way of financing by maintaining their independence.

**Results and Implications**

ESports is showing a unique point of view of a market audience classical broadcasting companies are failing to attract. The scene consists of digital
natives and it is therefore interesting to analyze their own way of television. Companies have to learn that easy access is the key criterion for that technique-affine audience.

Interesting for broadcasting companies is the need for interaction. Not only do people want to talk about the games, they want to do it personal. The phenomenon BarCraft is nothing special on the first sight, however it contradicts the common prejudice about digital natives in general and gamers in special. They seek the social contact.

But not everything is working well after ten years of development; eSports has to solve old and new huddles on the way. Functioning, unbiased and independent coverage is still not granted; spotlight of the tournament still lies on the caster and not on the professional gamer. Still eSports is missing a strong international organization in order to establish rules, minimize overcutting of major tournaments and enforce contracts.

However eSports shows that this distinct audience is solely reachable over the Internet and classical television has no place in it. Viewers seek to find their content easily and fast, something they find in Starcraft II. Furthermore with the chance to interact with others, view-ers are encouraged to interact and contribute to the eSports community on their own. Viewers have the feeling of being right in the middle instead of mere present. It enables interaction, involvement and enthusiasm so well, that the audience is neglecting the recorded shows for the real and live thing.

In conclusion improvements in technology became a driving force in eSports and those changes led to advances in the accessibility, passive content-consummation, active interaction with a local factor, and community-based content-generation.

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References


This year’s issue contains articles about many major eSports topics in 2011 and 2012, StarCraft II for example. Manuel Schenkhuizen wrote a Manifesto. Henry Harris wrote a detailed story about Team Fortress 2. Aman Parmar and Ángel Quintina chose topics that focus on India and Spain. Marc-Andre Messier looks at Quake and Terrence Wong gives an insight into South East Asia and the problems of Dota 2 there.
The eSports Yearbook is a collection of academic articles and columns about eSports. It is published every year. Contact us at: contact@eSportsyearbook.com