

Esports challenge sports clichés

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Riot Games



As the NHL and NBA playoffs rage on, a different sporting spectacle quietly continues its slow rise: esports.

Now hold up, esports? “That’s not a sport! They just play video games.”

Well, that’s the point! With our increased use of technology these days, it’s no wonder that kids and adults have begun to spectate competitive video game competitions.

If you want to argue legitimacy of these being enjoyable and comparable to a competition such as the hockey or basketball playoffs, just watch one of the many tournaments with thousands of dollars up for grabs.

Call of Duty, Dota 2, Halo, Smite, Overwatch and even sport games such as NBA 2K have become the newest form of sporting entertainment for our generation. However, two games reign supreme in the esports realm: Counter Strike: Global Offensive and League of Legends.

Arguably the most prevalent esports today, “League of Legends” was released in 2009 to much acclaim. Based on the popular “Warcraft III” mod Defense of the Ancients, it’s hard to deny that League is responsible for bringing Multiplayer Online Battle Arenas (MOBAs), to mainstream attention. Since its release, League has become the most played game in the world, boasting 100 million monthly players.

For context, a report by Forbes stated the next closest MOBA is DOTA 2, which sees 13 million monthly players, and Activision, one of the largest publishers in the game industry, boasts 55 million players across all their games, including major titles such as Call of Duty and Destiny.

League esports started with simple, fan-organized tournaments, but that didn’t last long. In 2011, Riot Games announced the first official competitive season. The Season One Championship was held at Dreamhack summer 2011, drawing more than 100,000 concurrent



Team Solo Mid, a North American League of Legends team, prepares to face off against long time rival Cloud 9 during week 1 of the Summer Split. TSM emerged victorious in a 2-0 sweep.

viewers, and it certainly didn’t end there.

Last year marked the sixth world championship for League of Legends, which drew 43 million viewers.

June 2 saw the beginning of the 2017 Summer Split for the North American league, marking the beginning of the second half of the regular season following the Spring Split earlier this year. Each team will vie for one of three available seeds for the upcoming World Championship.

Much like regular sports, esports are defined by the players.

Names like Faker, Sneaky, Mithy and Uzi have become the esports equivalents of Tom Brady, LeBron James, Sidney Crosby and Kris Bryant.

In addition to watching them play during professional matches, many players also stream in their off time, allowing fans more access to them than regular sports players.

Perhaps due to this accessibility, it has become very impactful when a player chooses to retire. During the 2015 World Championship, Dyrus, a well-known player for the North American team TSM, or Team Solo Mid,

announced his retirement after his team lost their final game. The reaction from the crowd was emotional, with the crowd chanting his name.

If you watched any of TBS’s programming this past summer, you may have seen a video game being advertised and played called CS:GO. ELEAGUE, a new competitive CS:GO league began on the network which has become the first of its kind on cable television. This league is historic for e-sports and sports as we know it. The popular video game that has kept kids in their room for hours on end now has a spotlight on national television.

Why put a videogame on national TV anyway?

Valve made Counter Strike, a popular PC game that has been around since the early 2000s. It is regarded as one of, if not the greatest, first person shooter game in history and largely cements the opinion of PC gaming’s superiority over console gaming.

As time went on, the competitive scene began to explode and viewership for major tournaments has reached hundreds of thousands of people on the popular streaming site Twitch and

offering millions of dollars in prize pool winnings to the champion.

This past weekend, the season 5 ESL Pro League finals took place in Dallas, Texas and showcased powerhouse EU teams G2 and Fnatic alongside NA squads Team Liquid and Cloud 9. Watching these games is just like any sport that one watches; players such as KennyS, Guardian, Snax, Hiko and Olafmeister are the game’s superstars. Someday soon you’ll begin to see things such as Fatheads of these people on bedroom walls.

Now we understand it’s not an athletic competition and calling them athletes is seen as misleading, but be prepared for that term to be used a lot more with these players. With the growth and hype centering around these new forms of competitive entertainment, it’s only a matter of time before that’s their official title.

Don’t worry, you can keep watching your football on Sundays, but when a kid decides to tune into Twitch to see the finals of the next major, just know they will be just as excited as you are to see their favorite team compete for that a title.