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ESPORTS



SHOWTIME!

One of the more confusing parts of esports for newcomers is the overwhelming number of competitions and ecosystems that exist. This booklet will increase the clarity of this highly opaque subject. Section one, Esports Championships, is an overview of the most important competitions across top esports titles. The following section, A Year of Esports, subdivides a year of esports competitions into seasons, articulating when the peaks and valleys of esports competitions are felt. The concluding section, Esports Around the World, highlights top esports regions across the globe, showing the variety of languages and cultures united by play.

ESPORTS CHAMPIONSHIPS

The events below are all World Championship level tournaments for their respective games, determining who is the absolute best in that title. These competitions are all the pinnacle of larger competitive ecosystems for each title, the World Series or Super Bowl of their league. Although each of these ecosystems has its own unique twists and quirks, they can be divided roughly into three groups: circuits which group together several tournaments, annual leagues that run during a large part of the calendar year, and semi-annual leagues with two seasons per year.



INTEL EXTREME MASTERS KATOWICE / ESL PRO TOUR

Intel Extreme Masters (IEM) Katowice is a longstanding World Championship event

for Counter-Strike: Global Offensive based in Katowice, Poland. Held in the Spodek Arena, the CS:GO tournament has occurred every year since 2014. In 2020, the competition has been incorporated into the ESL Pro Tour (EPT) as one of two yearly championships for the twenty event circuit. By competing in other EPT events, teams earn points that qualify them to compete at IEM Katowice. In addition to hosting the CS:GO championship, IEM Katowice will also host a \$400k Starcraft II tournament in 2020 as the game's largest competition of the year.



THE INTERNATIONAL DOTA 2 PRO CIRCUIT

The International (TI) is Dota 2's yearly championship, first being held in 2011.

Over time, it has become a leading esports tournament, holding the record for the top 5 prize pools in esports. Crowdfunding is the source of these massive prize pools, with TI9's reaching a final sum of \$34.3M dollars. In recent years, qualification for The International has been integrated into a system called the Dota Professional Circuit (DPC). The DPC is a series of 5 pairs of events. Each pair is made up of one Minor with a \$300k prize pool and one Major with a \$1M prize pool, with the winner of the Minor qualifying for the corresponding Major. Placements in Minors and Majors earn teams points, which are then used to qualify for TI. OG Gaming is the only team to have won The International twice.



WORLDS / LEAGUE OF LEGENDS ESPORTS

Worlds, short for the League of Legends World Championship, is the pinnacle of competition for League of Legends, regularly setting esports viewership records with a prize pool of more than \$2M dollars per event since 2012. The tournament is

made up of the champions from each of League of Legends' 12 regional leagues, as well as 2nd and 3rd place finishers from North America, Europe, China, and South Korea. One of the highlights of Worlds is the Opening Ceremony, which blends the physical space of the arena with the digital space of the game. In 2017, the opening ceremony won Riot a Sports Emmy, featuring a massive AR dragon that briefly perched on the roof of Beijing's Bird's Nest stadium before flying to center stage.



EVO / FIGHTING GAME COMMUNITY

Evolution, frequently abbreviated as Evo, is the Fighting Game Community's largest yearly event, held on the first weekend of August in Las Vegas.

Responding to the wants of the community, Evo features a rotating set of games, with 9 titles being officially supported in 2019. Still, series such as Super Smash Bros, Street Fighter, and Tekken are permanent fixtures of the competition due to their popularity. Evo hosts the largest number of competitors of any premier esports event, allowing all who sign up to compete. In 2019, almost 3500 players entered the event's Super Smash Bros Ultimate competition, with 6 of the other 8 official tournaments reaching more than 1000 entrants.



OVERWATCH LEAGUE

Overwatch League's (OWL) regular season and playoffs culminate in the OWL Grand Finals.

The Overwatch League is structured similarly to traditional North American sports leagues such as the NFL, NBA, and MLB, with teams playing matches in their home cities and team owners having to own a franchise slot to compete. Over the course of the season, Overwatch League teams compete for a prizepool of \$5M dollars, with \$1.7M of that being distributed during Grand Finals. During its two years of existence, OWL has done an outstanding job of attracting non-endemic sponsors including Coke, T-Mobile, Toyota, and Bud Light thanks to its franchised and geolocated structure.



THE 6 INVITATIONAL RAINBOW 6 ESPORTS

Rainbow 6 Siege's World Championship, the 6 Invitational, occurs yearly during the month of February. Bringing together champions from the previous year of Rainbow 6 competition along with

teams who fought through regional qualifiers, the 6 Invitational is always held in Montreal, home of the game's development team at Ubisoft. In 2019, the event had a crowdfunded prizepool of \$2M. In four years of competition, there has yet to be a repeat champion.



BLIZZCON / HEARTHSTONE GRANDMASTER TOUR & OVERWATCH WORLD CUP

Blizzcon, Blizzard's celebratory convention that attracts more than 40,000 attendees yearly, is the site of multiple esports championships. In addition to major competitions for World of Warcraft, Hearthstone, and Overwatch, Blizzcon also hosts keynote speeches and concerts. In 2019, Blizzcon hosted the World Finals of Hearthstone Grandmasters, where pro player Xiaomeng "VKLiooon" Li became the first woman to win a Hearthstone world championship. Overwatch's yearly World Cup has been held at Blizzcon since 2017, with the United States breaking South Korea's streak of wins in 2019.

A YEAR OF ESPORTS



FIRST BLOOD

JANUARY-MARCH

The beginning of the calendar marks the start of yearly esports leagues such as the Overwatch League and League of Legends domestic leagues. The opening weeks of these leagues are a particularly exciting time for their fans, who can finally see how their teams' new rosters will perform after the offseason. For Rainbow 6 Siege viewers, this season is rather busy with the game's Pro League starting in January as well as the 6 Invitational occurring in February. Circuits which began in the previous year, such as the Dota 2 Professional Circuit and the ESL Pro Tour (EPT), continue during this time period. Notably, The EPT has one of its two Masters Championship events during this season, IEM Katowice, which is also the pinnacle of the Starcraft II competitive calendar. Genesis, one of Smash's largest tournaments is also held during this quarter.



MID-SEASON MADNESS

APRIL-JUNE

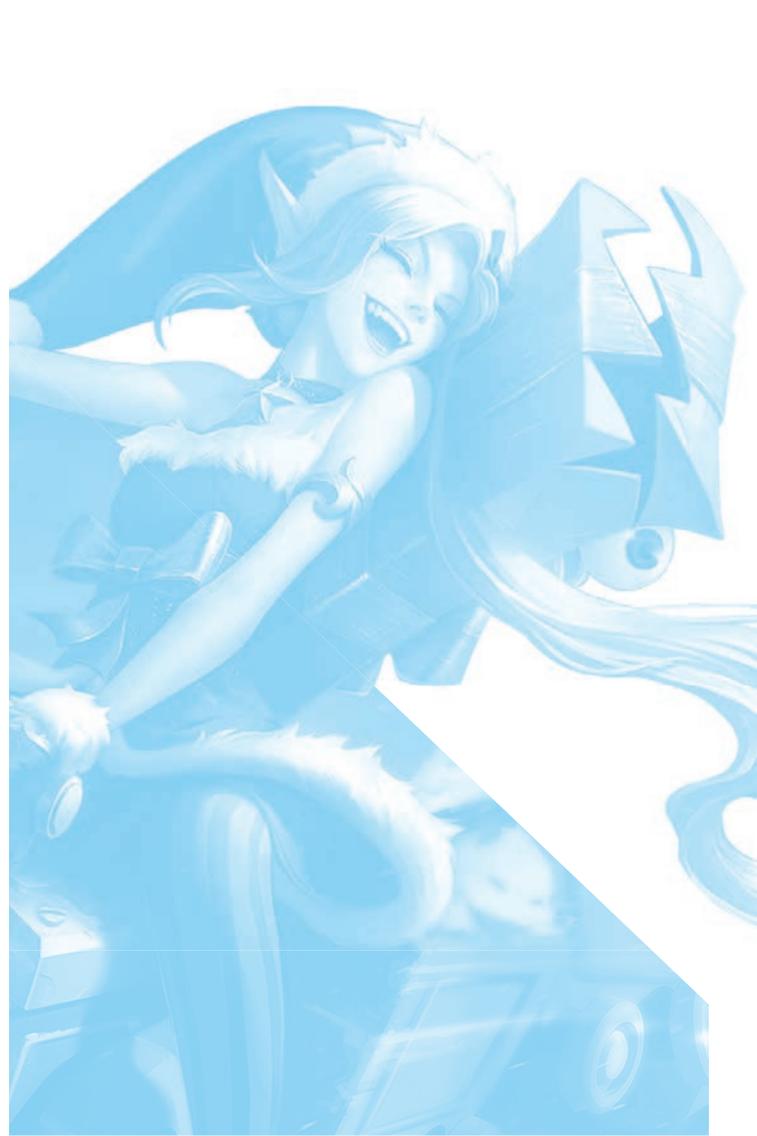
The second quarter of the year is a heavy period of competition, creating a mini-championship peak in May for some titles while others ramp towards their apex during super season. Year-long leagues such as the Overwatch League and the Call of Duty League (CDL) are all in the thick of their regular seasons during this time. Both League of Legends domestic leagues and the CDL have a mid-season event splitting their year in two. The League of Legends event, the Mid-Season Invitational, has been held since 2015 and serves as a mini-championship that draws significant viewership. Semiannual leagues such as Rainbow 6 Pro League and the Rocket League Championship Series finish their first season of the year during this period, usually holding finals in either May or June. For teams competing in circuits, the spring months are when championship qualification dreams either crystalize or crumble, with both the DPC and the EPT hosting several events during this time. Valve's first CS:GO Major of the year occurs in May, the game's largest standalone tournament.



SUPER SEASON

JULY-SEPTEMBER

The later summer months are the busiest time of year for esports. During this time period, World Championships across almost all top esports titles occur. Unlike the regular season (where league play tends to cluster on weekends) championship tournaments frequently fill the calendar during this time, allowing fans to feast on high-quality matches seven days a week. The first championship of super season, ESL One Cologne, kicks off the festivities in July. Shortly after the Fighting Game Community's premier event, Evolution, takes place. Hot on Evo's heels is Dota 2's championship, The International, giving fans yet another competition to enjoy. At the same time, yearly leagues are all wrapping up their regular seasons, having their finals shortly after. In addition to all of the events listed previously, Rainbow 6's second Pro League starts at the beginning of summer before pausing briefly in August for the Six Major, a midpoint championship similar to League of Legends' MSI. Truly, this season is super.



OFF SEASON

OCTOBER-DECEMBER

With some notable exceptions, the end of the calendar year tends to be a less active period for most esports in terms of number of matches played. The League of Legends World Championships is the most notable of these exceptions. However, after this championship, it falls into a period of dormancy much like other titles. In place of matches, roster shuffles dominate the news cycle for year-long leagues. For the semi-annual leagues of Rocket League Championship Series and Rainbow 6 Pro League, this period marks the conclusion of their second seasons for the year. For circuit based esports such as Dota 2 and CS:GO, the closing months of the year are filled with the first events of next year's circuit. CS:GO teams also compete in the second Valve Major for the year. Very few matches are played during the holidays in the last weeks of the year, giving teams, fans, and tournament organizers a moment to breathe before diving back into the next year of competition.

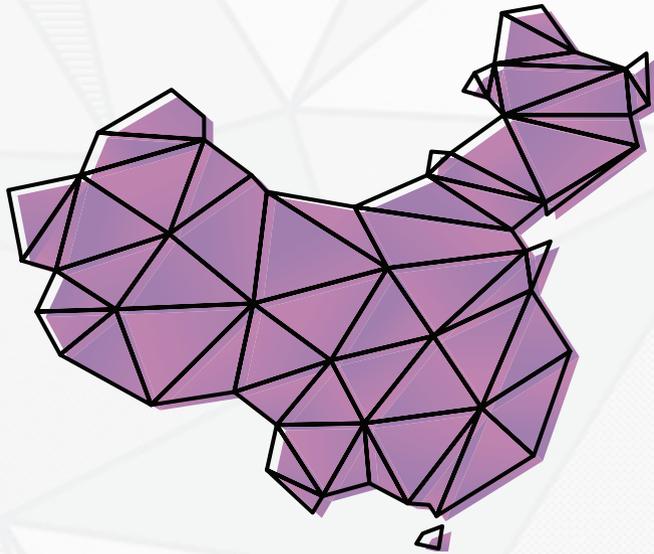
ESPORTS AROUND THE WORLD

NORTH AMERICA

North America is the epicenter of esports, with many key companies being based on the continent. These companies are primarily esports game developers and publishers including Valve, Riot, Activision-Blizzard, Epic, and Ubisoft, in addition to the streaming platforms Twitch, Mixer, and YouTube. North American teams are competitive across all major games, showing particular dominance in Call of Duty, Fortnite, and the Super Smash Bros series. North America is also a hotbed for franchised leagues and teams, with more than 33 franchised teams being located there.

ESPORT HUB CITIES:

Los Angeles, Dallas, Atlanta, Montreal



CHINA

With almost half of their internet users having watched an esports tournament recently, China serves as a fantastic example of a fully saturated market. The Chinese government is quite supportive of the esports industry. In June 2019, the Chinese province of Hainan announced a fund of almost \$150M for esports development in the city. League of Legends, Dota 2, and Honor of Kings are some of China's most popular esports titles.

ESPORT HUB CITIES:

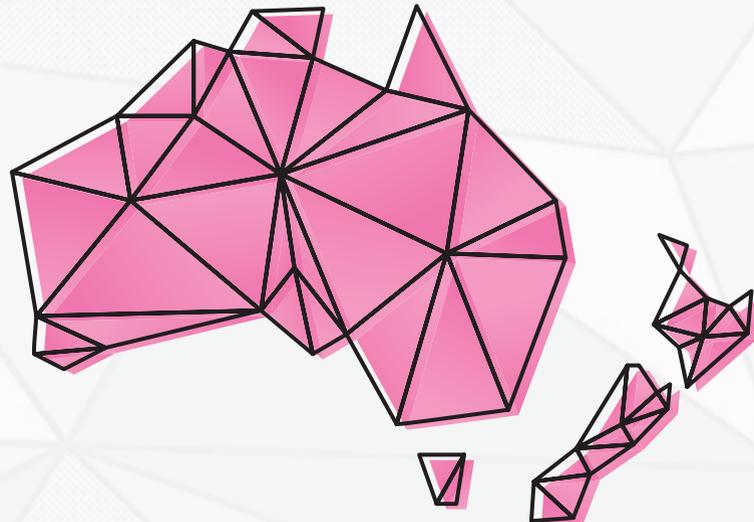
Shanghai, Hangzhou, Chengdu, Guangzhou, Xi'an

AUSTRALIA & NEW ZEALAND

Australia and New Zealand form a small but growing region for esports. Players from these two nations have made an international impact, with Melbourne native Ana winning Dota 2's The International twice as a part of OG Gaming as well as standout performances from the predominantly Australian 100 Thieves roster at numerous CS:GO tournaments. Popular titles in the region include League of Legends, CS:GO, Overwatch, and Rainbow 6 Siege.

ESPORT HUB CITIES:

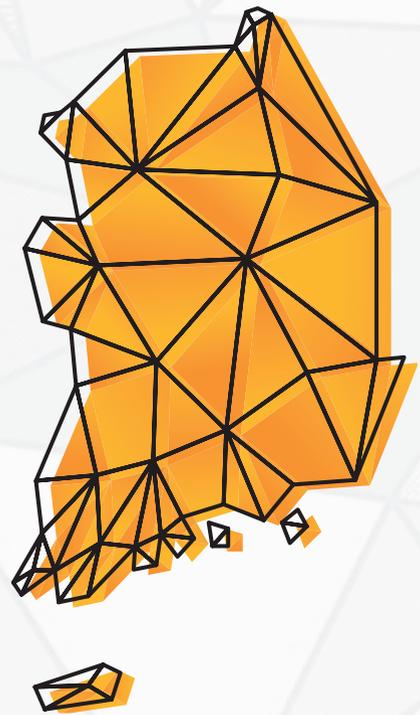
Melbourne, Sydney



SOUTH KOREA

Often referred to as the birthplace of modern esports, South Korea began officially sanctioning esports competitions in 2001. Since then, South Korea has dominated most esports that they have participated in, most notably League of Legends, Overwatch, Starcraft: Brood War, Starcraft II, and PUBG. In an attempt to mirror their success, Korean training methods and players have been imported by teams in many other regions.

ESPORT HUB CITY:
Seoul



BRAZIL

Brazil, the heart of esports in Latin America, is currently one of the fastest growing esports regions. Inspired by the international success of the Luminosity Gaming roster in 2015-2016 led by Gabriel "Fallen" Toledo, several other CS:GO rosters have followed in their footsteps, and have emerged as strong competitors in major tournaments. Alongside CS:GO, the intra-region popularity of titles such as Rainbow 6: Siege and League of Legends has led to recognition from brands such as BMW and Nike, who have formed partnerships with homegrown esports organizations.

ESPORT HUB CITIES:
Sao Paulo, Rio de Janeiro

EUROPE

Europe has a strong history of esports competition, tracing back to early games such as Counter Strike 1.6 and Defense of the Ancients. This history has led the region to multiple championships in the spiritual successors to those earlier titles, CS:GO and Dota 2. Instead of franchise-based leagues, Europe tends to favor events that host tournaments for multiple titles. The premiere tournament organizers in this space are ESL, founded in 2000, and DreamHack, founded in 1994. In addition to CS:GO and Dota 2, League of Legends is also a very popular title, with Riot Games supporting more than fifteen leagues in the region.

ESPORT HUB CITIES:
Berlin, Cologne, Stockholm, Barcelona, Paris



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**UNITED
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United Esports, LLC.
6253 Hollywood Blvd. Unit #204
Los Angeles, CA 90028

For more information, please contact us at:
info@unitedesports.com