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**eSports**

- **POKEMON**
- A phenomenon
- An eSport

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# So, what are eSports?

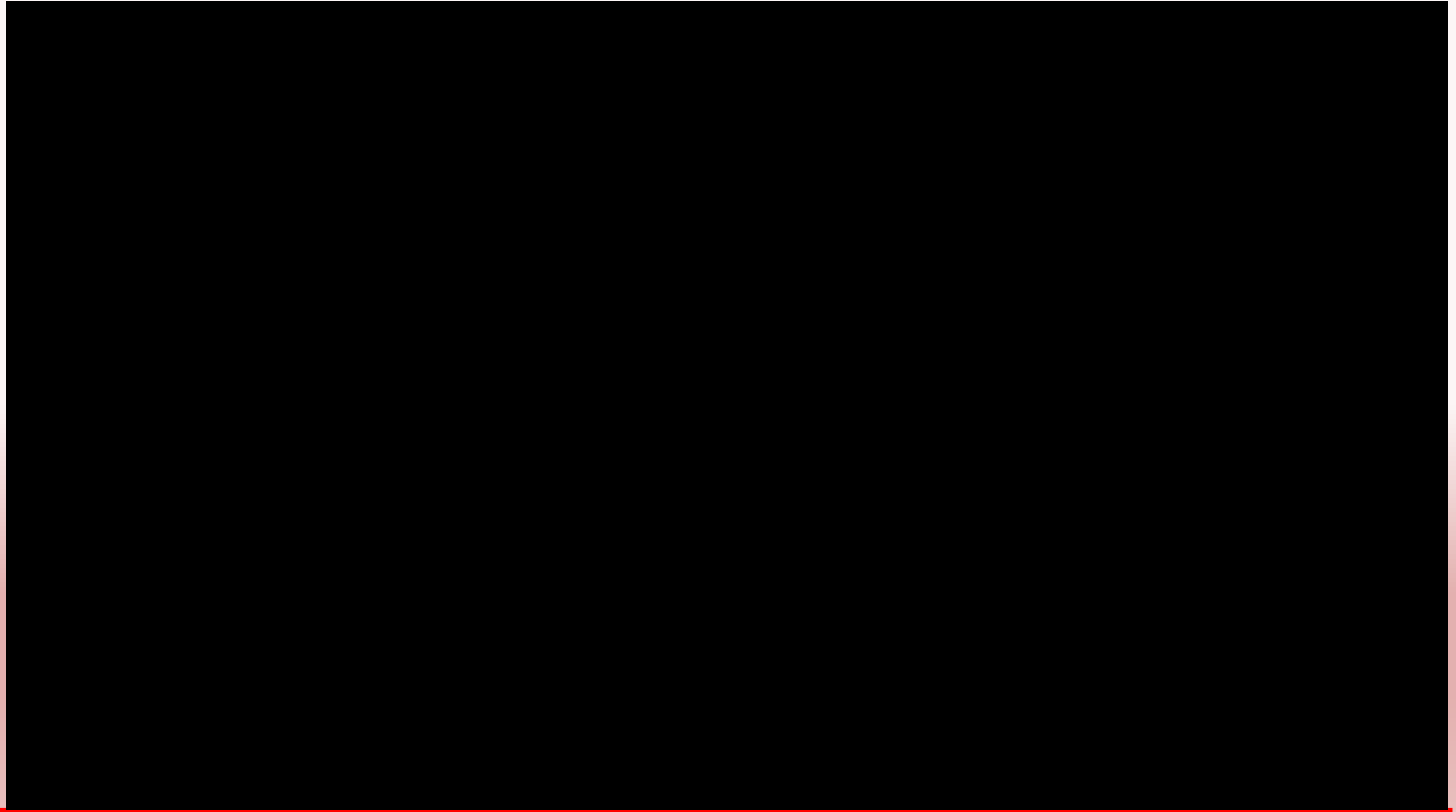
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- It is the umbrella term for organised, competitive computer gaming, usually between professionals

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**Currently some of the most popular eSport games are:**

**Counter-Strike**

**Global Offensive**

**Call of Duty**

**League of Legends**

**Dota2**

**Smite**

**Rocket League**

**World of Tanks**

**Heroes of the Storm**

**Heroes of Warcraft**

**Super Smash Bros**

**StarCraft II**

**Melee**

**Hearthstone**

# But is it a sport?

- Labelling video games as sports is somewhat controversial.
- While some point to the growth in popularity of eSports as justification for designating some games as sports, others contend that video games will never reach the status of "true sports".
- eSports are not a sport – they are a competition, according to ESPN President John Skipper





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## But are eSports mainstream?

- eSports has grown hugely in recent years.
- The number of consumers worldwide that are aware of eSports will surpass one billion this year, up 36% year-on-year, according to NewZoo.
- The analyst also predicts that eSports will generate revenues of almost \$500m this year, up 7% from the initial projection from the start of 2016.

# Viewership

- In terms of popular competitions, the most-watched eSports tournament final was that of the 2015 League of Legends World Championship, which was viewed by 36 million people.
- Over the course of all 73 games, the tournament saw an average concurrent viewership of over **4.2 million**, with the average fan watching for over an hour per viewing session.
- Most of the bigger and established tournaments are broadcast on online streaming platforms such as Twitch, which allows users to view matches (or their favourite players) live and share their comments at the same time. Twitch pulls in almost 10m viewers every single day.
- 37% of eSport watchers do not watch any traditional sports
- 30% do not watch anything through a TV
- The average age of an NFL watcher is 47 years of age, For eSports fans it is 22 (less than half).
- 250 – 300million watch this child of the internet around the world.

# Competitions

- The bigger tournaments feature hundreds of thousands of pounds in prizes, with the biggest prized competition - the Dota 2 International - boasting a \$20m pot this year.
- League of Legends awarded approximately \$30 million within 1749 registered tournaments



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# The Players

- High skill levels. Players train for hours each day, recreational players simply cannot compete with elite players, high presentation levels for top events.
- **Sounds like squash!**
- Their problem is that to become more mainstream they need to have fans who are not players.
- **Sounds like squash too!**

# Ethics

## **It is not all sweetness and light**

- There have been violations of the rules. Examples:
- In 2010, eleven StarCraft: Brood War players were found guilty of fixing matches (and were ultimately fined and banned from future competition).
- Team Curse and Team Dignitas were denied prize money for collusion during a championship.
- In 2012, Azubu Frost was fined \$30,000 for cheating during a semi-final match of the world playoffs.
- Dota 2 player Aleksey "Solo" Berezin was suspended from a number of tournaments for intentionally throwing a game in order to collect \$322 from online gambling.
- In 2014, four high-profile North American Counter-Strike players, were suspended from official tournaments after they had been found guilty of match-fixing. (The four players had allegedly profited over \$10,000 through betting on their fixed matches)

# Performance Enhancing Drugs

- **Yes, an issue for eSports too.**
- Reports of widespread use of PEDs in eSports are not uncommon. They seem to be discussed openly.
- Players often turn to stimulants which can significantly boost concentration, improve reaction time and prevent fatigue.
- Selegiline, a drug used to treat Parkinson's disease, is reportedly popular because, like stimulants, it enhances mood and motivation.
- Conversely, drugs with calming effects are also sought after. Some players take Propanolol, which blocks the effects of adrenaline, or Valium, which is prescribed to treat anxiety disorder, in order to remain calm under pressure.
- PEDs are not outlawed in sanctioned competitions.



## Ownership

- Unlike squash, eSport games have publishers / owners, who control the underlying I.P. They can make money from that ownership, and from the teams that compete in their games, along with broadcasting / streaming rights.

# eSport Regulation

- The International e-Sports Federation (IeSF) is a signatory of the World Anti-Doping Agency
- Key areas of focus within the eSports industry this year have been regulation and player representation. At the moment, game developers set the rules, punishments and guidelines for their specific eSports games
- This year the French government has started working on a project to regulate and recognize eSports.

# Why does it matter to us?

- It is a new form of entertainment for youngsters.
- ..... Not a substitute for traditional sports.
- It is a different audience and an opportunity.
- Is it competitive? Yes, in terms of time, but complementary too.
- We need to be aware, explore links that we can use with development programmes.

# Traditional Sports

- Traditional sports are also taking note of eSports. NBA basketball team the Philadelphia 76ers has just acquired UK-based eSports organisation Team Dignitas, while retired basketball pro Shaquille O'Neal invested in NRG eSports, to name a few.
- Looking towards football, big established clubs are getting involved too. Bundesliga side Schalke 04 bought a League of Legends team earlier this year, while Premier League sides West Ham United and Manchester City have signed FIFA professional gamers.
- Other teams including Ajax, PSV Eindhoven, Wolfsburg, Valencia and others have announced their own eSports players.

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**Imagine the increased  
credibility of squash for  
our youngsters if the  
eSport stars they follow  
play squash too!**

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**NOW, BACK TO OUR OWN SPORT!**

**Thank you.**