

## Esports Is Legit and It's Time to Accept It



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There's no denying that esports has seen a meteoric rise in popularity over the past decade earning it the status of "cultural phenomenon." And for people within the tight-knit community, the most strenuous part isn't possessing the immense talent and skill it takes to be one of the best. It isn't the regimen of practice and physical activity required to have a well-balanced quality of life. Nor is it the level of competition standing in the way of fulfilling a dream.

No, it's something the gaming community has very little control over.

The hardest part of being an esports athlete is facing blowback from those that aren't part of the movement. And don't think for a second that it isn't every bit of that word: "movement." So today, let's dive into the shifting connotations of esports and see how the term went from conjuring images of overweight guys playing games in dingy basements to images of pro gaming stars shining on international stages.

In a [2017 CNBC interview](#), Peter Guber, CEO of Mandalay Entertainment, knew the future of esports was bright.

"I think it has all the tools to really go the distance and become something powerful," said Guber. "And it has had a straight-up trajectory."

It may come as a shock to some that esports actually began on October 19, 1972. On that monumental day, the Laboratory for Artificial Intelligence at Stanford University held the [world's](#)

[first esports tournament, the Intergalactic Spacewar Olympics](#). The event consisted of 24 players vying to be the greatest fighter pilot in the game *Spacewar!* And after the controls had settled, Bruce Baumgart would claim a one year's subscription of Rolling Stone magazine and have his name etched in history as the world's first esports champion.

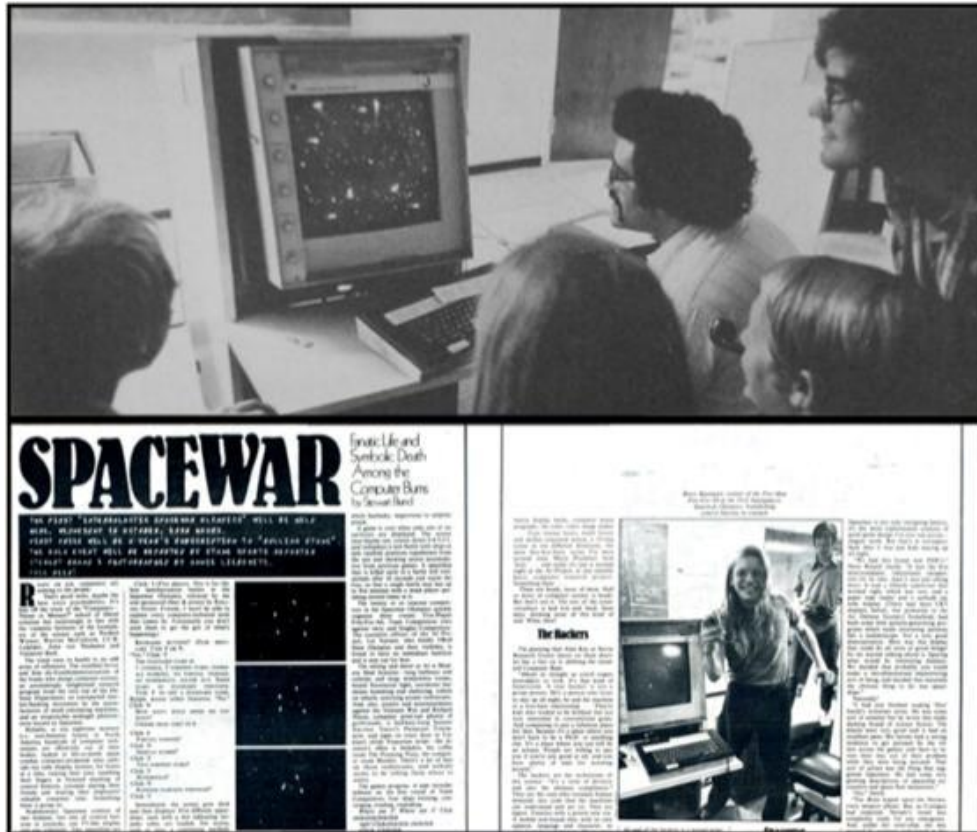


Photo courtesy of Rolling Stone

Fast forward 48 years and esports have seen a meteoric rise in popularity and participation. In fact, since 2014, the global esports audience (which includes occasional and frequent viewers along with participants) has gone from approximately 205 million people to an audience of nearly 500 million in 2020. And it's only gaining steam. Projections show that by 2022, esports viewership could surpass that of America's greatest pastime, baseball.

Even going back to 2015, only a little more than 800,000 people were aware esports existed altogether. These numbers would skyrocket by 2016 when more than **one billion** people would learn about the rapidly surging esports community. By 2023, experts predict that over [15% of global internet users will watch esports at least once per month](#).

Talk about repeatedly beating a high score...

So, why is it not taken more seriously?

Its global revenue will surpass [\\$1 billion when the curtain falls on 2020](#). Markets are emerging all around the world in new places like Southeast Asia, India, and Brazil. Younger generations are finding a camaraderie much like the kind people will find in more physically active sports like football and basketball. And not only are they building friendships, but they are also building a career, and a lucrative career at that.

A major pushback has been from people that claim sports should be considered a “physical activity” and that video games shouldn’t be glorified and considered a real profession.

Well, to that, we say, “get with the times.”

Esports is an enormous, gigantic, huge, gargantuan community filled with exceptional talent and legitimate career opportunities. And if athletes — yes, athletes — can play a sport that clearly has little to no risk of serious injury like you see with rugby or wrestling, then why stop them? This generation has found their tribe and is sprinting towards a new definition of “professional athlete.”

Whether it be as a fan, avid participant, or athlete, the time is now to join this flourishing industry. [Get on board](#), because the game is just beginning.