

THE
STORY
MOB

Beautiful

WEIRDS

TELLING THE STORIES OF ESORTS HEROES

Esports

starts with passion.

It's about honoring the drive and dedication of the athletes in the space who push themselves to conquer new heights on virtual battlefields – as comms pros, it's our role to help them in that journey. We want to showcase their stories to the wider world and to help the athletes gain the recognition they deserve as figureheads of **the world's fastest growing sport.**

To do that, we need to challenge the way we think about heroes and storytelling in sports.



Let's Talk About

STORYTELLING

Storytelling at its core is about making sense of the world, and the most vivid stories are the ones about people. Although it's tempting to think of commercial storytelling - be it through public relations, marketing or advertising - as superficial dressing on a profit-driven salad, there's one universal truth:

Without a good human interest angle, any story dies on its ass.



Stories about passion, triumph, and personal hurdles were probably scrawled on cave walls, but we're here to talk about the newest sport - a sport played with keyboards and controllers instead of cleats, but no less of a goldmine for deeply human endeavors. For those millions of gladiators who roam digital battlefields every day to discover themselves and prove their worth, no story could be sweeter or sadder.

Most of the time when we talk about esports heroes, our stories resonate with people around the world because they are patterned after sports stories, and sports stories have been honed over a century to be truly *human* stories.

Whether it's the Chicago Cubs winning a World Series after 108 years in baseball, or a great player overcoming personal demons and tragedy to come back better than before, the do-or-die competition in traditional sports provides the perfect backdrop for narratives that enthrall and inspire us. Esports carries this tradition forward into the digital age, and it's no surprise that we tell the same kinds of stories about pro players and teams when trying to convey the high stakes and emotional journey of professional video gaming.



THE REIGNING CHAMPION

After the stage lights dim and the confetti settles, a player or team has to defend their title from all comers. If they manage to stay on top consistently, they can build a legacy that's instantly recognizable to anyone who plays the game - and attract an international mob of adoring fans.





THE UNDERDOG

David vs. Goliath. Unexpected tactics, resilience, and cunning are key when facing long odds of defeating a dominant opponent. The underdog carries the hopes and fears of those of us who are facing our own powerful challenges, and their tenacity helps us believe in ourselves when the going gets tough.

THE HERO

Sometimes it's not just about the glory of the win. The most memorable players aren't just looking for numbers on a scoreboard, but stand for something bigger than themselves. Their message inspires their peers and their daring example raises them to heroic status among fans.





THE CLUTCH PLAYER

The worst matches are the ones that feel like they're decided before they're over. But if the losing side rallies and thinks outside of the box, there's sometimes a chance to snatch victory from the jaws of defeat and get all the fans on your side while making history.

These sports tropes have served esports well by helping us frame our stories in a familiar language, and we will probably see them in many, many tales to come. On the other hand, if we keep thinking about esports just in terms of sports, we miss out on the interesting ways esports leaves traditional sports in the dust - as well as all of the opportunities to tell the exciting and innovative stories only the esports industry can tell.



STEPPING OUT OF

THE SHADOWS

OF SPORTS

We all know that the average pro gamer probably couldn't out-run or out-lift the average pro athlete, but pro gaming doesn't train those capabilities anyway. The real question is, can athletes - or any other competitors, for that matter - out-perform pro gamers when it comes to micro movement speed, reflexes, and fine motor control?

Professional League of Legends player Eugene "Pobelter" Park went through a battery of tests to find out, courtesy of **ESPN Sport Science**.





0.07
seconds

Pobelter's ocular movement
during gameplay

0.22
seconds

Human single-word
comprehension

0.3
seconds

Goalkeeper in football
reacting to penalty kick

0.325
seconds

Fastest tennis serve

0.38
seconds

Batter hitting a 100 MPH
fastball in baseball

0.4
seconds

Human blink

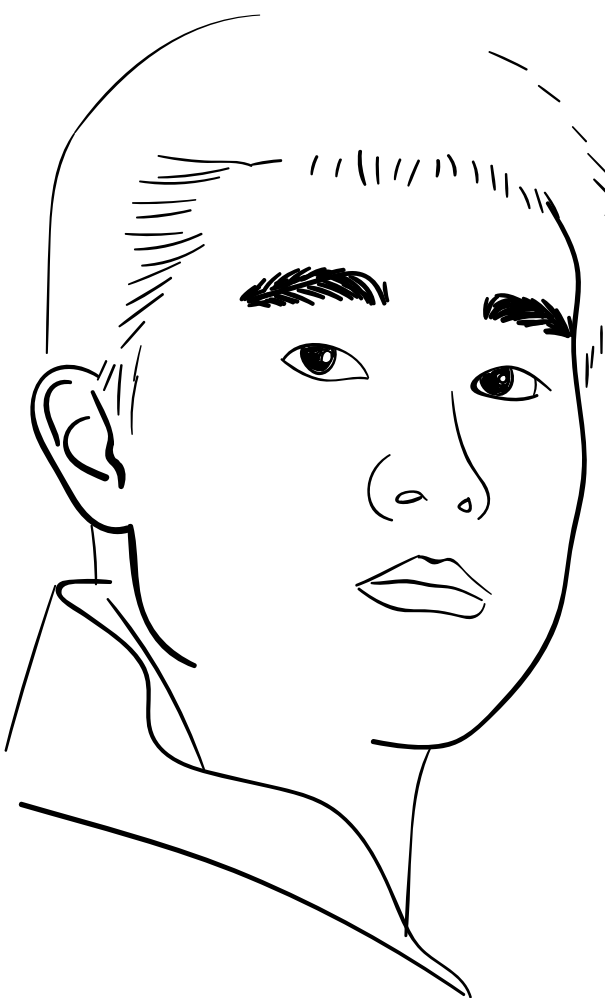
Source: ESPN Sport Science

Pobelter's pure movement speed and reaction time while playing are inhumanly fast, even for sports players. But his dominance transcended esports-specific micro-adjustments and movements.

ESPN had him take the **Wonderlic Test**, which is a well-known assessment for rapid problem-solving and analysis administered to professional American football players before they enter the National Football League (NFL) draft. The test involves solving up to 50 multiple-choice or fill-in-the-blank math and verbal reasoning puzzles in just 13 minutes - just 15.6 seconds per answer to fully finish the test. In football, the quarterback requires the most strategic intelligence under time pressure, so Wonderlic scores are important in evaluating that key position.

When Pobelter took the test, the results showed he was well above the average for NFL quarterbacks.

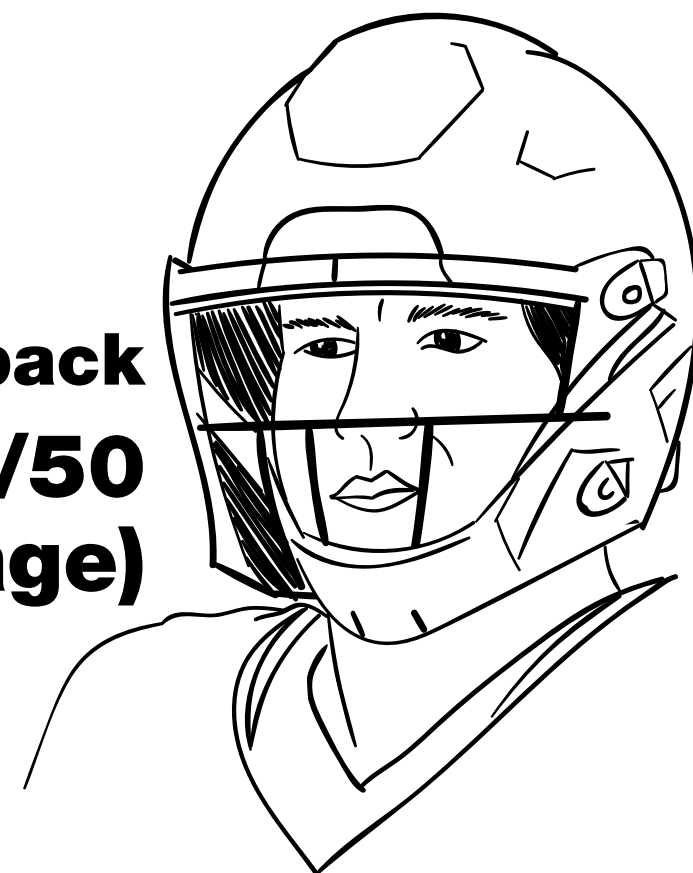
WONDERLIC SCORE



Pobelter
41/50

Find
out
yours!

Quarterback
24/50
(average)



While Pobelter may not be trained to run with a ball like a quarterback, he and other esports pro players can contend with the best of traditional sports athletes in two crucial skills for competition - speed and intelligence - and come out on top.



Esports

isn't just

about ability -

it's about

bringing

imagination to

LIFE



Credit: Riot Games.

Viewers watching the live broadcast of the 2017 League of Legends World Championship at Beijing National Stadium saw an enormous augmented reality (AR) dragon from the game fly into the arena, land onstage, and roar triumphantly.

We're all familiar with the pageantry of televised sports events like the iconic halftime show at the Super Bowl. They often involve choreography, live music, and even lighting effects - but have you ever seen a life-sized dragon?

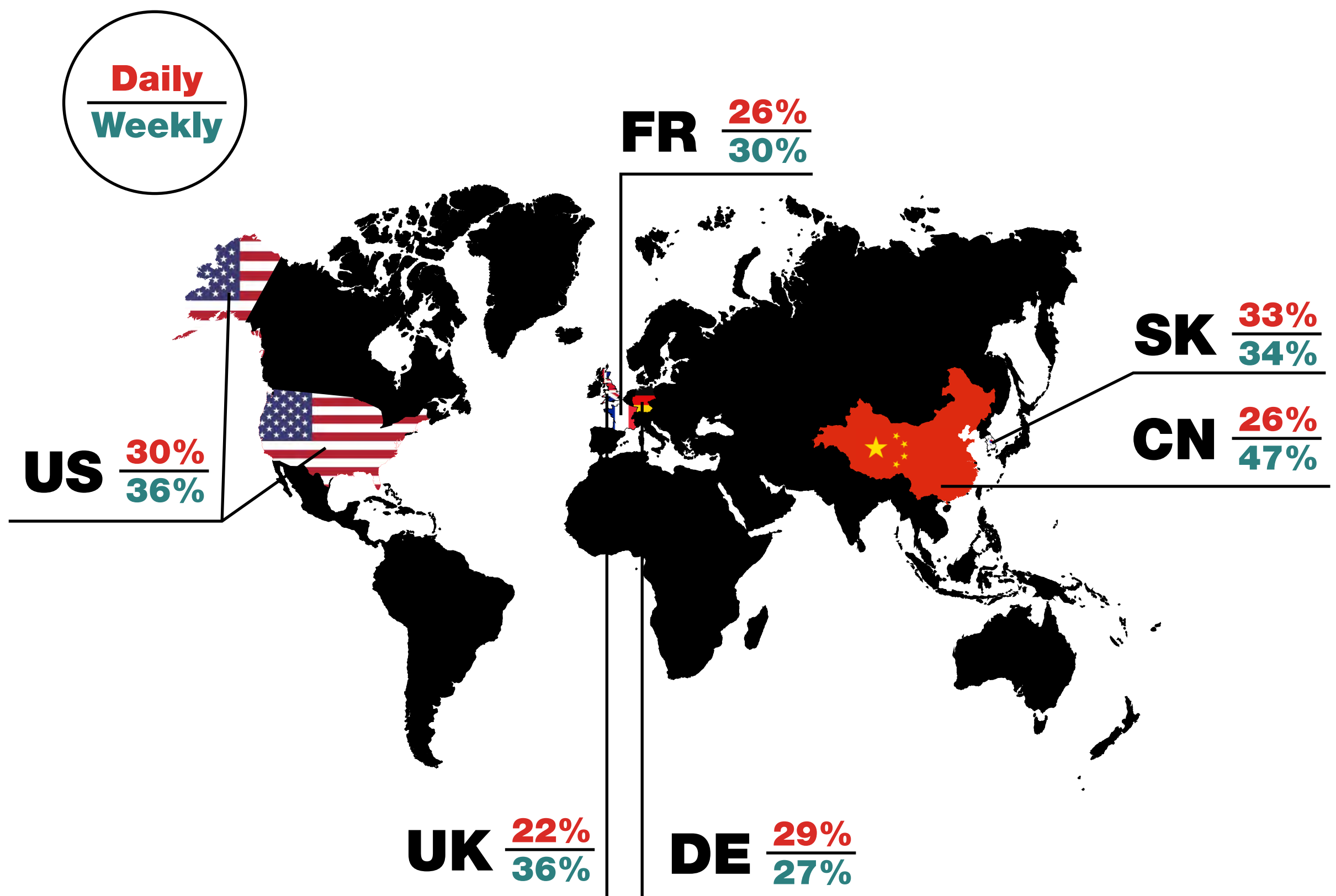
The performance won Riot Games a Sports Emmy for Outstanding Live Graphic Design - the first Sports Emmy won by an esports-related event.

The synergy between esports and cutting-edge technology means there are limitless ways to blend fantasy and reality and create unprecedented new stories and experiences.

Perhaps the best and most obvious advantage of esports from a storytelling perspective, however, is the unbelievable connection many pro players have with their fans. Unlike most pro athletes, pro gamers are right there in the mix with their audience via personal accounts on Twitter, reddit, Twitch, YouTube, Facebook, and more.



ESPORTS FAN ENGAGEMENT WITH GAMING PERSONALITIES




Fans always want more interaction with their favorite personalities, and pro gamers are more incentivized than almost any other celebrities in history to build a responsive online brand and encourage these connections.

These unscripted, authentic conversations - posted and broadcast for the world to see - mean that pro players feel more like the best reflections of ourselves rather than untouchable gods. They transcend the normal gamer world, yet remain within arm's reach.

Fans will do anything for a great player who also lets them into their life and cares about setting a good example. This intensity of engagement and loyalty can create unparalleled opportunities for branding and marketing... if approached intelligently.

The Power of the *Beautiful* WEIRD

Esports pros don't just share tournament placings and strategic tips over social media and video - they talk about pop culture, family problems, food, politics, funny moments in their day, dealing with burnout and depression, and much more. They meme and troll and issue zany proclamations about life, just like all of their fans, except to a much larger audience.



This is the first time that an entire generation at home is seeing themselves reflected, celebrated, and held up as heroes through stars who are just as beautifully weird as they are.

Many pro players, for their part, understand that their value rests as much on their fanbase as their skill. They see how much other people look up to them and continue to cheer them on despite losses and challenges, and they feel a responsibility to connect to their fans honestly.



When you have a population of intelligent, driven, passionate gamers and athletes who know they are loved by thousands of people for their quirks and not in spite of them, the worst thing you can do is try to make them look and sound like everyone else.



hungrybox

@LiquidHbox

Sorry for losing my temper. Someone threw a fucking raw crab at me. After a 5 set losers run. Barely missed my head.

What the fuck man

Anyway GGs, no clue how I won that

*After winning a heated grand finals set at the Pound 2019 major for Super Smash Bros. Melee, someone in the crowd threw a crab at Juan "Hungrybox" DeBiedma's head. He expressed outrage in the moment on camera, then later **tweeted this.***

While media training is highly recommended for all esports pros, the goal should not be to turn them into cookie-cutter PR muppets but rather to give them the tools and guidelines to express their originality in constructive - or at least non-harmful ways.

It's a staple of entertainment celebrity culture that fans want to know as much detail as possible about the stars they admire, and esports isn't any different - just much more interactive. In the esports storytelling business, when we recognize and highlight a player's uniqueness well, fans connect to them more deeply because they better appreciate the player as a fellow multi-faceted human being. That fan connection is what drives the most value in esports, whether through media rights, sponsorships, merchandising, digital subscriptions, event ticket sales, or ad impressions.

A fan that feels a deep connection is a fan who will spread that passion to others, including new generations. That's the kind of marketing money can't buy.

Case Study:

Sneaky's Gender-Defying Cosplay

Name: Zach “Sneaky” Scuderi

Age: 24

Esport: League of Legends

Team: Cloud9


Position: AD Carry





Sneaky has competed against the best in the League of Legends World Championship tournament and is an established fan favorite and veteran of the scene. He's also an increasingly accomplished cosplayer who has been posting **stunning photos** of himself in feminine cosplay since 2018 and successfully monetizing the content, with over 1,200 fans contributing their own money monthly to the **Patreon** created for the project. It's not just about looking glamorous, though - Sneaky thinks of his actions in much larger and more strategic terms.

Who can imagine LeBron James, Harry Kane, or Messi doing something like this on their own time or making this kind of statement? Sneaky is challenging his audience - and perceptions of what a pro gamer should be or stand for - and it caught BMW's attention. Cloud9 **recently announced** an upcoming collaboration with the storied carmaker which featured a cosplaying Sneaky and his colleagues, proving that even global, mainstream brands are ready to embrace the unconventional sides of players just like their fans do.



“Most of the time I know [people who see my cosplay photos] are just seeing something new to their eyes so of course their first reaction is ‘what is this?’ ... It’s cool that I get to expose closed-minded people to stuff that might make them more open-minded in the future. That seems like a pretty good direction for the human race.”

Zach “Sneaky” Scuderi, Newsweek

Case Study:

Pengu and Goga's Christmas Cupcake Challenge



Name: Niclas "Pengu" Mouritzen

Age: 21

Esport: Rainbow 6 Siege

Team: G2 Esports

Position: Flex



Name: Daniel "Goga" Mazorra Romero

Age: 24

Esport: Rainbow 6 Siege

Team: G2 Esports

Position: Support

G2 Esports recently featured two of their Rainbow Six Siege players, Pengu and Goga, **in a fun short video** that showcased their personalities, artistic abilities, and holiday spirit last winter.



Daniel Mazorra Romero



GOGA

G2 Rainbow Six Siege Player

Niclas Mouritzen



PENGU

G2 Rainbow Six Siege Player

In this video, each player decorated cupcakes based on three themes - a Christmas tree, Santa Claus, and “your own imagination” - while explaining their creative process and bantering playfully à la popular competitive cooking shows like The Great British Bake Off. The cupcakes were then judged by teammate Juhani “Kantoraketti” Toivonen and, of course, eaten enthusiastically. The concept of the video was already compelling for its familiarity and visual appeal, but what stood out was the

personality of each player and their total willingness to engage in an activity that was very much outside the norm for professional gamers (or pro athletes, for that matter). Even though there was no mention of Pengu and Goga’s in-game activities, it was easy to see that Pengu was outspoken and strategic while Goga was earnest and patient, which completely fits their respective competitive roles as flex and support players.



Crisian376

And this is why G2 win everything... find 1 team with better companion-ship between players I dare you, love the vid btw and also... LET'S GO G2



Derna X

That's why I love G2 R6 Team



Rmc D

More from R6 G2 !!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! They are soooo funny, Love it!



The 30K+ views and 170+ overwhelmingly positive comments on the video show that it hit its mark among fans.



G2 created a high-quality content piece that brought out their players' innate personalities by encouraging them to express themselves freely in a new context, which is consistent with the approach they take to marketing their other players and teams as well. The combination of a quirky, charming concept and pro players who are willing to throw themselves into it can create magic for esports audiences - without competition footage or expensive special effects.



Not every pro player is going to cosplay, decorate cupcakes, or intentionally thwart social expectations. Regardless of their particular idiosyncracies, though, they are collectively our greatest storytelling asset and deserve to be captured as the complex human beings that they are.

How to Embrace the

CHAOS

and Prepare for

EVOLUTION

ESPORTS

is a multi-dimensional, multi-headed beast that spans different games, attitudes, ecosystems, countries, budgets, controllers, and more. Instead of trying to downplay our differences in esports storytelling, it makes much more sense to articulate and celebrate them.

Here are some ideas to consider when trying to tell an esports story with any kind of human interest angle:



Don't tell the same sports-style stories over and over again. If you've seen the plot in a movie, try not to use it heavily.

Do find unique ways to celebrate your players' achievements in terms that are meaningful to their fans and peers.



Don't underestimate the power of a open, sincere personality in a pro gamer - that's someone whose natural instincts will help them forge generational fans through social media and streaming.

Do give pro players the resources and training to handle the ups and downs of esports celebrity with grace - including ways to handle trolls and other unwanted attention.



Don't overly censor pro players' concerns or expressions of negative sentiment, but don't overlook them, either - a player's honest thoughts are important to their brand, even if they're not expressed in the most polished way.

Do highlight pro players' side hobbies and personality traits with thoughtfulness and, if appropriate, humor.



And one more important caveat:



Don't forget that one or two personality quirks alone do not make an esports star - the player's competitive relevance must be established first.

When trying to appeal to esports' young, global, digitally native, hyper-connected audience, it's no longer about sanding down the rough edges of tech jargon and fantasy lore to fit some kind of traditional sports ideal. Although esports is relatively new, the passion that has fueled its incredible growth for the past two decades proves that it's here to stay. We need to start thinking and talking about esports in its own terms to ride the wave - reinventing the sports lexicon and embracing a nerdy, offbeat, mutating, melodramatic, inspiring, digital and physical ecosystem.

If pro gamers are willing to put themselves out there and connect with fans more honestly and intimately than ever before, those of us who are telling their stories can at least try to understand those efforts and accept that - in this new world - there is no such thing as “normal.”

So, the next time you are tempted to gloss over some less-than-totally-mainstream-friendly detail in an esports or pro gamer's story, remember that we're not the ones leading the charge.

It's the *beautiful* **WEIRDOS.**

And it is not just good karma but also good business to celebrate more of who they are and want to be.

The Story Mob is the world's first communications consultancy focused solely on esports.

We came together to form The Story Mob because we believe that esports fans are the most valuable fans in the world, and there is only one way to reach them: through authentic, transparent, and timely communication.

We also saw a genuine gap in the market for brands, teams, and companies who wanted to effectively reach esports fans, but couldn't quite speak their language. We believe that our esports ecosystem has a long way to go when it comes to effective communications.

The Story Mob is proud to represent some of the top names in the industry: from endemic and non-endemic brands in the space, to esports organizations competing in top tier tournaments and most popular on-air talent.



**THE
STORY
MOB**

**IF YOU HAVE A STORY,
WE HAVE THE MEGAPHONE.**



We embrace the joy in competitive play by working with stakeholders who are seeking ways to build and bolster the scene for fans and for pros.

Our vision is a future in which pro teams, players, brands, and investors we work with are able to harness the potential and reach of esports fans through meaningful communication strategy and engagement. We want to help them identify core messages and share authentic, inspiring stories of heroes through earned and owned channels. By providing strategic communication support, we promise measurable brand recognition and engagement, boosting fan loyalty and attracting external investment.

Based on years of experience working with the world's largest competitive gaming communities, **we help you cut the fluff and create impactful, authentic outreach to esports fans.** Whether you're a legacy brand or new to the esports space, as your strategic communication partners we can help refine your message. We'll engage your target audience, plan effective communications campaigns, manage media relations, help weather the storms, and develop and deploy your own unique esports voice.



But wait, there's more!

**Check out our first whitepaper: The Seven
Commandments of Esports Communications**

The Story Mob *Founders*

Founded by the industry's most experienced communications professionals, **The Story Mob** is the world's first international communications consultancy focused on esports. Throughout our years in the industry, we've worked within some of the biggest esports communities in the world and learned the ways in which brands and investors - existing and new, endemic and non-endemic - can add value to the world's fastest growing sport.



**Anna
Rozwandowicz**

Before co-founding the world's first esports communications consultancy, **The Story Mob**, Anna was the **VP of Communications at ESL**. Leading a worldwide team at the world's largest esports company, Anna has overseen global corporate communications, public relations, crisis management, and internal communications on behalf of ESL. Her team developed and deployed communication strategies for all of ESL's major tournaments across the world's top titles: ESL One, Pro League and Intel Extreme Masters, in League of Legends, CS:GO, StarCraft II and Dota 2. She's also led the setup of the industry's first integrity initiative (ESIC), is **an adviser for the Cybersmile Foundation, and a mentor at leAD Sports Accelerator**.



**Nicola
Piggott**

After a 10-year career in brand communications, Nicola spent over five years at Riot Games, where she led **global communication for Riot's esports team** and the most successful esports title in history. Nicola has given counsel and training to esports teams' organizations worldwide. **Named one of PR Week's Top Women in PR in 2015**, she has managed communications around global events like the League of Legends World Championship, which in 2018 was the most-watched esports event to date with over 99 million unique viewers.



**Kalie
Moore**

Before co-founding **The Story Mob**, Kalie was **Head of Communications for BITKRAFT Esports Ventures**, the first investment fund entirely dedicated to esports. Through her work with BITKRAFT's portfolio companies, Kalie has overseen the communications strategy, crisis communications, and media relations for esports technology startups seeking coverage in mainstream business, financial and tech news. Previously, Kalie **drove growth, led marketing**, and garnered media attention for startups and corporate clients across Europe and the US.



Wanna hear about the time we launched a rebrand of one of the world's best-known esports leagues, coordinated a top-secret brand collaboration between a team and one of the biggest franchises in global entertainment, or transformed a team owner into a one-man lightning rod for esports personality and style in mainstream media?

WE'D **LOVE** TO TELL YOU

WWW.THESTORYMOB.COM

Or reach out to

CONTACT@THESTORYMOB.COM

If you'd like to stay up to date on all things esports comms, drop us a line **[here](#)** and we will make sure to keep you in the loop.

Editorial oversight by Mobster **[Christina Kelly](#)**.

Photos credit: ESL