



Raising the Stakes: E-Sports and the Professionalization of Computer Gaming (MIT Press)

By T. L. Taylor

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Competitive video and computer game play is nothing new: the documentary *King of Kong* memorably portrays a Donkey Kong player's attempts to achieve the all-time highest score; the television show *Starcade* (1982--1984) featured competitions among arcade game players; and first-person shooter games of the 1990s became multiplayer through network play. A new development in the world of digital gaming, however, is the emergence of professional computer game play, complete with star players, team owners, tournaments, sponsorships, and spectators. In *Raising the Stakes*, T. L. Taylor explores the emerging scene of professional computer gaming and the accompanying efforts to make a sport out of this form of play. In the course of her explorations, Taylor travels to tournaments, including the World Cyber Games Grand Finals (which considers itself the computer gaming equivalent of the Olympics), and interviews participants from players to broadcasters. She examines pro-gaming, with its highly paid players, play-by-play broadcasts, and mass audience; discusses whether or not e-sports should even be considered sports; traces the player's path from amateur to professional (and how a hobby becomes work); and describes the importance of leagues, teams, owners, organizers, referees, sponsors, and fans in shaping the structure and culture of pro-gaming. Taylor connects professional computer gaming to broader issues: our notions of play, work, and sport; the nature of spectatorship; the influence of money on sports. And she examines the ongoing struggle over the gendered construction of play through the lens of male-dominated pro-gaming. Ultimately, the evolution of professional computer gaming illuminates the contemporary struggle to convert playful passions into serious play.

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Editorial Review

Review

The recent explosion in the popularity of competitive gaming lacks a sufficient amount of documented history for people to truly appreciate just how far professional video gaming has come. Finally, T.L. Taylor provides an amazing perspective on eSports that will educate fans about a period of competitive play that's nearly been forgotten. Forget what history you may know, this book gives you the history you should know.

(**Marcus "djWHEAT" Graham**, Host and Executive Producer, *OneMoreGame.tv*)

T.L. Taylor has been among the best analysts of the media we have had over the past decade. Now she turns her exacting but always entertaining scrutiny to e-sports, with all the power we have come to expect of a participant observer of the highest order.

(Toby Miller, author of *Makeover Nation*)

In *Raising the Stakes*, T. L. Taylor does exactly what the title promises by giving us the first serious academic take on the world of competitive e-sports. She touches on every aspect of the new cyberathleticism, always carefully balancing enthusiasm and skepticism.

(Henry Lowood, Curator for History of Science & Technology Collections, Stanford University)

This book is about much more than the e-sports scene. T.L. Taylor uses e-sports as a lens for looking at the confluence of social, cultural and technological practices that are reshaping human interaction as digital culture at both the local everyday level and at the broader level of global techno-politics.

(Bart Simon, Director of the Centre for Technoculture, Art and Games, Concordia University, Montreal)

... Taylor has given us a great account of an exciting part of gaming culture.

(Faltin Karlsen *Times Higher Education*)

While *Raising the Stakes* fits neatly within the gaming studies or media studies genres, it is also an exciting and novel contribution to the growing body of work in what might be termed global technology studies.

(Jenna Burrell *Contemporary Sociology*)

Raising the Stakes is a must not only for game studies but also media and internet studies researchers as a wonderfully nuanced study of century-first digital play-based in DIY, grassroots ideology-in the face of burgeoning leisure commercialization. Play on.

(*Game Studies*)

Esports is a fascinating collision of new technology and culture with traditional sports structure, and is a phenomenon that could only happen in the present. There is a growing body of research around the growing esports phenomenon, and this book provides a great primer into the academic perspective on the emerging culture. In my opinion, this is the book to refer anyone to who is interested in understanding esports -- for both newcomers and veterans.

(Timothy Young *Day9*)

Taylor's book is a valuable piece of scholarship that lays the groundwork for further investigation into all aspects of video games as sport and players as athletes.

(Steve Jacobs *American Journal of Play*)

About the Author

T. L. Taylor is Associate Professor in Comparative Media Studies at MIT. She is the author of *Play Between Worlds: Exploring Online Game Culture* (MIT Press).

Users Review

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Amy Medina:

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