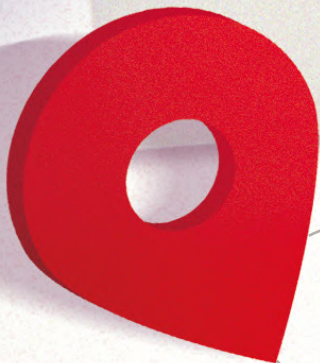


THE  
STORY  
MOB



SPORTS



EXTRA INNINGS:  
**A GUIDE TO NAVIGATING  
DIGITAL FANDOM**





# DEAR SPORTS,

It may not seem like it, but without you there would be no us. We are standing on the shoulders of giants. It's our dream that the era of sport we represent might one day be as celebrated as the stick and ball sports who came before us.

There's so many things that we share - most of all, **WHY** we do this. The community created alongside fans. The unforgettable **"DID YOU JUST SEE THAT?"** moments that live forever. The pure joy of victory and the agony of defeat. Our shared human stories transcend their platform -- digital or traditional.

Like you, we are gripped by uncertainty; having to find new ways to operate and stay connected when we don't know what tomorrow will bring.

We have learned so much from you over a century of existence. While we're all counting the days until we can cheer on our heroes in packed stadiums, we see the industry adjusting course to meet fans where they are...online. It's a formidable task.

Luckily, **THIS IS OUR NEIGHBORHOOD.** We are able to take our games, our tournaments and our championships back online - and we know that it might seem daunting going from physical spaces to digital connections.

With this letter, we're hoping to repay even a tiny bit of the wisdom you've given us over the years.

LET'S TAKE THIS STEP TOGETHER.

#WESPORTS

# BABY

# STEPS

**MORE AND MORE THESE DAYS** we're seeing professional athletes doing their part by playing their league-specific game title live on Twitch (more on that later). Whether it is NBA2K or F1, the audience tunes in for the name and looks forward to the kind of banter and interaction they don't usually have with these untouchable idols. That's not always the result.

Let's remember what it takes for popular esports pros to get to the top. Just like their traditional sports colleagues, they practice for hours to perfect their game - not even counting the extra blood, sweat and tears of growing a community and a brand from scratch in one of the most competitive and ruthless markets out there. Whether it's streaming gameplay or creating unique content, would-be superstars need to put in the work.



# IMAGINE LEBRON JAMES\* ...



*\*Not actually LeBron James*

...PRACTICING LAYUPS WITH A GOPRO STRAPPED TO HIS HEAD. Not only is he expected to make basket after basket, he has to simultaneously communicate with teammates AND interact with hundreds (or thousands) of fans, any of whom pay money to subscribe to his practices. If he misses one day of these fan-attended practices, those same fans might switch to someone else's practice and not come back, taking a chunk of revenue with them. When LeBron is done with his 10-plus hours of public practices, he'll need to practice more on his own into the late hours, to make sure his skills stay sharp and he doesn't reveal any strategies he wants to keep under wraps.

**HE'LL GET UP THE NEXT DAY AND DO IT ALL AGAIN.**

**24H STREAM WHEN?**

**GOD**

**!UPTIME**

**RIGGED**

**LUL**

**GG**

**BOT**

**NOOB**

**POG**

# HERE'S THE GOOD NEWS:

Unlike the real LeBron, who may as well be behind glass for most sports fans, **THE ESPORTS VERSIONS ARE LIVING, BREATHING EXAMPLES** of sportsmen and women building their brands and telling their stories online. They've had practice at building a community from the ground up - and they're here to light the path through the world of streaming and online interactions.

- Trembling on **THE BRINK** before launching your first stream?
- Advising your athletes to give this "**LIVESTREAMING**" **THING A GO**?
- Trying to figure out **HOW TO TALK** to your community on a new platform?

Take a masterclass stroll through the streams of [DrDisrespect](#), [Rakin](#), [Pokimane](#), [TimTheTatman](#) and more.

**JUST BECAUSE THEY MAKE THIS SHIT LOOK EASY, DOESN'T MEAN IT IS.**



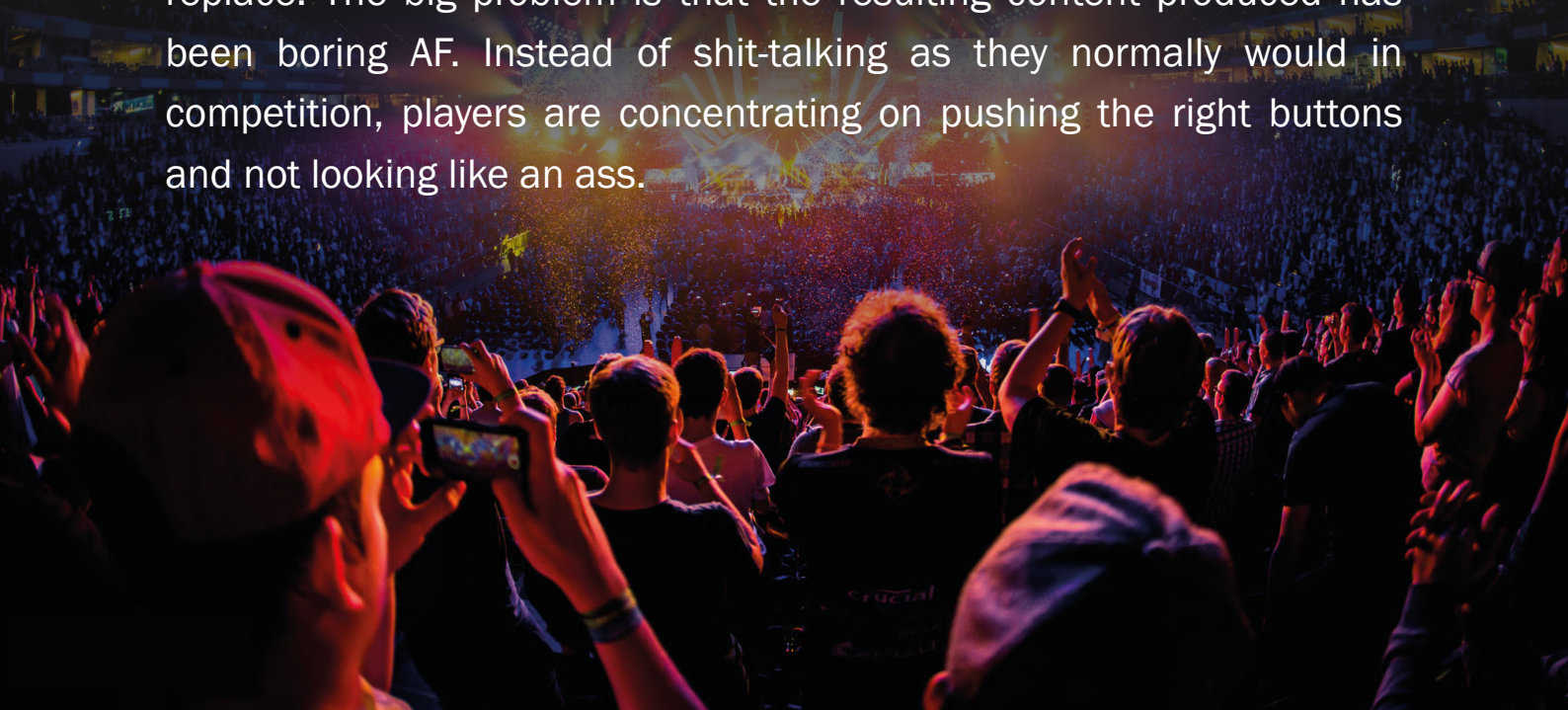
GAME

RECOGNIZE

GAME

WHAT ALLOWS ESPORTS TO GROW AND EXPAND IS THE WIDE ARRAY OF TITLES AVAILABLE TO PLAYERS TO PARTICIPATE IN AND FANS TO WATCH. THERE IS A GENRE FOR ALMOST EVERYONE.

We've seen most major leagues leaning on their sport-specific titles while waiting for play to resume. It's a reasonable approach - smack bang in the comfort zone, no tricky IP issues and likely to be the closest approximation of whatever shuttered sport the stream is designed to replace. The big problem is that the resulting content produced has been boring AF. Instead of shit-talking as they normally would in competition, players are concentrating on pushing the right buttons and not looking like an ass.



**WHETHER YOU'RE  
A PLAYER AGENT,  
PUBLICIST OR EVEN  
A LEAGUE PR,**

**THERE'S A BETTER  
WAY TO KEEP YOUR  
HEROES IN THE  
SPOTLIGHT:**

**SET THEM FREE.**

OUR CHALLENGE TO YOU IS TO **EXPAND THE GAMES PLAYED** BY YOUR PRO PLAYERS AND BROADCASTED ON YOUR CHANNELS.

**WHY?** BECAUSE YOUR PLAYERS ARE ALREADY PLAYING POPULAR GAMES IN THEIR DOWNTIME. SOME ATHLETES AND GAMES INCLUDE:



**GORDON HAYWARD (NBA)**

League of Legends,  
VALORANT, Clash Royale,  
Fortnite, Overwatch



**AERIAL POWERS (WNBA)**

Call of Duty: Modern Warfare,  
APEX Legends, VALORANT



**ZACK HYMAN (NHL)**

Call of Duty: Warzone,  
Fortnite



**RICHARD SHERMAN (NFL)**

Call of Duty: Warzone



**NAOMI OSAKA (USTA)**

Overwatch



**BRYCE HARPER (MLB)**

Fortnite



**THIS ALSO  
OPENS UP THE  
OPPORTUNITY  
FOR CROSSOVER.**



Team up your superstar player who happens to be a **HUGE LEAGUE OF LEGENDS FAN** with Svenskeren from Evil Geniuses and have them duo-queue together.

Drop into **FORTNITE** with a squad mixed of teammates and 72hrs from Team Liquid.

Is your star athlete a big fan of car racing but can't race because of contract limitations? Dare to be vulnerable and ask Brandon Leigh or Ray Alfalla to show your guy how to race a virtual car in **F1 OR NASCAR**.

**PROFESSIONAL ATHLETES ARE NATURALLY COMPETITIVE** and want to know as much as they can to get better at whatever they do, whether that's sinking three-pointers or juggling on the Rift.



The content that comes as a result of these experiences is authentic and not forced, leading to wider engagement. **ENGAGEMENT IS KEY - OTHERWISE IT'S HOME VIDEO.** Engagement is what develops fans and keeps them tuned in when presented with a billion other options of content to consume.

# BEST CASE SCENARIO?



A superstar athlete brings sports fans to esports - and vice versa.



# WORST CASE?



The athlete takes a few humbling headshots on de\_dust2 and endears themself to a new population of fans.





# Now IS

# THE TIME

**JUMBOTRON ADS JUST DON'T LAND THE SAME IN EMPTY SPORTS STADIUMS.** Without live activations and broadcasts, WSJ estimates that **APPROXIMATELY \$1 BILLION WILL BE PULLED** by blue chip advertisers this year. Budgets are being tightened and people are losing their jobs because the safe and reliable bet is gone for the foreseeable future. It's a scary and uncertain time.

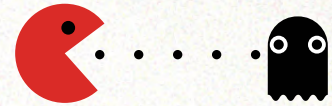
In the midst of all this is a chink of opportunity. Now more than ever a digitally-connected, affluent audience is online nearly all the time. Brands have an unprecedented opportunity to reach an illusive demo of cord-cutters, undistracted, unchallenged and ready to engage.

You may not get your name on a banner in a stadium (for the foreseeable), but now is still among the best times to redirect those sponsorship dollars into esports and interactive gaming entertainment. For companies who have dipped their toe into the esports space or are flirting with the idea of entering, a bold decision in the face of uncertainty could mean a massive payoff.

## WANT TO START SMALL?



Become the title sponsor for an esports team's gameplay highlights released on social media.



## A LITTLE BIGGER?



Direct your ad dollars to create an original multi-episode content series produced by the team.



## WANT TO GO ALL-IN?



Get your company's logo on jerseys as the team competes or streams, inclusion in team branding across all platforms, premium logo placement on Twitch streams by players and influencers, unique content on social media, and more!



If team sponsorship isn't your thing, look at the major esports leagues who continue to grow in audience size or purchasing ad space on Twitch. Or imagine becoming the title sponsor to an in-game Fortnite concert and attracting millions of viewers, players, and press.

**COMPANIES ARE ONLY LIMITED BY THEIR IMAGINATION AND WILLINGNESS TO ENTER A SPACE THAT IS NEW TO THEM BECAUSE ESPORTS AND GAMING WON'T STOP TO WAIT FOR THEM TO CATCH UP.**



**WHEN IT COMES DOWN TO IT,  
DEAR SPORTS, NONE OF THIS  
IS EASY.**

**WE'VE JUST BEEN MAKING  
IT LOOK THAT WAY.**

After years of looking on agog, it's our turn to show you what we know. Let's combine forces and spread a little community and connection when we all need it the most.





**TOGETHER, WE GOT THIS.**

**#WESTPORTS**



## THIS GUIDE IS BROUGHT TO YOU BY:

### LEAD AUTHOR:

**JEN NEALE**



Jen Neale joined The Story Mob after building a communications shop from scratch at Immortals Gaming Club (IGC), acting as IGC's one-woman PR and media relations army for IGC's corporate initiatives and esports brands Immortals (NA LCS), LA Valiant (Overwatch League), OpTic Gaming LA (Call of Duty League) and MIBR (Counter-Strike and Rainbow Six). Prior to diving head first into esports, Jen was a writer and editor for Yahoo! Sports and its NHL vertical, Puck Daddy. After spending years in traditional sports where the 'rules' have been set for a century, she sees so much potential for creativity and innovation in esports.

### MANAGING EDITOR:

**NICOLA PIGGOTT**



After a 10-year career in brand communications, Nicola spent over five years at Riot Games, where she was leading 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 Championships which in 2017 was the most watched esports event to date with over 80 million unique viewers.

### MARKETING PROJECT MANAGER:

**JOANNA DUDA**



Before joining The Story Mob, Joanna was a Pro Gaming Content Manager at ESL. She was the first point of contact for communication plans around all pro level products, e.g. ESL One, Intel Extreme Masters, ESL Pro League. Her work consisted of planning and executing a variety of editorial and social content, making sure that the pro products receive proper attention and promotion on social media channels. She also delivered live coverage of several ESL events around the globe, as well as coverage for external clients such as Bandai Namco.

### PROJECT LEAD:

**ANNA ROZWANDOWICZ**



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



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