

The very male, billion-dollar gaming industry

Level 3 • Advanced

1 Warmer

Answer the following questions.

- How often do you play video games?
 - every day
 - often
 - once in a while
 - never
- What kind of video games do you like best?
 - sports
 - action
 - war
 - sci-fi

2 Key words

Complete the sentences using these key words from the text.

enthusiast
gaming

directive
euphoria

disparity
pursuit

eligible
patchy

venue
lull

- _____ is the activity of playing video games.
- An _____ is someone who is very interested in something and spends a lot of time doing it.
- A _____ is the place where an activity or event happens.
- A _____ is an order to do or not to do something.
- A _____ is a quiet period during a very active situation.
- _____ is a feeling of great happiness that usually only lasts for a short time.
- A _____ is an activity that you enjoy.
- If something is _____, it is good sometimes but not always.
- _____ is the difference between things.
- If you are _____ to do something, you are allowed by rules to do it.

3 Find the information

Find the following information in the text as quickly as possible.

- How much prize money was available for the women's tournament?
- How much money was in the prize pool for the IEM tournament?
- How many teams were competing at the IEM tournament?
- How old were most of the people attending the event?
- How long did the IEM tournament last?
- How many games did a team need to win on order to win a round?

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Extreme eSports: the very male, billion-dollar gaming industry at a stadium near you

A crowd of 18,000 filled a Sydney arena recently to watch groups of young men play video games for huge cash prizes

Alex McKinnon

7 May, 2018

- 1 Whenever an artist scheduled to play the Qudos Bank Arena in Sydney doesn't sell enough tickets, black cloth is placed over the empty seats in the theatre's uppermost section. Filling more than 18,000 seats is quite a challenge, which is why only top-flight acts like Pink, Katy Perry, Shania Twain and Kendrick Lamar are attempting it in 2018.
- 2 The black cloth is not needed today. Sydney gaming enthusiasts have filled the venue almost to capacity for the Intel Extreme Masters (IEM), a three-day professional video-game tournament that rivals anything the arena has hosted in terms of scale and spectacle.
- 3 Two groups of five men are onstage, seated at computer monitors. Headphones on, they sit almost completely immobile except for their hands and eyes. Their coaches stand behind them, watching the screens and muttering directives into their microphones.
- 4 Behind them, two enormous television monitors broadcast their onscreen actions. On the dusty streets of a village, a band of balaclava-clad separatists is shot to pieces by a matching squad of Special Forces soldiers. Thirty seconds later, the soldiers are the ones being cut down, shot by a sniper as they stumble through a veil of smoke. A bomb planted on a cache of chemical weapons ignites, presumably killing thousands.
- 5 The enthralled crowd watches on, occasionally roaring its collective approval or disappointment. It is overwhelmingly male, although not noticeably more so than your average rugby match. The main difference from any other sporting audience is that of age: the vast majority of attendees are in their 20s and 30s.
- 6 During lulls in play, they amuse themselves in the time-honoured way of bored Australian sports fans everywhere: by throwing around a few beach balls and taunting security's efforts to stop them. Chants of "Aussie! Aussie! Aussie! Oi! Oi! Oi!" are just as regular and inane as they are at the cricket. When events onscreen reach a climax, the immense amphitheatre thunders with the crowd's euphoria. If this scene sounds made up, you have officially missed the boat on the eSports phenomenon. Competitive gaming is a billion-dollar industry and Sydney has become its domestic epicentre.
- 7 Sixteen professional teams from as far afield as Europe, Brazil, the United States and China are competing at IEM for a share in the \$310,000 prize pool. Individual games take less than two minutes. Whichever team wins 16 games takes the round, like a set in a game of tennis, and the team that wins two of three rounds wins the contest and advances to the next stage.
- 8 For competitors, this is not an amateur pursuit – it is a livelihood and a possible ticket to sponsorship and stardom. While large-scale eSports events like IEM are relatively new in Australia, tournaments in other countries routinely attract tens of thousands of attendees and millions of livestream views.
- 9 As the scene has become increasingly professionalized, competitive eSports has begun to resemble traditional sport. Like any other sport, it has its own doping scandals, injuries, and pay and contract disputes.
- 10 Teams are increasingly joining the World eSports Association, a body designed to standardize pay, conditions, rights and regulations across the industry. The major brands attract the same loyalty and fanaticism of elite sports teams. Their uniforms bear the logos of sponsors and they scout lower pool-stage tournaments for talented players to sign.
- 11 Twenty-one-year-old Australian Oliver Tierney has been playing professionally for a year. Tierney has already played at international tournaments in London, Korea, the Philippines, Malaysia and New Zealand, and is going to Dallas soon with Australian team Grayhound Gaming. "I love the competitiveness of it. I love the group aspect," Tierney says. "I never thought I'd be here in a million years."
- 12 While Tierney has established himself abroad, he's also keen to grow eSports domestically. "The industry's just going to keep growing and growing," he says. "We're completely behind in Australia at the moment; our internet's too patchy, no one takes games seriously, the culture's not there yet. But every kid these days knows what

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eSports is. The new generation coming through is where it's going to happen."

- 13 As the 16 male teams battle it out, a domestic women's tournament plays in a side room. Around 100 people sit in the audience, making it the only space at IEM with more than a handful of women at any given time. It's a reminder of the gender disparity that permeates both sports and gaming culture. Like almost any other sport, women eSports tournaments are woefully underpaid compared to the main international tournament, which is dominated by men. The two women's teams in the grand final are only competing for the lion's share of \$10,000 in prize money.
- 14 The main tournament is not formally gender segregated but while women are eligible to compete, there were no female players in the 16 teams over the weekend. It's a circumstance that

points more to the sexism present in the wider gaming scene than any disparity in ability. Nicole Constantine is the Sydney Saints' manager, handling their schedules and day-to-day logistics. She thinks that while gender equality in eSports is a way off, the "step-by-step" work of women like the Saints is breaking down the barriers.

- 15 By Sunday, only two of the 16 male teams remain: FaZe Clan, the home crowd favourites, and Astralis, described as "possibly the best team in the world". The final takes nearly five hours and when FaZe Clan finally win, the arena erupts. And as Sydney goes about its Sunday, unaware of the growing phenomenon in its midst, 18,000 gaming fans stand to cheer their new champions.

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4 Comprehension check

Choose the best answer according to the text.

- Which of these statements is true?
 - Sydney is the global centre of competitive gaming.
 - Sydney is the centre of competitive gaming in Australia.
 - Sydney is completely new to the world of competitive gaming.
- Women are ...
 - ... not allowed to compete in the IEM tournament.
 - ... paid just as much as men in competitive gaming.
 - ... allowed to compete in the IEM tournament.
- The Qudos Bank Arena was ...
 - ... completely full for the IEM tournament.
 - ... half-full for the IEM tournament.
 - ... almost full for the IEM tournament.
- How long does an individual game last?
 - less than two minutes
 - less than two hours
 - three days

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5 Find the word

Find the following words and phrases in the text.

1. an adjective meaning *in the highest position* (para 1)
2. an adjective meaning *not moving* (para 3)
3. an adjective meaning *so interested or excited by something that you give it all your attention* (para 5)
4. a two-word adjective meaning *done in the same way for a very long time* (para 6)
5. a verb meaning *shout cruel things at someone to make them angry or upset* (para 6)
6. a three-word verb phrase meaning *fail to take advantage of an opportunity* (para 6)
7. a three-word verb phrase meaning *compete with each other until there is a definite winner* (para 13)
8. an adverb used for emphasizing that something is very bad or does not happen enough (para 13)

6 Verbs

Match these verbs from the text with their meanings. Use the context of the verbs in the text to help you.

- | | |
|------------|--|
| 1. rival | a. start to burn |
| 2. mutter | b. suddenly be a lot of noise as people start shouting |
| 3. stumble | c. be as good as something or someone else |
| 4. ignite | d. look for someone who has a lot of ability |
| 5. scout | e. fall or almost fall when you are walking or running |
| 6. erupt | f. talk in a quiet voice that is difficult to hear |

7 Word-building

Complete the sentences with the correct form of the word in brackets at the end of each sentence.

1. The crowd roared its _____. [APPROVE]
2. The audience was _____ male. [OVERWHELM]
3. Most of the _____ were in the 20s and 30s. [ATTEND]
4. For the competitors, gaming is a _____, not a hobby. [LIVE]
5. Some players love the _____ of their 'sport'. [COMPETE]
6. Video-gaming teams attract the same _____ as major sports teams. [LOYAL]

8 Discussion

Discuss the statements.

- Video gaming isn't a proper sport.
- People who pay to watch someone else playing video games must be crazy.
- Video games require great skill and hand-eye coordination.

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KEY

2 Key words

1. gaming
2. enthusiast
3. venue
4. directive
5. lull
6. euphoria
7. pursuit
8. patchy
9. disparity
10. eligible

3 Find the information

1. \$10,000
2. \$310,000
3. sixteen
4. in their 20s and 30s
5. three days
6. sixteen

4 Comprehension check

1. b
2. c
3. c
4. a

5 Find the word

1. uppermost
2. immobile
3. enthralled
4. time-honoured
5. taunt
6. miss the boat
7. battle it out
8. woefully

6 Verbs

1. c
2. f
3. e
4. a
5. d
6. b

7 Word-building

1. approval
2. overwhelmingly
3. attendees
4. livelihood
5. competitiveness
6. loyalty