

Can clever launch strategies help indie studios compete with the giants?

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Slocap's multiplayer football title Rematch has already reportedly drawn over 1 million unique players just 24 hours after launch, making it another overnight hit from a French studio following Clair Obscur: Expedition 33's success in March.

But what is it about Rematch which is just so appealing to players - and can it finally challenge the hegemony of EA FC as the king of football games?



Despite both fundamentally being about kicking a ball into a goal, Rematch and EA FC are very different games. While EA FC strives to simulate real world football leagues, Rematch incorporates arcade-like abilities and arguably is the more grounded football experience of the two - letting players control just one player from an immersive third-person perspective and offering them more precise, technical control of their feet and the ball.

It's not just the controls which make Rematch feel so special. Slocap, who are also the creators of 2022's Sifu and 2017's Absolver, inject a uniquely French animation style into the game, reminiscent of Arcane (animated by French studio Fortiche) in its colourful, painterly aesthetic.

This unique combination of tight controls, beautiful aesthetics and action heritage from Sifu comes together to create an experience that has players feeling like they're straight out of the popular football anime Blue Lock every time they score a goal. This formula does seem to be attracting both sports and anime fans to the game, and may be the key to bringing those disparate groups together.

The game's attractive style and high-octane gameplay has been especially attractive to streamers, who appear to have picked up Rematch organically en masse.

I can't say for certain whether Sloclap deliberately targeted organic creators, but the fact that Rematch lends itself so well to content creation - with easily shareable clips garnering high levels of engagement - meant that potential players were likely to see some of the world's largest streamers such as Angry Ginge play the game.

These top-tier organic endorsements absolutely encouraged more people to check Rematch out - and once they found out it was free with GamePass, the decision to try it became even easier.

It wasn't just organic creators either - Sloclap partnered with The Sidemen to create paid content which seamlessly fit in with the influencer super group's existing audience and shot up to the #1 spot on YouTube's trending gaming page within 24 hours.

It hasn't all been smooth sailing for Rematch though. The game did not deliver on key promises like cross-play and faced bugs, lag, and stability issues at launch. But despite this, Sloclap have managed to satisfy the player base with their quick bugfixes and direct communication with fans - helping to retain trust and momentum during the critical launch moments.

If anything, the release of Rematch has proven that while your game doesn't have to be polished at launch, your launch strategy does.

I'm not sure if targeting anime fans and organic streamers was part of Sloclap's initial plan, but in an increasingly competitive market, perhaps finding new ways to bring together vastly different audiences is the best path forward for small studios.

