

Could Esports Help Level Up the UK Beyond London?

By Will Guyatt
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No matter how things change, they still stay the same. Having spent years defending the games industry from sensationalist headlines around violence and age-ratings, I've spent a considerable chunk of my week celebrating the legitimacy of Esports, and its value to the UK.



Many of my cynical broadcast friends like LBC's Nick Ferrari have just got over the games industry being the preserve of 'teenage nerds in the bedroom' - and now they are getting hot and bothered about the fact Esports talent are now infact elite athletes, or that "grown adults" spend time watching others competing in games tournaments.

The surge in interest around Esports has come from the excellent news the UK is getting a European-first national games and Esports arena. The deft-comparison by British Esports chairman Andy Payne, comparing it to football's St Georges' Park facility does a lot of the heavy lifting in explaining the vision and importance of this new facility in Sunderland and focuses attention on Esports and the development of future generations of talent.

Bringing Olympic and World Cup Esports tournaments to Sunderland doesn't just boost the games scene - it has huge benefits to the city. If you're here playing or watching - you're going to be eating, drinking and having fun while you're there. And also - anything that encourages the UK gaming industry out of London is a huge win for those of us that don't live within the M25.

Even if journalists like Nick feel like Esports isn't for them - they find it hard to argue when they see that over 1.2m British adults now regularly watch competitive games events - numbers that established media outlets would bit your arm off for in 2025.

You could say there's a 100m other reasons why Esports matters to the UK - with the sector now contributing a healthy £111.5m to our GDP every year.

The more Esports events we hold in the UK, and the more times the new Sunderland arena makes mainstream headlines, the easier it gets to explain the scene.

I might even get Nick Ferrari to join me on a Fortnite live stream too - there's still time.



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