

Sports Geek Nation AMA with Andrew Wray

Andrew Wray is the Founder and Special Content Lead of Snowball Esports.

Andrew started his career in the sports industry as an intern at the Adelaide Football Club where he worked with the commercial projects team assisting with drafting business plans and developing project ideas and concepts.

After Andrew's stint at the Crows and finishing Uni, he joined Riot Games which started his journey into the esports industry. As the Esports Player Manager, he worked around the bits and pieces around esports from building good relationships with stakeholders, team staff and players to liaising and developing internal systems to track and display the current team rosters.

In 2018, Andrew founded Snowball Esports an Australian-based hub for Oceanic esports currently covering the League of Legends Oceanic Pro League, Overwatch Contenders Australia and Oceanic CS:GO.

Connect with Andrew Wray on Twitter [@AWray7](#), [LinkedIn](#) and Slack [@awray](#)

Find out more about Snowball Esports at snowballesports.com

Here's the full transcript:

Links to names will link you into Slack community, if you are not a member [please sign up here](#).

Q. [seancallanan](#): I'll start [@awray](#) can you give everyone some insights into your esports story and what the last 18 months have been like at Snowball Esports?

A. [awray](#): My two biggest hobbies growing up were video games and watching sports

No surprises that very early on watching my first stream in 2011 I thought esports had some serious legs.

I graduated university at the end of 2015 and landed my first job at Riot Games in Sydney, spent the year there with the esports team and had an amazing time.

About 18 months ago I was left frustrated as a fan about the lack of esports coverage in the region of Australia and New Zealand, so I decided to start a blog that has now turned into a publication for oceanic esports.

It's been an absolute whirlwind for sure, I think the highest point so far was seeing our content featured in the League of Legends in game client for the first time, it's pretty rare to see third parties in the game client so it feels like a very big achievement.

Q. [lennygoh](#): @awray how big will Fortnite world cup be for bringing esports further into the mainstream spotlight?

A. [awray](#): The thing is fortnite is already such a behemoth, alright it's esports infrastructure may not be where it should be and events like this help but most people know what fortnite is and have avenues to get coverage on streamers and pro teams already.

Yes it's big but how big is up for debate

It's important to remember Esports has already has had big events and will continue to, recently Honda and Nissan joined teams as sponsors. It's already big, it's hard to know how much this event moves the needle.

Q. [Chris Derrick](#): @awray how do you choose which games/leagues/tournaments to cover? Specifically, from an editorial point of view how do you know what's genuine and what's just hype?

A. [awray](#): The criteria is sort of along these lines

1. Is it oceanic specific
2. Is the title/league big enough to warrant our time and effort
3. Resourcing

Being in the esports ecosystem you tend to have a very reliable gut feel on what's hot right now and that will reflect in our metrics.

The issue is almost always then down to resourcing and subject matter experts. We expanded into overwatch before CSGO and a big factor was due to the timing of two grand scale events in Melbourne and one of our existing writers having already developed a knowledge and network in the esport itself.

What's genuine vs hype is almost always around viewership numbers and how many conversations are you seeing around it.

If you're looking for longevity and what will be more than a flash in the pan, I'd look for a sign of "is this too big to disappear overnight"

Goes without saying if fortnite released a regional league we'll almost certainly cover it

Q. joliegee: @awray how did the scuffed tipping competition come about?

A. awray: It happened pretty quickly, Riot OCE had mentioned that they weren't going to host a tipping platform this year. As part of our commitment to try and engage the wider oceanic esports community we thought it would be a great idea for us to step up to the plate.

We made the platform and launched it in 2 days, so there's plenty of room for improvement. E.g. email reminders so people don't miss tips.

Overall happy with how it ended up.

Q. seancallanan: @awray what are your thoughts on the fan appetite for esports events growing? What events have you attended?

A. awray: This something I was thinking about the other day. It's interesting because it's usually week to week a purely digitally consumed product so live events have to break usual viewership habits.

But I think live events are incredibly important, I think the biggest aspect that is hard to measure is the sense of community it creates. Sure memeing in twitch chat with other fans on a Saturday night is an interactive experience but if you take sports as the prime example the roar of thousands is something that sticks with you and probably helps hold your interest for longer.

It's a fine line though, live events are very expensive to run which makes it very hard to justify it's value.

I've been fortunate enough to attend OPL 2016 final in Brisbane and Melbourne Esports Open in 2018 which I'll be returning to in 2019.

Q. joshuaduboff: @awray I'm wondering if you could weigh in on this article.

<https://www.stuff.co.nz/entertainment/games/106077491/sky-tv-launches-popup-uk-esports-channel--but-is-it-missing-the-mark> Do you think esports "has to be free" or is there a model that could see esports in a pay to view model as well?

A. awray: I think there is probably a "freemium" model somewhere that esports could tap in but with so many high quality esports broadcasts being available for free a paid broadcast certainly begs questions.

Esports needs to grow it's revenue pie for its commercial longevity but I think we're a decent time away from a subscription service.

What is Sports Geek Nation?

Been forwarded this from a colleague? That's great we love seeing our members get credit for sharing their knowledge. Sports Geek Nation is a curated sports business community in Slack and Facebook which will help you learn from the very best in the world. Sports Geek Nation was founded by Sean Callanan in 2015 (as #SportsBiz Slack), it connects sports executives who work in digital, data and technology.

Sports Geek Nation has members from (in alphabetical order) Australia, Canada, Denmark, India, Lithuania, New Zealand, Sweden, United Kingdom and United States working in sports such as basketball, football, ice hockey, baseball, AFL, horse racing, golf, rugby league, netball and more.

You can join Sports Geek Nation by going to SportsGeekNation.com