

Opinion: Real sports can learn a lesson from e-sports

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Image 1. Players go head-to-head at an e-sports competition in Paris, France, in November 2017. On the left is Lucas Cuillierier, screen name "DaXe," who plays for the PSG E-sports Team. He was competing in a soccer video game against Florian Muller, whose screen name is "Cody." Photo from: Thomas Samson/AFP/Getty Images

The Washington Post newspaper says "e-sports" are attracting a large audience around the world. This latest sports craze, though, is not even a sport. It is video gaming.

In e-sports, players and teams compete in video game tournaments. Fans fill arenas and watch the action live on huge screens.

E-sports has gone way past kids playing against each other at home. The International is a major competition for players of the game Dota 2. Overwatch is another popular video game in e-sports. Earlier this year, the International awarded \$24 million in prizes. The winner took home almost \$11 million. Other e-sports tournaments have sold out Madison Square Garden in New York and the Staples Center in Los Angeles, California. Both arenas can seat 20,000 people.

And e-sports aren't a big hit just in the United States. More than 80,000 fans attended an e-sports competition at the Olympic Stadium in Beijing, China.

Baseball, Basketball, Soccer — And Reading

I have to admit that I am not a big fan of computer games. I know that some games can be educational. However, I think too many kids spend too much time sitting in front of a screen shooting space aliens.

I think it would be better if kids spent more time reading or playing real sports. Basketball, baseball and soccer are three sports that come to mind.

Some people might try to tell me that gaming is a real sport. I would disagree. My American Heritage Dictionary says a sport involves physical activity and skill. I don't think anyone works up much of a sweat playing video games.

E-sports Set To Become Even More Popular

Still, video games are very popular, especially among kids. Some experts think 590 million people will be watching e-sports by 2020. At the same time, studies show that fewer kids in the United States are playing physical sports, like baseball and soccer.

Maybe adults could learn something from e-sports and video games.



Fun For Everyone

Video games are good at giving kids what they want from any game: fun. The games are packed with action, and kids play at their own pace with their friends.

Also, video games let everybody play. I've never heard of any kid being discouraged because he or she wasn't good enough.

Another Kind Of Message

Too often, regular sports send kids another kind of message. Kids start competing early. Lots of them are not ready for the ups and downs of games. Tryouts and travel teams come next. Not everyone gets on the team. They give too many kids the message they are "not good" at sports. So lots of kids quit and start playing more video games.

Maybe youth sports should borrow a few ideas from video gaming: Turn up the action, keep it fun and let everyone play.

Fred Bowen is an author. He has written 22 sports books for kids.