

(English, 25, male)

*How long have you been playing games professionally and competitively in eSports?*

P1: When I was 18 going to 19, I played like a lot of Smite, played a ton of rank, and was asked to join a team just after I hit 19. Its been over 6 years ago, and I started playing and practicing everyday like I was a pro player and it was my full-time job

*How many teams have you been on?*

P1: I'm on rival, before I was on [REDACTED], which even though it had a couple people switch out, it started as hungry for more, but it had a couple different members, that's three. Before that was [REDACTED], which was the exact same roster as [REDACTED], we just switched sponsors. And before that we were on sponsored by mortality gaming, which was a tiny little sponsor, which was imaginary. So I guess you could say six.

*What does an average day look like for you?*

P1: On season, basically when, staring next February, it'll be season time. So a normal day for us gamers, our sleeping schedule tends to be later than the average person by quite a little bit. Let's say you wake up around 11am, anywhere from 9-12. I don't think I'm particular late, I tend to wake up 10-11am. We usually book scrims around 12 or 1, so I have time to have breakfast and my coffee, chill a little bit. If I have time and I feel like I'll play like one game of smite before our first team practice starts. If it starts at 12, it'll be three hours, same if it starts at one. WE practice with another team and we practice for three hours until our time slot runs out. Between the games we talk about, like, if we lose why did we lose, and if we win what could we do better, what type of strategy or the picks and bans we want. After that's finished, we maybe hit the gym, maybe find something to eat, maybe go out somewhere or order in food, depending on the people. I try to cook as much as I can, maybe have an hour down period, before our next, go to the gym for a couple hours if we have enough time. Then we have evening practice at 5 or 6 and then goes around until 8 or 9. All scrims tend to be three hours, for some reason they've always been like that. Then we do the exact same thing we did earlier, can be different team, like different team then earlier. If we've already gone to the gym, then we don't, but if we haven't... we are pretty much gym rats. I didn't go to the gym, but started going with them and it quickly became one of my favorite hobbies and we do that pretty much every day. Then we eat again and have any time from that until we want to go to sleep, 2 or 3 am, we have our own time, so we can start doing whatever we want. We can just chill on computers, go out, I like dated a little bit, but that I guess doesn't... basically we can do whatever we want in our free time until we want to go to sleep, which can involve playing smite on our own time if we feel we're doing bad on our own time. That's a good time to do individual practice. But I'd say we don't play much more than 6-7 hours a day, and then wed go to bed and rinse repeat. That's a normal on season thing for us.

*so you go to the gym every day?*

P1: pretty much yeah. We all carpool over there and you know, there might be one or two of us that don't go or don't feel like it, but the rest of us did. We'd all just carpool and hit the gym. I know mike, he loves his long workouts and he'll go for an hour and half, two hours, so we usually have pretty long workouts. But its nice we get to talk about stuff outside of smite. We get to bond like friends and people, as opposed to just being coworkers.

*That's cool, that you guys do it every day.*

P1: I will say that before this year, it was very hard to get the motivation. There would be sometimes like, ill be honest, there would be days where I wouldn't go outside. I knew that, I don't eat badly, but I was... this year fore example. I go outside more and gained 20 pounds, but lost fat, if that makes sense. I look leaner and gained tons of weight, which shows how out of shape of was. I wasn't... I knew I was out of shape but I didn't have motivation. My closest friends were online, my teammates and people I played games with it. So, if they're not in the same town as you, that means you just don't go out and hangout with people. I don't have many close friends that live around me because we don't have the same common interest. So, there would be days I don't go outside. Maybe groceries or a walk because I felt like it. But I don't do much exercise because I didn't feel like it, and I knew how bad that was or me. It was almost mentally worse than physically because sometimes you'd feel lazy or bad, you'd feel kind of like a vegetable. All you'd do is wake up, eat something, then game then scrim then game then eat something. Moving to a team house, and I don't even think if they were gym rats, which I am now, I love it and stuff. But if we weren't all in the same house, like if someone asks you go to the gym, it really motivates you. And if someone else is feeling lazy, if you ask them, it motivates them. So, having other people to motivate you to go changes everything. It would be the same if fi had a friend that wasn't a teammate. But I feel like the story of laziness and not doing anything is pretty awful.

*How many days a week do you practice?*

P1: M-F. Its not as loose as that could be T-S or W-S, depends on when we have matches and stuff. But we want to practice at least five days before. Match day we don't play, we talk about strategy and what we want to do during game day. Let's say the match is Saturday, we play M-f and then we have Sunday off. Matches take 2 or 3 hours, then we take the rest of the day off. We'd normally have the full day of Sunday where we're not expected to play or practice. We can if we want, I'll end up practicing more than most because I still enjoy smite. But I'll try to take a full day away from my computer. I can enjoy other stuff, like painting for example, and dating a little, and doing other stuff. I feel healthier for leaving the computer off for a day. Mentally I feel like it's a good rest.

*do you have a nutrition plan you follow at all?*

P1: I was pretty interested in this a few years ago, so I try to drink a lot of water because I feel like that helps with focus and stuff. Like when we scrim I'll grab a liter of water and drink it threw the session. I do feel like it helps me concentrate. And then there's food like omega 3 that is supposed to help with concentrate, so I'll try eating fish twice a week. I don't follow a nutrition plan but I try to eat healthily. But I'm not sure if that's to help my job, or more personal. A little of both, the water is definitely more with matches and practice and I feel like it helps a lot. But other than that, I eat mor strictly because we go to the gym. I try to eat well, and I feel like if I eat well Id be more productive, but it wasn't a big thing.

*More personal choice than a team thing.*

P1: Exactly, exactly.

*Have you ever experienced any physical pain in relation to esports?*

P1: I have been very lucky, I do hear a lot about back pain, but I've had a lot of people have mild scoliosis or feel really like their back hurts, especially if they don't have a good seat that holds their back up, or

they have bad posture when they play. I've never really experienced any back pain from gaming. My eyes, I say it goes day to day. If I play 7-8 hours, my eyes start to get dry. It isn't particularly serious but its like my whole body saying to chill for the day. But I've been pretty lucky and haven't experience anything I have to go to the doctor for. It would be ridiculous to say it doesn't cause any issues though. I've heard other pros talk about back problems and their posture and neck hurt a lot.

*Another big part of health is mental and psychological wellness. How much stress do you say you would face as a professional eSports player every day?*

P1: I would say that's the biggest form, I could go quite into detail for this. When I was young, I had a rash that would come up when I would have exams. They were little spots that would go up on my arms or my knees, but they would just pop up. Sometimes my face but rarely. It was when I was really stressed, like exams or when I was sick, like a common cold would bring them up. They weren't really bad rashes, but they would be a sign my stress was too high. And when the exams were over, I would take tablets to help get rid of them, but after the exams they would go away really quickly. That trend continued when I had lan events or an important match coming up, but when the lan event comes up and thee is a lot of money on the line, and stress builds. No one wants to lose the lan event and everyone wants to try to win. I am extremely competitive like a lot of pros are, because you don't get into it unless you're competitive because everyone hates losing, so I would get the rashes before tournaments like I would get it a lot before worlds. I got them a lot. It wasn't a mystery why I got them it was stress and anxiety to some extent. Winning is all that matters at the end of the day to us. Mentally, people say you're just playing video games and your just having fun, and that's given by older people a lot, but mentally its really tough. I know that, I love the adrenaline, but I won't miss the stress and anxiety that comes with it when I'm done with competitive gaming. I remember [REDACTED] would puke and stuff before matches. He was really badly effected, before or on gameday. And I know he's not the only one, and I'm not the only one, that experiences anxiety and stress. Which is kind of unprofessional, because you want to be as cold as ice, you don't want to be affected by anything that might limit your performance. But you don't really get to choose especially as your job and career become more important, because it because worse for you. I've gotten better at not letting show and keeping it down, not getting shaking and stuff in front of anyone. But in my own head I still get anxious stuff. I know [REDACTED], my old captain, recommended breathing exercise before big matches for controlling anxiety. Basic stuff like counting to 10 and breathing regularly. But its definitely hard. But outside of important tournaments, mentally, I feel like I could never be happier doing the dream job, and I'm not a nervous wreck any other time

*what would you say is the biggest part of that stress?*

P1: I think the biggest thing isn't, like second or third is the only. It's a lot of money you could win or lose. If you make a lot of money is has meaning, maybe you can buy a car or an apartment, money helps. It makes you more comfortable in life. Especially in smite, your performance makes a lot of difference in how people perceive you and how successful your career is. Like if you do bad in a tournament, like if die 10 times in worlds and I don't get a kill and my team gets knocked out, everyone is going to know you did that. Then they think 'oh captain twig, you as a pro, you're not attractive anymore because you sucked at the tournament when everything was on the line and it mattered' How you're perceived matters a lot in the profession. It's a good look for you if you play well and look super cool in the game and help a lot for the tam wins, and are a good strong part of that team when you lose. Its stressful and

it puts your career on the line. In sports or competitive esports, if you have a bad day on important match days, everyone knows it and it's going to hurt your career a lot. It's going to hurt your prospect of getting paid well the next year your prospect of getting a higher salary or good bargaining with organizations that want to pay the best athletes to sponsor. If you don't do well in tournament it's a big stress. Not only is winning important, but the thought of doing badly is the real stress for me because if I do badly then I don't even feel comfortable about getting a job or a sponsorship next year. Well, that's super stressful and there's no real way around it. You just have to take that stuff out. And outside of that the money makes a real difference, you can play well and win a lot of money, but that doesn't help with stress.

*have you ever been on a team with a mental coach?*

P1: Well in smite teams have not done it for the most part. They're just general coaches. Whatever the coach wants to do, and they want to watch your games and tell what you did wrong that's most common. But some coaches are better than others at talking to players about how they feel and helping people resolve feelings and basically be good. Like [REDACTED], has been good about talking to us. He tries to be quite good with asking about how people feel and not letting people be too silent, or get out without talking through their mindset. I don't even know what an organization could do without having straight up mental coach. But there's only room for six people: five players and a coach, and the coach is a gameplay coach with strategy and play over anything else.

*your coach looking out for you, having that support, do you think it helps your performance?*

P1: for sure. Having a strong mind set and feeling strong and comfortable helps your mindset and it's the best mindset you could have. I think having someone who knows the psychology and mind set of athletes would help a lot. There aren't many coaches who can do that or don't have much qualifications for that kind of stuff, but there is no doubt in my mind it would help a lot. Having healthy mindsets in players is just as important as physical bodies, if not more important in video games.

*Based on your experience, what do you think is the biggest health problem whether mental or physical esports players face, and what would be the best way to help players with that problem?*

P1: That's hard. I think I'd go to... the most common problem I've noticed with pro players and high-level gamers is probably obesity or malnourishment. They just don't care about, they spend so much time of their life in front of a computer or distracted or focused on winning a computer game, and not enough about staying healthy physically. It's probably obesity or the opposite is the biggest problem. The problem is that... I don't even know how you'd fix that. It's easy to point to good parenting but like, even in schools, they need to be educated on how being healthy physically helps you a lot in game, and helps concentration, and a healthy body or healthy gamer is the best most competitive gamer. And like that knowledge or education and studies would indicate the healthiest people, I mean it's a theory, that the healthiest people are the most competitive. Being unhealthy physically does not help for long term success as a gamer.