Can you introduce yourself and talk about how long you've been a professional gamer?

Sure, my name ███████████. I've been a lifelong gamer but my first foray into the competitive world was through SC and SCII. Its' been my primary game, I've dabbled in others but never nearly as successful. I got into the competitive aspect when I was 13-14 years old, and then SC2 came out and I was an early adopter of the game and was probably the youngest player in it for a decent amount of time in the North American scene from 2010-2013. Then I took a break for a year and a half and then been off and on since then in terms of competing. I'm actually not actively playing at this moment. I was a fulltime player for a bout a year in 2017, and then stopped in 2018. I guess this topic interested me because I've gone back and forth between different levels of commitment with the game. StarCraft was my primary income then, and I've learned a lot about that affects me personally.

With the on and off, in total, how many years did you play? What made you decide to step back?

In total, probably around six or so years. Over the last nine to ten years I was actively competing for 6or 7 of those. To answer the other question, it's been different each time. The first time I quit… I guess all… I think, actually I'll work backwards. Two years ago, the biggest thing at that point was that the pro gamer lifestyle was not one I thought was a health lifestyle for myself. I Was often upset and depressed as I streamed, and competed every day. I started having less fun, forcing myself to play games I didn't want to play every day to make money because at that point that was my only source of income. I recognized that was not something I could sustain long term, even if I was more successful. I could make money, but not enough to make it a great career option. I think that generally speaking, the way people play competitive games is really prone to burnout. We get people to commit really hard and stream 10 hours a day to be really successful. We as a community has not promoted a healthy diverse lifestyle in terms of competing or streaming or whatever in eSports. That goes back to the Korean StarCraft scene in the early 2000s where the people that got good were the people who practiced nonstop. That was the biggest reason. I just did not feel the lifestyle was good enough to sustain happiness.

What would you say, when you were playing, your average daily routine would be?

Well one of the hardest parts about doing this is that having a consistent daily routine is one of the hardest things. Everything is self-motivated, and the only way to be successful is to have a routine and continuously play and have a routine. Generally speaking, since my majority income was from my stream, I structured my day around when I thought I would be most successful steaming which ended up being late night. I generally streamed between 10pm and 6am eastern, which was my local time. I would end up sleeping relatively late, with my afternoon and early evening going out and taking care of personal things, then playing and streaming SC in the late evening. And then online tournaments would happen before my normal streaming, so I'd play that and then add streaming time after that. It was somewhat loose but I tried to get, you know, roughly about 6 hours of streaming time a day, and then sometimes play more outside of that as well. I'd aim for six days of doing that and if I had to estimate, my goal was roughly 6 hours of streaming, si days a week. AS I was also competitor, the entirety of my practice being streaming was detrimental to that, but ultimately did not ever have a definite solution to that. Since I was making most of my money from streaming, I did not want to play more than I had to

and I already felt like I had to force myself to play to make money. And I stopped enjoying it outside of what I had to do.

How much sleep did you get?

I think I was getting a fairly good amount of sleep because mu schedule was my own. I couldn't put a number on it, but I could sleep as much as I wanted. That could be a bad thing because I would often wait a lot of earlier time in the day.

What did the hours of sleep look like? Like going to bed and waking up?

It did fluctuate, these hours were not conducive to maintain a real life. I was generally going to sleep at 6am and waking up at 2pm in the afternoon. And that was because I had the most stream success late at night.

Did you have exercise or nutrition plans at all?

Not consistently. I did recognize that with that schedule the lack of routine really hurt me. I personally really struggled to self-mandated a routine, like this was my exercise and this was my work.

What were your eating habits like?

I have never had a strict dietary plan in my life. I've always been roughly averagish. It was never a health concern for me.

Have you ever had any physical pains or complications you'd associate with eSports?

Occasionally I'd have tire hands and wrist, and maybe a slight pain, but never anything detrimental. I could tell when I played lot it would make me sore or tired, but never anything serious that I can tell.

Have you ever had help for it?

I've had times where I've thought about it, but it usually seemed to resolve itself. I have considered trying to figure out if any of my habits are really bad, or if I'm at the risk fo damaging myself long term, but I haven't.

What would you say has been the biggest psychological or mental health issue that's affected you?

I think a lot of professional players, especially myself, go through varying degrees of depression during their professional play. I think the percentage of people that have needed therapy is very high. When you play a 1v1 eSports like I did, it is very socially isolating. I had friends, but everything I did was alone. Even streaming, you're interacting with a community, but you're still alone. It is a very shallow relationship and a very shallow friendship. For my social relationships, it was definitely lacking more than I was aware of. Just sharing my day and life with people was not a thing. Perhaps team esports helps with that a bit because you share your success and failures with a team. I had some big wins in SC that excited me, but it was fleeting and I couldn't really enjoy it. I did this awesome thing and I had a moment of it, but I have to build on it or its otherwise meaningless. I think that I've gone to therapy for depression at a couple points in my life, and the lifestyle I had from gaming made me more vulnerable for those issues. I think its possible to be healthy, but you have to be self-aware and take care of that part of yourself. IT has to be proactive in a way beyond most gamers.

What would say are the main factors that contribute to that?

Social life and isolation, and conjunction, the fact that majority of your time is spent alone at home. I notice I'm happier when I have more to do and have reasons to leave my home. Just being outside more could be a part of it. The constant pressure of having to perform and being self-motivated, it puts a lot of pressure on people and you constantly feel like you're not doing enough, you're not doing well enough. I constantly felt guilt when I wasn't being productive., because my entire success was entirely self-motivated. I did not get more money or streamers or better results unless I practiced. So, you constantly have this weight of I should do more to promote myself, to take more opportunities and that as damaging mentally because I never did enough. I never enjoyed anything else because I felt like I was wasting my time doing something else I shouldn't be doing. I'd be interested to see how that compares between 1v1 and team things.

In addition to self-stress, how much of a factor do you think the fans were?

I think I struggled with that when I was younger, because I cared more about what people thought of me. Later on, I care about what people thought, but that was because it was related to success. It affected me at a personal level early on. But later, when I would get negative comments and things, it all stopped bothering me at a certain point. I had a compass of being a positive good person in the community more than the spectator feedback.

What were your biggest outlets for support?

I guess, one thing, despite the social aspect, I've made a lot of good friendships through SC. There are people I talk to on a daily basis that I met through the community. Having someone to share that with, especially when you are an active player, like we are all in it together and doing this crazy stupidly hard game at a high level for no reason than our own self-gratification. If you want to be making a good living, you won't be playing esports. There is a real bonding that comes together over that. It makes it easy to talk to people in that type of thing, and the self-motivation. Its issues that a lot of these players go through. Outside of the scene, I've had a relatively very supportive family. IF they saw a great future, they would have been very supportive. I never reached the point where it felt like a great career option, so it limited that object.

(Asides)

I think we see so many young people because they haven't burned out yet, and that's a big reason we don't see many professionals in their 30s. I think if we can encourage people to have more healthier lifestyles, we'll get older players. But those are the big reasons we don't see professional players, because I don't think people get worse as they get older.

What would you say is the biggest challenge eSports players face in terms of health, and what would do to mitigate that?

What comes to mind first that the model to professional gaming has stemmed from the Korean model. I just think that's not a healthy lifestyle, and that's the biggest challenge overall. We as an Esports community are only now starting to realize that we shouldn't applaud people who play 12 hours a day because that's not a great way to live your life. It feels unsustainable for that to be the norm. My understanding is that LoL and DOTA is that, with stable high-level scenes, its becoming less of a norm for

lcs to be living in the same house together. Having a healthy lifestyle will help the physical and mental health. We need to get to the point where people who are professional gamers have lifestyle that are akin to people who have office jobs. I know that will never be entirely true because of the highly competitive nature, like professional athletes, but they have an active time and have an offseason.