

(Female, American, 25)

*How long have you been a professional gamer and what type of game do you play?*

I've been a pro gamer for a 1.5, but I've been competing for like 5 or 6 years. The game I compete in is the tekken series, and that's the only game I've competed in. and I'm with [REDACTED].

*With the game you play, that's solo work?*

Yes that's correct.

*Could you give me a brief run through of the day, and what your daily routine looks like?*

Every day, before I even pick up the game, what I do to get myself energized and ready to deal with the training is, physically, I work out. I go on the elliptical or go to the gym. It's a good way to get the brain stimulated, to get energy. For a lot of the team you're sitting at a screen, and that's a lot of sitting, a lot of hyper focusing. So u think it's very important to get the physical energy first, moving first, get that heart pumping, get the blood moving so you can tackle that. Once I work out, I'll sit down, eat breakfast, take care of the business things, then ill start training. The training can be anywhere from 2 to 7 or 8 hours, it varies and depends on what I'm learning for today. And sometimes its not about how long but what you're learning while you do. It's important that people don't burn themselves out with that information that they're learning.

*What does your training consist of?*

Well it's a combination because if I was just doing matches, I wouldn't learn everything. if there's something I need to learn, if I need to do more research on or a certain matchup then I'll go into training mode and study and ill recreate the situation so I can see how I can defend against it next time, or weaknesses in the matchup I have. Or ill even study matches where pro players are having tough matchups and apply what they're doing well to my own prep.

*How many days would you do this?*

Anywhere from like 4 to five days.

*Does that number rise when tournaments are coming closer?*

Sometimes its actually less when a tournament is coming up. The last thing I want to do is burn myself out on training too much for a tournament coming up. I want to watch matches more than anything because tis comprehending and understanding how the game works, because some people miss certain things when they constantly in the game. I sometimes tend to prep a bit less coming up, liked as before, I try not to play too much. Playing is one thing, but what are you actually understanding? So the closer to tournaments I'm training but not actually playing.

*How many hours of sleep do you usually get?*

Like five to six hours of sleep.

*Are those weird hours?*

No, the hours get odd depending on what I'm doing. Sometimes they get really weird, especially if there other obligations. I've been going to bed a lot at four. The closer to tournaments ill get more rest, because that has to do with burning out. So you get more rest so your energy is where it needs to be when you wake up for your pool.

*Do you have a specific diet plan?*

I do tend to be kind of cautious about what I'm eating, especially around tournaments. I tend not to eat heavy foods because it can make you sluggish, and if you have nerves it can hurt your stomach. Then you go to compete and your stomach is flipping and turning, so you don't want anything sitting too heavy in your stomach that could affect your play or you. I try to do fruit and water and maybe a carb, but nothing too heavy. Since I work out in general, I have to be sort of conscious about what I eat, like salads and vegetables, fruits, fiber, nuts, but no junk food because it effects my energy and brain, and I need that to train.

*Do you think it helps with performance and competitions?*

Yeah, for sure

*Have you noticed physical pains at all?*

I sure have. Actually, something I've started experiencing, because of the blue light from the screens. When I would play for a certain amount of hours back to back, id get off and I couldn't sleep well. And if I woke up it felt like I didn't sleep well at all, and that was because my eyes were over exposed to the light and I was overtraining and overplaying. My eyes hurt, my brain hurt, my corneas, yeah it hurt. And I was training, and streaming, and it was poor management on my end. Because of that I had pain, so I kind of chilled for bit.

*What did you do to deal with that?*

I took a break and I started to decided what times of the day id stream, and stick to only doing that. But first I stepped away and minimized how much and how long. Because I would play three or four times out of a week, but the long hours were affecting my eyes, so I reduced the amount of hours.

*Are you still experiencing that now?*

Not as much, but that because I have more control of my schedule. I'm planning better.

*Were you on an esports team when this happened? (yes) did they say anything or give support options, or did you figure it out independently?*

I didn't tell them, I figured it out on my own. But these epsorts teams, they don't have those options, a lot of them don't. like reaching out and helping when those physical things happen. I think that ties back to money, and they don't have it. They're trying to expand, they're trying, but their players aren't money makers, they're people. And if you want them to be happy keep them successful to have to invest in them and check in with them. The teams that have legit money money, that can bring their players in for athletic training, that really helps people. But me, I had to do this all on my own, physical training and exercising, I did that, you have to keep your mind sharp. But the teams im on, they don't tell you those things. They can't afford it, I get it, but its necessary.

*Were there teams you were on that share similar stories?*

No but one of my teammates put on blue light filter glasses, and I see them wearing them from time to time, so I think he researched it and found it for himself.

*What would you say, referring to mental health and psychological part, is the biggest straining on your mental and psychological wellness?*

Revenue.

*Revenue?*

Yeah.

*Does that come from the team or?*

Its from my own hands, because the teams can't afford that. They cover a flight or lodging for things like that, but when it comes to actual revenue, like income, I have to earn as a player on my own through other means, like streaming or other sponsor deals. On my own. Its not like my team didn't help, but it is because of me I was able to get them. That's stressful because at any time, it can be taken away. The paycheck is nice when its coming, but when the contract is up, the stress comes and you're wondering how are you making your money?

*So the stress never goes away?*

Exactly. Its one of those things where you really need to find something that's consistent and will give you that paycheck consistently. When the contract is done you have to reprove yourself. A 9-5 job sounds nice, but when you're in the fighting game community, you really have to work for it. A lot of pros work and compete.

*With revenue is such a big thing, is that self-inflicted or from others that adds to it?*

For sure, yeah. My parents, though supportive, it's not like I haven't heard things. Like they're proud of me, but at the same time they're concerned because they don't understand the field. I'm trying to find my way, and I did so much year, and I am proud about it. But its still hard because I have to look for those opportunities. And its hard when your family says they're supportive but they don't get it and they don't understand how much you have to grind and work for it to survive and be financially stable, because you're a business person when you become a pro. And my family, its not just my parents but my sister too, and they can only be to a certain extent. The other players are where more support comes from because they have done it or are still doing it. How can you be fully supportive if you don't get it?

*Would you say the spectators get to you at all?*

For sure, yes.

*Is that something that has impacted you at all?*

98% of the time I brush it off. Because I always say when I sit down and play, I forget everything because I love the game, and no one can tell me wht I am. And what do the people know? They're not in our shoes and they can't understand. So when I'm playing, I just focus, because outside opinions wont help you progress. Knowing you're on the right path is all that matters, because when you know you know. I

really just focus and I play. But when I first started, as a woman, it is different. I've seen it, the judgement placed on woman just for existing in the space, because men can't get with them sexually or they don't have mental space. Even though we've proven time and time again that it has nothing to do with gender, there's less of us on the scene because of mentalities like that. So stay to be strong in that regard, and tell myself you are it, you are phenomenal. Because you have to look out for yourself and make sure you have cool, supportive people that will always be in your corner. Those are the people that matter, not the people that are insecure and want to see everyone fail.

*As tournaments get closer, does that increase the stress?*

The focus usually takes over but the lingering anxiety of playing a match is still there. But when I sit down the anxiety kind of subsides, like a blanket of focus takes over. I've had times where I'm focused and I'm really nervous, and it's competing against each other. Sometimes it's a beautiful mess and I get out and I did great, but there's other times where it goes wrong. I have competitive anxiety, which is crazy because I've been playing for six years. And I've had to go get help in that regard because that was not something we were provided.

*So for the competitive anxiety you had to find help independently?*

I sure did, all me.

*What do you think is the biggest health issues that esports players face?*

Thinking they're not enough. Self-doubt and insecurities are the biggest things they face. That huge self-doubt that occurs because maybe they fell short at a competition, or they let it slip. Self-inflicted stress is the biggest thing, and sometimes like, you want to great, and depending on the company around you, or how your team is helping you after a lost, doesn't make you feel better. Before equinox, my manager, when we would lose, she would be childish and throw a tantrum.