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Andy McNamara

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Dear Editor,

In the age of triple-A game studios and blockbusters like *Seikro: Shadows Die Twice*, *Call of Duty*, and *Red Dead Redemption 2* it can be easy to overlook the smaller games. These are the games that took years to release not because of their scope or scale, but because they were being made by 4 developers. Oftentimes these games gain a niche audience but couldn't dream of getting the same spotlight as a game like *Fortnite*.

In the world of video gaming, sports games are often placed in their own separate place. Often devoid of any story value, most sports games strive to place the power of a professional athlete in the hands of every-day people. EA and 2K Sports hold the places for the biggest and best-selling sports sims, and the bustle over their annual releases can overshadow the games of other smaller developers. Take *Slapshot* for example. With only 4 or 5 developers behind it, *Slapshot* has found success in the extremely niche area of indie sports games.

For the "Developer Spotlight" section in your monthly magazine, I propose a 1500-word profile on a developer named Balucha, and his partners working at Glacier Labs. Your magazine has a history of coverage for indie companies, and I think Balucha's story, and the story of *Slapshot* would be a great addition to your already impressive lineup of indie coverage. One of the main themes surrounding indie releases is that they are often projects of passion more than projects of profit. *Slapshot* is free to play on Steam, although a 10-dollar version is available for those who want more cosmetics for their cone-shaped hockey player. The game has an average player base of 230, and the peak was over 500. With over 80% of community reviews being positive, it's clear that *Slapshot* is a hit.

Perhaps the main draw is the sense of community, something Balucha wanted to focus on from the day the game launched on March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2019. Balucha and his fellow developers made a Discord server dedicated to the game, its community, hockey fans, and modders working with Glacier Labs to add extra content to the game. Oftentimes players have no direct access to the developers that make their favorite games. This disconnection can lead to failures like *Fallout: 76* and in general, leads to bitterness between a community and a developing studio. Balucha and Glacier Labs wanted to have their community feel like partners to the team. They wanted *Slapshot* to be made better by everyone involved. This unique style of development needs more attention. There are articles reviewing *Slapshot* based on game mechanics, but none focusing on Glacier Labs exceptional relationship with the community.

I have secured access with Balucha and the other developers, and even other players in the community. Because of this access, I am the best person for the job. There is still plenty more

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for me to ask Balucha and his team, and I'd love to write more about their style of development, and their game.

Thank you for your time,

Joe Barbieri