

Pride, not money, the spur to eGames King

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The eGames were showcased in Rio during the Olympics

Golf has the Ryder Cup, tennis the Davis Cup and now the fast-growing eSports will have the eGames in Pyeongchang in 2018, the main mover behind it, Chester King, told AFP.

The 44-year-old Englishman—chief executive of the International eGames Group—said his wish was for national pride to be at stake rather than it being based around prize money, as is the case with most eSports events.

ESports, in which sedentary competitors play video games, would not be a winner with former International Olympic Committee (IOC) president Jacques Rogge, who introduced the Youth Olympic Games primarily because he wanted to get young people enthused about taking exercise.

King comes from a sports background and his family-owned golf club, Stoke Park, has been used as a setting in several films, including the iconic golf scene in James Bond film Goldfinger.

He insists eSports players possess a lot of skill and there is no shortage of dedication with the professionals training for three to four hours a day.

It is certainly a money-spinning industry and its revenue last year was more than \$700 million, \$320 million of that in Asia.

Money, though, is not what is driving King.

"I come from this world of traditional sport," King told AFP after appearing on a panel at the Sport Industry Breakfast Club, supported by MP & Silva.

"What I saw in eSports was it has been all about prize money and I was concerned it would end up like poker.

"If you have children playing it its (the money) not the right thing so like in traditional sport tennis has the Davis Cup and golf the Ryder Cup, where the players don't play for money, I wondered where was the equivalent in eSports.



Players of eSports train for hours each day

"That's where we came up with the concept of the eGames."

King put on a demonstration event at British House during the Rio Olympics, which was supported by the British Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, Karen Bradley.

'Stepping stones'

King insists the aim is not for inclusion in the Olympics and selecting Pyeongchang, host of the Winter Games, in 2018 and Tokyo, venue for the Summer Games, in 2020—for their host cities is purely for practical reasons.

"We're not part of the IOC and don't want to be part of it," he said.

"They are aware of us and the only thing they made clear is we can't do it at the same time as their Games, which we wouldn't do anyway.

"The reason we like it is you need a city to accomodate the athletes and the arena space.

"These are stepping stones we are taking. In South Korea there will be 16 countries competing for five titles and in Tokyo there will be 32 countries for which there will be national qualifiers in 2017 and 2019."

King, whose father Roger made a fortune in the worldwide distribution of uncut diamonds from the Soviet Union, said the audience potential for the eGames was enormous, both in filling the arena and those watching online.

"There is an interesting statistic from the Twitch live stream platform," he said.



The eSports industry is worth hundreds of millions of dollars globally

"Apart from the Rio opening ceremony, more people were watching gaming than the Olympics online.

"As for the games that would form part of the eGames, well from a low forehead point of view you go for the most popular.

"League of Legends is number one and Counter-Strike, which is also a shooting [game](#), is number two."

However, King added there is no question of under-age children, such as his games-mad 16-year-old son Latimer, competing in those titles.

"They're age-rated so you don't have kids playing at professional level. It is like watching an 18 certificate film, there's a regulation for that.

"Although don't forget online you can watch what you like."

King, whose uncle Michael Wiggs ran in the 1960 and 1964 Olympics, competing in the 1,500m and 5,000m, also insists the violence of the games do not inspire real life acts of violence.

"There is no correlation between these games and aggressive behaviour," he says.

"Its a classic. Whenever there is a rampage in America they blame it on video games. However, unfortunately if someone is going to kill 50 homosexuals in a nightclub I don't think you can blame it on the games.

"People are sensitive but in Asia it is just a game."

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