

Top 10 most influential people in esports for 2019: Part I

It's that time of year again when we reflect upon the past year and diarize all that happened in 2019. For the esports industry, it was its best year ever and largely carried by some larger-than-life personalities. In this four-part series, we will countdown the list of people/entities that carried this nascent industry on their shoulders.

10: Brandon Beck / Marc Merill, Co-Founders of Riot Games

Who are Brandon and Marc?: The current co-chairmen of Riot Games played a decisive part in the uprising of esports. Aside from raising League of Legends to its current pedigree of a global esport, the two friends had set out on a mission to create a player-friendly company that refrained from pumping games out every single year. Instead, they would take a page from Asian game developers to offer a freemium model with monetization through cosmetics and skins. It may seem like a trivial matter in 2019, but it was quite the opposite in 2006 when Brandon Beck and Marc Merill co-founded Riot Games.

Why they mattered in 2019: In 2019, ten years later, League of Legends still maintains atop the hierarchy of esports. It has 13 worldwide leagues, the convergence of which starts esport's largest event, the LCS. This mega event not only rivals the Super Bowl in viewership, but also boasts some of the largest lump sums of esport prize money in the world. This is also the year Riot Games released Teamfight Tactics to rivals Dota's Auto Chess and announced the development of various other online competitive games spanning many genres.



Source: [Robert Paul for Blizzard Entertainment](#)

9: Andy Miller, Founder and Co-CEO of NRG Esports

Who is Andy? Andy Miller once worked directly under Steve Jobs. Not much needs to be said about a person's qualifications after that. In 2006, Andy Miller co-founded Quattro Wireless, which he sold to Apple in 2009 for US\$275 million. His sports acumen began as co-owner of the NBA's Sacramento Kings and In 2015 he teamed up with fellow Kings co-owner Mark Mastrov to found NRG Esports.

Why they mattered in 2019? No one has been able to grow and nurture their celebrity investor base like NRG. Andy was instrumental in bringing ARod, Shaq, Tiesto and many others into the fold. Their Overwatch franchise, the San Francisco Shock won the Overwatch League grand final and they inaugurated their Call of Duty franchise, the Chicago Huntsmen. In September they landed perhaps the biggest executive free agent, Optic Gaming co-founder Hector

Rodriguez. Not bad for one year.

8: Yiliang "Doublelift" Peng

Who is Doublelift? Have you ever played a video game just to have someone tell you, "you're trash" before the game even starts? That person is Doublelift. However, unlike so many others, when Doublelift says it, you believe him. Doublelift could very well be one of the best League of Legends players in North America, yet his potentially toxic style makes him one of the most controversial.

Why he mattered in 2019? In one word, Netflix. The Netflix series *7 Days Out*, featured the story of Doublelift as he navigated through the choppy waters of competitive League of Legends play while experiencing horrendous tragedy. The Score Esports, ESL, and Vice are just a few of the media companies that have jumped on the Doublelift train, bringing his dark humor to mainstream audiences. Through all of the fame, he managed to have a solid year with Team Liquid. The team was able to not only dominate Spring 2019 and Summer 2019, but they would later go on to win both the playoff series as well.

Stay tuned as next week we'll countdown #7, #6 and #5.