

IOC to explore Olympic eSports Games

October 14 2023, by Julian Guyer



IOC chief Thomas Bach confirmed the creation of an Olympic eSports Games is being examined.

The International Olympic Committee is looking at creating an Olympic eSports Games, IOC president Thomas Bach announced on Saturday.

"I have asked our new IOC eSports Commission to study the creation of

Olympic eSports Games," Bach revealed during the opening ceremony of the 141st IOC session on Saturday in Mumbai.

The German noted there are three billion people playing eSports and gaming around the world.

Estimates suggest over 500 million of those are interested specifically in eSports, which include virtual sports and sport simulations.

"What is even more relevant to us: a majority of them are under the age of 34," added Bach.

"In 2021, the IOC developed the Olympic virtual series. It was the IOC's first pilot venture in eSports.

"Building on the learnings from the Olympic virtual series, we then launched the Olympic eSports week in Singapore earlier this year," said Bach.

"In Singapore we saw proof that our [holistic approach](#) is working. We successfully brought together the Olympic and the eSports communities."

Including the qualifiers, the Olympic eSports Series attracted over 500,000 unique participants, generating more than six million views of live action over all channels, with 75 percent of views from people aged 13 until 34.

"This was a promising start. But it is just that: a start. It is like in any sport: after the promising start, the real race still lies ahead," Bach said.

Bach, a 1976 Olympic fencing champion, revealed part of his speech had been generated by Artificial Intelligence (AI).

"Every challenge comes with opportunities and risks," he said.

"AI has the potential to revolutionize the training of athletes, offer athletes individualized training.

"What does this mean for the protection of data and the future of the human coach.

"Football fans among us—let us say VAR, tennis players hawk-eye. What will AI mean for other sports—gymnastics, figure-skating, boxing and most illustrious, fencing."

Bach added, "Will AI support or revolutionize the human element?"

"Will we lose the human touch? Paris 2024 will be the last Games of the pre-AI era. In the end, every spectator can be the director of their own experience."

Nevertheless, he insisted: "But we can change before we are being changed. If we don't technological and commercial interests will come over us like a tsunami. Sport needs to go where the people are in both the real and digital worlds."

Bach's announcement of a possible eSports Games was, however, overshadowed by a subsequent speech at the ceremony from Narendra Modi, where the Indian Prime Minister confirmed his country would bid to stage the 2036 Summer Olympics and so become just the fourth Asian nation to host the Games.

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Citation: IOC to explore Olympic eSports Games (2023, October 14) retrieved 30 April 2024 from <https://techxplore.com/news/2023-10-ioc-explore-olympic-esports-games.html>

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