

## ECS Season 2: 'If you are not evolving every single show, then you are going to fail'



ECS has announced Season Two with a \$1.75-million prizepool. Provided by the Esports Championship Series.

**Joe Bartel** 15 JUL 2016

A successful Esports Championship Series Season 1 saw a finals with a prize pool of \$765,000, with \$250,000 of that going to the champions, G2 Esports. Today FACET announced Season 2, which will house a substantial \$1.75 million dollar amount that will go towards the prize pool and supportive funds. The new season starts on Oct. 7, and the finals kick off on Dec. 8. Additionally, there will be open qualifiers from Aug. 5-27, with the top two teams from the qualifiers taking on the bottom two teams from ECS last season in both the North American and European regions.

We asked Michele Attiansi, chief business officer and co-founder of FACET, to tell us more about the upcoming season:

**We are fascinated by the fact that the winner of the qualifiers gets co-ownership in the league and a chance to select representation at the league's governing committee. How did the players respond to that idea during Season 1? Is this a selling point to bring in some of the best CS:GO teams?**

This is a slow burner for us. It's an important step and both ourselves and the teams are still getting used to how it will work on a more macro level. Teams have varying interest in the concept but they are all happy for the step forward in professionalism. As with mainstream sports, moving away from keeping all of the money extra prize pool and more into structural funding for teams especially leads to a much more stable infrastructure and giving teams and their players a voice in the league allows us to have global sign off on any changes. As a selling point, it is definitely a factor, but the strongest selling point is our good relationship and trust with all of the players.

**How did the fans respond to Season 1? I have to imagine you were able to see a ton of fan interaction with the event at Wembley.**

The event at The SSE Arena, Wembley, exceeded our expectations. We are so proud of everyone who put in the effort to make it happen and the overwhelming positive reaction from the fans, community, teams, players and talent was the greatest reward we could ask for.

**Esports is clearly growing at an amazing, almost alarming, rate. ECS's stance towards building an esports "community" is impressive, yet something many groups aspire to. Please elaborate on how ECS is indeed helping the esports community.**

Community is everything to us, it is our core ethos and something we intend to keep at the forefront of our decision-making. We aim to provide the community with great experiences every season and alongside that we focus on creating interactive content around the season, from ECS leaders on FACET, to the addition of open qualifiers that give anyone the chance of reaching the top. We even go the extra step to do a few extra special things for members of the community that come to our attention around our finals like giving away VIP tickets to our most loyal members or exclusive backstage tours, meeting the players and signing sessions.

**How can your event help bring stability to the CS:GO scene that has been rocked by a few issues as of late?**

The scene is definitely undergoing growing pains right now, but we aim to be a rock that anchors the industry, encourages best practices and constantly pushes professionalism. One core thing that we are working on with all of the other large organisers is stabilisation of the yearly calendar to make sure players are not overworked and do have some down time to rest. For this reason we are releasing our schedule for Season 2 over three months in advance, as well as all schedules for 2017.



G2 won ECS Season 1. Can they repeat? Provided by the Esports Championship Series.

**Clearly the Turner Sports broadcasting of CS:GO ELeague is helping expand esports in the USA, yet Turner's traditional media approach is certainly different than what ECS / FACET / Twitch deliver. How do you view Turner's participation in esports?**

Turner has shown us that production levels can be so much more than they had been in the past, helping to push esports studio broadcasts to a new level, accessing a wider audience and encouraging new brands to invest. We had the privilege to advise and help Turner and in turn they push us to produce better quality production. For example, ECS is broadcast from the IM2 studio in London, the country's leading television studio complex. We have also created a team of industry veterans in both gaming and television.

**CS:GO's popularity in the U.S. and Europe is impressive. How important is it for CS:GO competition to be more globally, versus EU/American, focused?**

It is true that up until now Europe has been the powerhouse of the CS:GO scene and the general viewer base is very European and American focused, so obviously these two regions have the highest sway when it comes to decision-making for production. That being said, China and South America are some real hot spots right now and with the ECS Season 1 finals being broadcast on television in over 35 countries globally, we have very high hopes for growth in those regions.

**For team's aspiring to qualify for the ECS esports league, what general advice do you have for them? Clearly, qualification is not easy.**

Obviously the level of skill in CS:GO at this moment is off the chart, but new talent is rising through the ranks every month. For Season 2 of the ECS we will be holding open qualifiers on FACET, which we recently announced, (the full media release for Season 2 can be found here: <http://www.esgogaming.com/3>). This is something we intended for Season One, but due to time constraints we couldn't provide. The FACET platform gives us a unique opportunity to be able to open up these qualifiers to anyone that wants to try for the top. Alternatively, there are ladders every week for new aspiring teams to get in a level of practice, and the FACET Pro League (FPL) is available to help aspiring players transition to professionals.

**CS:GO has been dominated by a few particularly strong teams. Are there any up-and-coming teams you think could pull off some upsets?**

Some are saying that our finals were G2's break out event, so we are excited to see what Season 2 brings. Brazilian teams are all looking very strong right now and there is a good chance we will see a few more of those breaking through in Season 2.

**What will you be doing this year to provide more fan interaction with the players?**

Production for the finals was something we feel created a great viewer experience, we handpicked top broadcasting talent from television (i.e., director of MTV EMA) to create the most immersive show possible. Fan signing sessions and the VIP experience at our finals had an amazing reaction from the fans and players, we want to do more things like this that can bring access to the players and fans so we have some interesting secret ideas for this in the next event.

**What talent do you plan on bringing in to cast the matches? And who is remaining from ECS past broadcasts?**

We have a very good relationship with talent across the board and the level of talent in CS:GO is incredible so we often feel spoiled for choice. We were really happy with the lineup for Season 1 and we think they all worked very well together. But of course, as always, we will listen to the community before making our choices for Season 2.

**Will you be adding any new features to the broadcast portion from Season 1? More statistics, more replays, etc.?**

In this industry, if you are not evolving every single show, then you are going to fail. Other than some exciting new statistics coming from the FACET platform, you will have to wait and see as to what we have planned.

### EDITOR'S PICKS

**The Box Street Fighter V primer**  
Who are the favorites and can anyone coming into the 2016? Will information keep this crown or will Tobi and Justin Wong keep for an upset?



**The Summit 8 Dota 2 power rankings**  
The Summit 8 leads off this week, which means it's one of the first All-Star events The International 6. Let's check out where the teams stand.



**Nero looking to validate his status at Evo**  
Nero's path to greatness has been flat with ups and downs. Despite the inconsistency, he's still one of the best Smash 4 players to date. We'll look to validate that fact at Evo 2016.

