74% of B2B buyers research purchasing decisions with LinkedIn
Get $50 in Ad Credits
Get yours

MAR 16, 2017 @ 11:00 AM | 1,141 VIEWS

YouTube To Exclusively Broadcast ECS 'Counter-Strike' League

Mike Stubbs, CONTRIBUTOR
FULL BIO
Opinions expressed by Forbes Contributors are their own.

The main stage at the ECS Season 2 finals.

Tournament organiser FACEIT and YouTube have just announced a new deal that will see the ECS *Counter-Strike: Global Offensive* league be broadcast exclusively on YouTube.

The deal means all of the competition will be broadcast live exclusively on YouTube, along with all video on demand content. Previously, the league's live broadcasts were exclusive to Twitch, who were heavily involved with the competition. However the switch to YouTube will give viewers extra benefits such as 1080p live streams and live rewind features that have not been possible on Twitch.

Broadcast deals in the world of eSports are quickly becoming one of the most lucrative avenues for tournament organisers to make money. YouTube tied up a similar deal with ESL for the rights to their CS:GO Pro League earlier in the year, while MLG is rumored to have paid $200 million for the rights to the League of Legends Championship Series.

To find out a little more about this deal, and what it means for spectators, players and the owners of the league, I spoke to Michele Attisani, chief business officer and co-founder of FACEIT, and Ryan Wyatt, global head of gaming content at YouTube.

Mike Stubbs: Firstly, could you give us a sort of basic outline of this new deal. What it means, where the league is going to be broadcast and kind of what the deal is all about?

Michele Attisani: We've been working with YouTube for some time now on VoDs and on live content. YouTube is the largest platform globally when it comes to gaming content, and the level of commitment and resources that YouTube are putting into making the live product more and more prominent. We saw an opportunity, and we've been talking with them for some time, to a point where we decided to make YouTube the new home for ECS in terms of live content and streaming.

This means a lot of different things for us. First of all, the level of technology and infrastructure that YouTube Gaming has is phenomenal and unprecedented, so we'll be able to deliver the highest quality of content. We are going to have 1080p native streaming with a high bit rate and DVR functionality, so fast rewind on the fly directly from launch. On top of that we are working closely with the YouTube team to develop new features, to provide a really advanced viewer experience that has never been seen before in eSports.

Recommended by Forbes

Video: How The Empire Fared And Lost One Of The Most Promising Dota 2 Teams In...

Ryan Wyatt: The reason we are doing it is, although we are the largest gaming platform in the world we've not had a lot of eSports content traditionally, leading to some of these recent investments. When we looked at the platform we cover so many different areas of content, from gameplay to walkthroughs. Although we had a lot of great eSports VoD content, and we have a ton of it, we just never had the tournament part. It is kind of nice from the sales perspective, but it also makes our gaming offering of content more complementary with one another, and it execs it out so that we truly do have anything from mobile games, to VR games, to eSports covered on the platform.

Astralis pose with the ECS Season 2 trophy after their victory.

Stubbs: Obviously there are multiple shareholders in the ECS league, including the teams themselves. How involved were they with this deal and are they happy with it?

Attisani: For a number of reasons that you can probably imagine we couldn't disclose any specific information about this deal until the closing. At the same time we have been engaging with the teams and players in informal conversation to gauge their opinion about a possible deal like this. We actually try to understand what their opinion is going to be, and the feedback we got was extremely positive. That gave us the right confidence to go ahead with the deal and get it done.

ECS is co-owned by the teams participating and there is a revenue share in place. This deal will bring great stability to the scene, and will give us the opportunity to really focus on developing the product, while the YouTube and Google sales team will take care of commercialising the content. That's not just in terms of pure advertising but also in terms of sponsorship and brand integration. We see that as a phenomenal opportunity. When you talk about Google, it's the best sales force in the world when it comes to digital. This will have a positive effect for everyone, not just us as co-owners of ECS, there will be direct benefits for the teams involved and for the players involved as well.

Stubbs: Last year Twitch was a pretty big part of the ECS, so much so that I thought they were a co-founder of the league as their name was in all of the branding. So what happened there, why now switch to YouTube?

Attisani: Twitch was never a co-owner of ECS. Obviously they had a role in ECS last year, but we decided to move on from that relationship. We are now fully focused on the future and the potential opportunity that we have alongside YouTube.

Stubbs: So does that mean that the YouTube name will be branded across everything that ECS does, as Twitch was last year?

Wyatt: We want to support the league. My whole thought process on this is that FACEIT is the biggest eSports platform in the world. They are great at creating eSports content and that is what they should focus on. We are great at monetizing content, selling against content and we are the biggest gaming platform in the world. It is a natural relationship. We by no means need to have our name plastered everywhere, there is nothing in our agreement that says they need to say YouTube is in partnership, or that we have any other relationship with the league. We want it to be something between FACEIT as a league and the teams and the players. That is their creation, their league, they created it. We are simply here to say we want that content on our platform, and we want to help monetize it so we can help turn it into an even bigger business.

Xantorohunter and Olof fist in the final of ECS Season 2

Stubbs: The announcement says that this is a multi-year deal. Is this a multi-year deal that is going to last for the next 10 years, or is it a multi-year deal that is only for two years?

Wyatt: Not quite that long, 10 years, but it's over multiple years and it's more than just two. I think what we really want to establish here is a long-term relationship. There is a lot that needs to happen in the eSports ecosystem as a whole, and a lot of it is how this is content monetized and how it is offered up to the masses. We believe that we can do this, given our size and scale at YouTube. I think it will take many years working together, forging a partnership and introducing it to the hundreds of millions of gamers we have everyday coming to YouTube, to really get this thing to the next level. That is why the duration is long.

Stubbs: YouTube signed a similar deal with ESL for the broadcast rights to the ESL Pro League, a very similar competition to ECS. Why are you focusing on these exclusive deals for CS:GO competitions?

Wyatt: It's not always about making sure they are not on competing platforms. Really the exclusivity part, and the necessity to do that, is about the ability to have the sales rights and be able to monetize against it. eSports leagues are generally very expensive to run, there is a lot of production around it, there is a lot of staff required from video editors to commentators. It's just a lot of heavy lifting for these leagues and it's expensive. In order to try and invest in these leagues you need to be able to sell and monetize this content in a meaningful way. The only way to really sell and monetize the content in a meaningful way is when you have the flexibility to do that, and that's on your own platform. I would say that the reason we think of exclusivity is not a process of making sure they're not on other platforms, but it's more how can we enable our sales force and that's how we are able to do it.

Stubbs: With two big deals in a short space of time it seems like YouTube is pumping a lot of money into making sure eSports events are live your platform. Does that mean we can expect more deals like this over the next few months?

Wyatt: I think we will do more to be honest with you. My background is in eSports and I think it's a tremendous opportunity. I would say what makes us different is that it has to make strategic sense. So it has to mean we can activate our sales team and really put all of our resources behind it, both from a marketing standpoint, a sales standpoint, content and so forth. We will not just try and go grab eSports teams or properties just to grab them. It needs to make sense and fit into what our business is, which is why FACEIT was very attractive to us for a variety of reasons. I would say it won't be the last thing that we do in this space, but I think we will be incredibly strategic about who, and how, we work with other leagues, players and teams.

You can find more of my eSports hot takes over on Twitter @MikeJLStubbs

TravelTrust
WEBSITES GET 3X MORE CONVERSIONS WHEN SEARCHING WITH TIME, NOT DISTANCE
DOWNLOAD CASE STUDY

Smart Think Daily
1 Reason To Do This Today
U.S Computer Owners Urged To Do This Every Time They Go Online.
Read More >>

Smart Think Daily
1 Reason To Do This Today
U.S Computer Owners Urged To Do This Every Time They Go Online.
Read More >>

2x revenue per lead
from LinkedIn over Adwords
Claim £50 in Ad Credits

CREATED

easyMarkets
1,000,000+ Registered Accounts
20+ Global Awards
Trade
Forex
Commodities
Metals
Indices
Fixed Spreads
No Hidden Commission
No Slippage
Start Trading
Your invested capital is at significant risk

TravelTrust
WEBSITES GET 3X MORE CONVERSIONS WHEN SEARCHING WITH TIME, NOT DISTANCE
DOWNLOAD CASE STUDY