CS:GO -- coldzera looks to cement legacy

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The best ever? SK Gaming's coldzera looks to claim his place in CS:GO history

SK Gaming swept Cloud9 3-0 to take home the finals victory at ESL One Cologne. Provided by ESL

Samuel Delorme   15 Jul, 2017

This year's PGL Krakow major has implications that extend beyond 2017 and can make a mark on the history of competitive Counter-Strike: Global Offensive.

Every major has its memorable moments. The best teams and the best player of the year are in large part determined by their success at these tournaments. But this time around, a legend can be forged.

EDITOR'S PICKS

SK Gaming stands tall at ESL One Cologne

SK Gaming swept Cloud9 3-0 to take home the finals victory at ESL One Cologne.

The 2017 CS:GO Hub

The 2017 Counter-Strike: Global Offensive Hub is your stop for all the information you need about the EPL, ELeague, ECS, and CS:GO Majors.

SK Gaming's Marcelo "coldzera" David has already proven his greatness several times over. But a PGL victory would be his third major title. And that championship? It would turn that "great" title into "greatest."

So how did this happen? How did a player, unknown two years ago, rise up to become such a dominant force on the world stage?

Well, it began with a call from Fernando "fer" Alvarenga, who asked coldzera if he wanted to join the top Brazilian team, Luminosity Gaming. After coldzera's father rejected the idea of his son joining an international CS:GO team, his dad got a call from Luminosity captain Gabriel "FalleN" Toledo. Coldzera's dad was convinced and allowed him to start his professional career with Luminosity.

His debut match was at ESL One Cologne, the most revered tournament in CS:GO -- and Cologne 2015, one of the most competitive majors ever. So here was this young Brazilian, pitted against Fnatic and Team EnVyUs, who were to be the finalists of the tournament. No one would've reproached coldzera if he had played poorly. In fact, no one expected him to be anything but mediocre at best. First LAN, and it's a major? Tough luck, kid.

And yet coldzera didn't do the expected. On the biggest stage, coldzera played well. In a way, his debut was very typical of what coldzera was going to become. He wasn't flashy, but he was much better than he had any right to be.

After that surprising performance at Cologne and another at DreamHack Open Cluj-Napoca, coldzera went on a tear. Tournament after tournament -- RGN, FACEIT, ESL ESEA Pro League, Star-Series -- he improved. And just six months into his professional career, coldzera was the best player on his team.

There were rumblings around the scene about the new Brazilian prodigy. "He's one of the world's best" was a common opinion among pundits. But while players make their names with big performances, the very best make their name with trophies. Coldzera didn't have one yet.

By the time March rolled around, Luminosity had risen from a middling dark-horse team and become one of the world's best. It had made three finals at top-tier events but fallen short of victory every time. For both Luminosity and its best player, greatness was just beyond their reach.

Enter MLG Columbus in 2016, the first major at which coldzera was a serious contender. There, coldzera as we know him was born. He put up one of the greatest performances ever seen at a major. With an astounding plus-84 plus-minus, coldzera carried his team to victory both through his consistent firepower and some magical moments. His four-kill AWP round on Mirage at map-point was so incredible, Valve added a graffiti to the map as a commemoration.

Luminosity won its first trophy, a major, and a question bubbled up: Was coldzera, unknown just nine months prior, the best player in the world?

Then-Luminosity Gaming Counter-Strike: Global Offensive player Marcelo "coldzera" David of Brazil faces Virtus.pro in the quarterfinal match of the 2016 Major League Gaming Columbus tournament.
Kyle Grillot for ESPN

A few months passed, and Luminosity cemented itself as the team to beat in CS:GO. With EPL and DreamHack Austin victories, coldzera's team became the favorite at every tournament it attended. As for coldzera, he was the de facto No. 1 player in the world in the wake of Olof "olofmeister" Kajbjer Gustafsson's and Ladislav "GuardiaN" Kovács's injuries.

But Luminosity hit some stumbling blocks. At ECS, it fell to G2 Esports. Fnatic, though weakened by olof's dip in performance, was still lethal. As for coldzera, breakout performances at elite events from Oleksandr "s1mple" Kostyliev and Nikola "NiKo" Kovač had raised doubts about the Brazilian's status as the best in the world. Despite Luminosity's success, both coldzera and his team had to prove themselves at a major once again -- this time, as a rebranded team.

Luminosity's roster was scooped up by SK Gaming in June 2016 and made its major debut in a different uniform at ESL One Cologne. Regardless of the change, it was this group's tournament to win, and coldzera's to dominate.

SK Gaming dropped one map the entire tournament, and coldzera proved he could replicate that once-in-a-lifetime Columbus performance with a plus-87 and another major trophy. And while s1mple looked great, there were no longer any doubts. Coldzera was the world's best player.
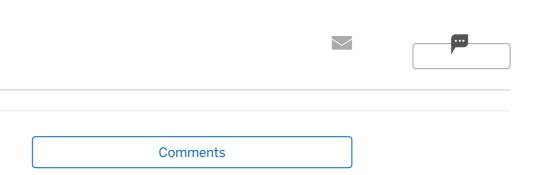
A title drought following Cologne led SK Gaming to swap Lincoln "fnx" Lau in February for Immortals' João "felps" Vasconcellos. After two poor showings while adjusting to the change, SK clicked and surged back to the world's No. 1 spot. They beat FaZe Clan, the presumptive heir to Astralis' CS:GO throne, at IEM Sydney and ECS.

Though SK Gaming is No. 1 in the world entering PGL and fresh off an ESL One Cologne victory, it is by no means safe in that position. The margin of victory against Astralis and FaZe at ECS was razor-thin, and G2 Esports pulled off an upset at EPL. Players like Nicolai "dev1ce" Reedtz and NiKo are right on the heels of coldzera, too.

But a win at PGL could end the debate. If NiKo carries his team to a victory in Krakow, he would be considered the best player in the world. If dev1ce were to do the same, his name would truly rival that of coldzera's. But if the Brazilians win, coldzera wouldn't simply keep his title. He would enter the conversation as one of the best players of all time.

He might be a more passive player, and his skill isn't worlds ahead of his peers, but coldzera's consistency is unmatched. That will always be undervalued; the mind latches onto highlight-reel plays and electric performances. But unlike flashy play, results are permanent.

Comments

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