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FACEIT's Michele Attisani on facing up to UK esports



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Jake Tucker (<http://www.esports-pro.com/authors/jake-tucker>) . Business . Thursday 20th July 2017 . 13:08

Michele Attisani co-founded competitive games outfit Faceit in 2012, but before that he'd been gaming competitively for 15 years, supporting the habit with a career working with various Fortune 500 companies and several tech start-ups.

Attisani is, as a result, ideally positioned to talk about the state of the UK esports industry, and in his mind, the competitive scene in the UK is "definitely" growing fast.

"[The games industry] is shifting from a traditional console market into a more PC and esports-focused market," says Attisani. "I think 2017 so far is also the largest for esports events in the UK, which is a great success."

This trend is continuing to the grassroots level, too, where players are eagerly competing in the hope of a call up to the big leagues: "In terms of grassroots activity, there's definitely a lot going on at local level, obviously on the Faceit platform where we have a lot of activities on all the grassroots levels, but of course also with other organisations like Gfinity, Multiplay and others."

Attisani feels that with their recent ECS Counter-Strike final, which played out in front of a sold-out Wembley Arena, they "proved this year there's a demand in the UK, and hopefully [esports organisations] will push more people to do more events in the UK. We're certainly planning to do more. And I'm sure other people looking at the success we had will try and follow our lead."

At the ECS finals, there wasn't a single British team competing, so we ask Attisani if he feels like there's a lack of British talent. "There's a bit of a shortage of the UK talent, that's for sure. And I don't think that's necessarily a big issue for us – the ECS is a very global league and we have the best teams and players in the world participating. Therefore, the level of interest is extremely high, as it's been proven, even without a UK team participating."

Historically, the UK has always been more skewed towards consoles, Attisani says, suggesting the reason why that UK is behind in PC-based esports is the lack of interest in the platform. "I think now the trend is converting. We can see very strong growth in terms of PC gaming and PC esports in the UK, so now there's a real opportunity to catch up as there's a large number of people that are highly engaged and there's a pretty healthy scene to take advantage of."

The ECS is notably in Counter-Strike because all of the teams competing have equity and revenue share, and Faceit has been working with some big sporting groups as a result of this. Regarding traditional sports teams, Attisani says that their involvement is an "opportunity" as long as they "understand the differences between traditional sports and esports and are respectful of the systems."

Attisani adds that "pretty much every sports federation is looking at esports right now and thinking about the market. Every sports group understands that in the next ten to 20 years, it's going to be as big as traditional sports, if not bigger. And as a result everyone is looking at ways they can participate."

"We'll likely see more announcements from established sports brand and a lot of different attempts to experiment and explore the market as they move to colonise digital sports. While some of these attempts will be successful, many will fail."

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