

# James Bardolph and ddk preview the ECS finals

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June 19 · By Mike Stubbs

**The biggest CS:GO teams in the world will head to London in a week to try and become ECS Season 3 champions, so we caught up with the casters for their predictions.**

The last half year has arguably been the most stable time in the history of CS:GO. The two established online leagues returned for more seasons. The big-name tournament organisers have continued to raise the bar when it comes to LAN events and the schedule hasn't been as crazy as it was last year. All in all, there have been a lot of improvement and not a lot in the way of gambles that haven't paid off.

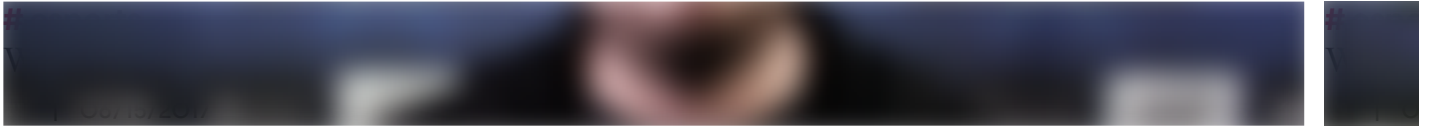
This stability meant that event organisers could take more risks, and this is certainly what the folks over at [FACEIT](#) did for ECS Season 3. The league had seen rapid growth in its first year, but for the third season they decided to make some changes, specifically to the broadcast itself. Gone was the London studio and the team moved over to California to broadcast from The eSports Arena. This brought with it a more relaxed atmosphere and casual casting style that really resonated with fans.

[Season 3 of ECS](#) has easily been its best yet and that's before we've even got to the LAN finals. The end-of-season event is due to take place on June 24 and 25 at Wembley Arena in London and it promises to be the biggest yet. To find out what they think will go down in London town, and

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### **How has the online stage been for you both? Have there been any issues with your new studio?**

**James Bardolph:** The new studio's been great: the hours are much better for us and we finish at a reasonable time. California's weather has been pretty good, so we've been able to balance hard work with relaxation! The biggest issue I'd say we had is the awful brown rug under the table, which will never, ever be seen again.

### **What about the action; has this been the best online stage for ECS yet?**

**JB:** Before the main league even started, I think Virtus.pro vs Space Soldiers was the best qualifier match we've had to date. They really fought tooth and nail to make it to the finals. I think this is the most competitive season we've seen yet, with some final LAN spots going down to the last few matches. NiP and CLG had some interesting scenarios in the last few days of the season.

**Daniel 'ddk' Kapadia:** The online stage has been much more consistent than I expected and the quality of CS is higher every time – in past seasons you can see some teams you didn't expect sneaking through as there tends to be more variance online. This time however, the only team from the big names not making Top Eight was VP, but it's almost expected, this isn't the only online league where they've had issues performing.

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Wembley is an epic location for CS

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**Did the final placings end up as you expected? Did you expect VP to end in the bottom two and G2 to make it to LAN?**

**JB:** You can never say that you expect VP to hit bottom two of the league, but then again you can't say it's a surprise either. I would have to guess that they're just not motivated by online play. It's not the same as live and the stakes are not as high for each match, so maybe they struggle with the motivation. G2 are former champions and it seems that as we approach the finals they are only getting stronger, which is great to see.

**ddk:** Yeah, just as James says, it's really not surprising, they have a track record for this kind of thing. I'm so happy G2 made it, of course it's just been a matter of time until we saw something great out of them, but they are beginning to find their feet at just the right time – and let's not forget, we'll be going back to the Wembley SSE Arena where this time last year we saw G2 winning over SK to win their first big title.

**What can we expect from the finals? Will it be the more laid-back and chilled atmosphere we've seen so far, or will it be a more TV sports broadcast style like most LANs?**

**JB:** It won't be as casual as we have for the online studio environment – that said we're not afraid to have fun. We have brought in a lot of analysts for this event – I might for example ask Thorin to open Day Two as the desk host for the first hour. The barber shop will be open for business so attendees can get their hair cut by players – it's good to be a fun event!

**ddk:** We'll bring the personality and at the same time give the event, the competition, the respect it deserves – I never much like comparing what we do to sports, there's boundless amounts to learn from them, but we're our own thing and we'll continue to find our own successes and failures. I think this event will be particularly great just due to the awesome talent line up.

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Astralis won ECS Season 2

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### How are ticket sales looking for the event? Will you sell out Wembley Arena?

**JB:** The fact we are approaching the stretch goal where someone wins a bus tour of London with myself and Dan tells me the tickets are doing well. It's already exceeded last year, which is the main goal, and is also very close to selling out! London is a location that doesn't get much in the name of standalone eSports events and that's something we want to build upon year after year.

**ddk:** I hope we get there. As James says, it's already an improvement upon last year, and hopefully over time people will get used to the idea of having bigger and bigger events in London for CS:GO.

### So, predictions. First off, which region will have more teams in the top four, NA or EU?

**JB:** The strongest teams from both regions are at the finals, however Europe is still considerably stronger than NA at this point so that's the way it should be on paper, however upsets are always welcome!

**ddk:** Definitely EU. It would be very surprising to see otherwise as the level is generally a lot higher, besides SK who should make the top four.

### Which two teams do you see making it to the final, and why?

**JB:** It's hard to say because the teams are so strong – both groups might end up being groups of death. My money would be on G2 and Astralis, but then how can you count out FaZe? Or SK? Impossible to predict.

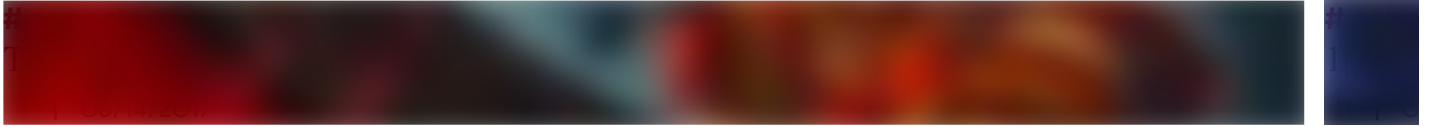
**ddk:** Overall this set-up of teams could be the best we've ever had. It promises to deliver so much, as all the teams from Europe are hitting such incredible levels lately; Astralis are always my consistent pick, for this event I'll put them with G2 as my answer. The only thing right now is that I hesitate to say G2 as their consistency is in question. Can they peak at back-to-back tournaments? I think it could just as well be FaZe as they match up so well against the top

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again. Man, it's so hard to pick. This will be such a great final.

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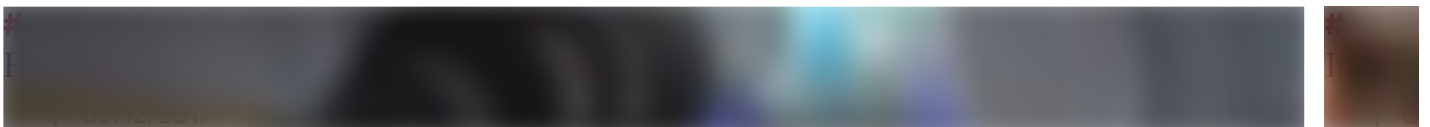
### Who wins your predicted final, and what score will it end up being?

**JB:** I think both the teams skillsets and map pools go so deep right now I can't even predict the maps, but I favour Astralis slightly in this series to edge it 2-1. One of the maps I want to see most is Overpass between these two teams, it's so incredibly technical, but Astralis are eerily consistent and make so few mistakes and over extensions, yet versus the explosiveness of G2 there is always a way in. KennyS has been in godmode lately – I just want to see him on a map that's good for the AWP.

**ddk:** I'm incredibly excited for this. Just to sum it up in another way: Astralis, G2, Faze and SK are teams that all belong in a major finals with their recent performances – they all seem to be closing in on their peaks. Astralis and Faze have the craziest rivalry right now, so if they meet late in the tournament we get to see a new Astralis as they definitely have something ready for Faze. SK have reinvented themselves with felps, and have had a lot of troubles, but are finally turning the corner and seem very optimistic to have their form ready to win a massive title, and are a roadblock stylistically for Faze. We have the reunited Fnatic, incredibly fun to watch, a team that finally look like they can beat anyone again, ready to prove they can take a title. And G2, they're the most entertaining team to watch, KennyS hitting godmode, bodyy is the French Xyp9x and they're coming off of an incredible win at ESL Pro League finals. It's gonna be good.

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