Grunt

September 23 2015

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Final Draft

Word Count: 1507 **Final Boss**

When I got my first Xbox, I also got a game called *Halo* 2. In the beginning, I just played for fun, playing the campaign and customs games against friends in my neighborhood. A few months later, I bought Xbox Live, where you play with other people online across the world. At this point I wasn’t taking my gaming experience too serious. Once I found out what Major League Gaming (MLG) was, I started to play religiously, because I wanted to be the one holding the **$100,000** check one day. My influence to put copious amounts of hours into practicing this game is in the picture below. The team, “Final Boss” is the greatest Halo team of all time. From 2003-2008, at every event, they placed outside of the top 3 only 4 times. Taking first place 25 out of 38 events. One of their teammates, named Walshy, even got a sponsor from Red Bull. These people made more money playing a videogame than most middle class family’s annual incomes.



 Literacy comes into the equation when I started playing competitively. When you’re playing *Halo* with Major League Gaming (MLG) settings, it entails a four on four match with multiple game types. Depending on what year of competition it was, there was anywhere from 10-15 total combinations of map and gametype variants. One example of a gametype is called “Team Slayer”, where you and your three other teammates try to kill the other team for a total of 50 kills. If you get killed, you respawn after 5 seconds, unless you fall off the map or kill someone on your own team with friendly fire, then it can change to 10 seconds or more, for your next respawn. Having a 10 second respawn can quickly change the momentum of the game if you’re on the wrong side. This is because *Halo 2* is an extremely fast paced game if you’re playing competitively. On every map you play on, there’s what’s called “callouts” which is a certain spot on the map. To be sufficient at winning you and your team must learn every single “callout” for every map. Every map has at least 30 “callouts”. A good example is: “**one shot on snipe two!**” That means, there is a guy on the other team on a part of the map called snipe 2, with no shields left and it will only take one shot to kill them. With four people yelling callouts, weapon spawn times, and tactics during a game, this can get pretty hectic and sound like a foreign language to someone who’s unfamiliar with competitive gaming.

While playing *Halo 2* I learned how to communicate to my teammates without hesitation on where an enemy was and how much health he or she has left. I didn’t realize until later on that this type of gaming significantly helped me while I was serving in the Marine Corps Infantry on how to communicate on where an enemy was. There is an abbreviation on how to say where an enemy combatant or just someone suspicious is, and that is called an ADDRAC (Alert, Direction, Description, Range, Assignment, and Command). An example would sound like: squad, direct front, enemy machine gun in the compound, 700 meters, firing at the rapid rate, at my command. This type of gaming literacy also helped me while I was a turret gunner. When you’re in the turret in urban areas you have to constantly “paint a picture” of what’s going on around you to your team leader who is inside the front passenger seat of the truck, this is because inside of the vehicle there isn’t much view of the outside. Without realizing it, under stressful situations I was easily able to communicate to the team leader on what was going on. I attribute some of that competency from my time with competitive *Halo*.

 At every MLG event, all the screens being played on were recorded, where it was then accessible to view on MLG’s website. This is where I learned how to dissect and analyze the top tier players on how they played and communicated with their teams. Then, my team and I would apply the “setups” the pro’s used into our own tactics, to win games. For example, on a map called Lockout on either Team Slayer or Team Oddball, to dominate the other team, you would need a teammate who was competent with the sniper rifle and your whole team be setup at the Battle Rifle Tower. The perfect setup would be as follows: Sniper on closed ramp, one teammate on open ramp (preferably the best on the team in close up battles) or whoever has the shotgun or sword, one teammate in library window, and the last teammate roving from BR two (short for Battle Rifle tower second floor) to bridge. The objective of Team Oddball is to hold the oddball, which is a skull, for a certain amount of time, having more time held than the other team at the end of the match would result in a victory. If the game type was Team Oddball the player roving on BR two would have the oddball. This is how I would analyze the literacy of professional halo players game play, communication, team tactics, and playing styles. Without knowing it, by 8th grade I had mastered the literacy of competitive *Halo 2*.

 I associate my competitive *Halo 2* gaming days with three other people. Their online gamer tags were: NuTz, Amplitude, and Itz Natural. Amplitude and I originally met when we first started playing Xbox Live, then later on we met NuTz and Itz Natural. After practicing with these people for hours on end every day, I knew more about them then some of my friends who I saw every day in school. I still keep in contact with NuTz and Amplitude. I know that Chris (NuTz), lives in Virginia and is working as an accountant and finishing his master’s degree. John (Amplitude), lives in West Virginia and just started his first semester at law school. I don’t really talk to Billy (Itz Natural) that much anymore, but I know that he is finishing his Bachelor’s degree in construction management. Chris, John, and I have brought up the idea of getting our team back together for *Halo 5*, which is being released later this year. I don’t know if I’ll have the time to practice to compete at a high level with all the stuff going on in my life right now. I’m currently in college, I work for FedEx, and my wife and I have a seven month old German Shepherd puppy to take care of, but I may give *Halo 5* a shot depending on if I like the dynamics of the game. For example, from *Halo 3* to the current *Halo 2 Anniversary*, is no longer played at a fast pace anymore, because of the game makers are trying to make the games more “noob friendly” (easier for people who are unfamiliar with the *Halo* series).

 In *Halo 2*, a patch came out that created button glitches, which made practicing even more important. These button glitches would avoid a time delay in reloading or melees. With the battle rifle, you could press (rapidly) the right trigger twice and then the X button to avoid a time delay with the semi-automatic shots, thus shooting two bursts right after another. If you got even better, you could do what is called a “quad shot”. A quad shot is on the controller (RRXYYRRX), this would allow you to shoot four bursts in a row, kind of like an automatic weapon. But the tricky part is, while doing one of these button glitches, it is extremely difficult to keep your reticule on the opponent, and if you’re off by one shot or one centimeter, your enemy would gain an advantage and most likely kill you. This is because the way you hold the Xbox controller and if you press the X button you have to take your thumb off the joystick for a split second. One pro I know of (Walshy) avoids this problem by holding the controller a different way. With his right hand he uses his index finger to press the buttons on the controller, he uses his middle finger to pull the right trigger, and his right thumb to control the right joystick. These are some examples of how I comprehend and analyze the literacy of competitive *Halo*.

A lot of people may think that gaming is useless and a waste of time, but gaming for me has significantly helped my literacy skills. From dissecting the professional player’s tactics and using them myself, to the literacy of conversing with my teammates trying to win games, and how that carried over into my time in the Marine Corps. Also, thanks to my addiction to *Halo 2* for helping me complete this raid with ease. In the end, gaming has played an important role in my life without me realizing it.