
MINESKI NEWS
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**GAMING IN THE
NEW NORMAL**



TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Last Sport Standing	pg.	1-3
Adjusting the Philippine Pro Gaming League for Quarantine	pg.	3-4
What does “Grassrooting” mean in esports?	pg.	5

The LAST SPORT STANDING



The sporting world froze for a time this year as major sporting events suspended their operations due to the global pandemic. Filled arenas and constant face-to-face interactions made such activities potential hotspots for COVID-19 spreading, with some world-famous athletes even contracting the virus, prompting immediate action from leagues to safeguard the health of their players and fans. The 2020 [Tokyo Olympics](#)¹, the [National Basketball Association \(NBA\)](#)², and [football leagues across Europe](#)³, and more were all shut down and postponed indefinitely until measures were rolled out. Some have resumed operations with various stringent safety guidelines, such as the [NBA's "bubble" in Orlando, Florida, USA](#)⁴, but it's clear that the sports entertainment industry took a big hit from the pandemic.

For the most part, however, esports remained far less affected, and in some cases, even thriving in the sudden massive shift to digital consumption. In an [article published](#)⁵ last June by Beazley, a study revealed that [viewing figures for esports content creators and tournaments have risen exponentially](#)⁶, with a major platform averaging 2.3 million concurrent views in May compared to the 1.4 million it clocked back in January when live sporting events were still available.

Some traditional sports attempted to transfer to an esports environment. One example of this was when the Formula One Grand Prix drivers moved their races "online." According to [SportsPro Media](#)⁷, the well-known drivers of the participants in the prestigious F1 Grand Prix signed up for the Bahrain Virtual Grand Prix to let their fans still enjoy their favorite racing sport.

Ultimately, however, these were just temporary band-aid solutions for most traditional sports--gimmicks to keep their fans engaged while waiting for a real solution. For esports, instead, the show could go on.

From our end, Mineski Global and our country-based subsidiaries adapted our projects to go fully online. To clarify: though esports is mostly a digital competition in the first place, most tournaments still culminate in live events where players can compete on a stage and fans can watch their favorite players play in the flesh (as well as on-screen). Though the transition wasn't easy, as the logistical concerns of running a digital esports broadcast are at par with the complexities of a live broadcast, the shift was at the very least natural to the esports audience.



One such example of a successful transition into an all-online format were the Mobile Legends: Bang Bang Professional Leagues (MPL) in the Philippines and Indonesia which registered record numbers in their respective markets. MPL's fifth season in Indonesia racked up [back-to-back record breakers](#)⁸ during its run last April. First, its playoff round featuring the two best and most-popular Indonesian teams in the game in Team RRQ and Team EVOS faced off with 700,000 concurrent online viewers. MPL ID raked in a million concurrent views in the Finals to set another Indonesian esports record as the most-successful staging of any esports event in the country.

¹ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/52152293>

² <https://www.usatoday.com/story/sports/nba/2020/03/11/coronavirus-nba-shuts-down-after-rudy-gobert-tests-positive/5028026002/>

³ <https://tv5.espn.com/football/english-premier-league/story/4085771/europes-top-soccer-leagues-and-coronavirus-where-premier-league-la-ligamore-stand-with-finishing-2019-20-season>

⁴ <https://www.usatoday.com/in-depth/sports/2020/07/09/nba-bubble-takes-shape-disney-world/5387760002/>

⁵ https://www.beazley.com/beazley_academy/filling_the_void_lockdown_fuels_growth_in_esports.html

⁶ <https://twitchtracker.com/statistics>

⁷ <https://www.sportspromedia.com/news/f1-esports-virtual-grand-prix-series-gaming-coronavirus>

⁸ <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2020/06/12/mobile-legends-pro-league-books-records-highest-finals-viewership/>



It was considered a historic achievement by both Moonton and Mineski Indonesia, who have run the league in the country since its first season in 2018. Like Indonesia's MPL, the Philippines' own iteration, aided by Mineski Philippines, reached its biggest viewership to date in the country's esports history. [317,330 Filipinos across the archipelago tuned in](#)⁹ to the finals of MPL PH's fifth season, which featured OnicPH and Sunsparks.



Aside from that, Mineski Philippines was also able to hold a fully online tournament with their charity event dubbed Lockdown Games, which donated USD 20,000 to the Philippine General hospital for much-needed medical supplies. The Philippine team also held its long-running Philippine Pro Gaming League (PPGL) in a completely online format, with a focus on mobile game titles and influencer-centric community cups.

[MarketWatch](#)¹⁰ insists that all the content and sudden popularity of esports is not merited by having more gamers. It's having more people playing longer, creating more content, demanding more content, which has led to people and brands looking forward to tournaments, albeit online, in lieu of live events.

[According to Little Black Book](#)¹¹, the population all over the world have more time to kill on their hands and video games have been an engaging way to shut minds away from reality. More people are watching people play video games more as well. Twitch, the live streaming platform of choice for gamers, has experienced a 31% rise in viewers in March, according to [TwitchTracker](#)¹². Cheil Brazil's chief creative officer, and [self-confessed gamer](#)¹³, Claudio Lima said it best: "When you are practicing something a lot - like gamers are doing - you always want to know how the pros are doing and fairing," explaining the rocketing numbers in digested gaming content as the world deals with the pandemic.

Esports thrived in the absence of live sporting events and as the entire world deals with the post-coronavirus environment, esports will be one of the biggest considerations for organizers and movers of sports entertainment.

Southeast Asia has one of its building blocks thanks to the painstaking effort that Mineski Global and its country teams have established for the past ten years, which will help ease brands and leagues looking to shift and include a digital counterpart in the esports world.

⁹ <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2020/06/12/mobile-legends-pro-league-books-records-highest-finals-viewership/>

¹⁰ <https://www.marketwatch.com/story/game-on-esports-has-filled-the-void-of-empty-stadiums-and-arenas-2020-04-01>

¹¹ <https://www.lbbonline.com/news/can-esports-fill-the-void-while-mainstream-sports-are-on-the-bench>

¹² <https://twitchtracker.com/statistics>

¹³ <https://www.lbbonline.com/news/5-minutes-with-claudio-lima/>



ADJUSTING THE PHILIPPINE PRO GAMING LEAGUE FOR QUARANTINE

Though esports is already a mostly-digital platform-- from the games themselves to broadcast consumption via online streaming-- as with any event, there is still a crucial live component. Behind the scenes, project managers, stream engineers, league operations staff, and broadcast talents still need to brave the pandemic to operate a high-production show in a studio. Viewers, as well, are hungry for the peerless spectacle of live grand finals events where they can see their favorite players in person and cheer to their heart's content with a crowd. Transitioning a league to become 100% online is not only difficult but there is some element of the experience that must be sacrificed.

We at Mineski have adjusted many of the leagues and tournaments that we operate for the global pandemic in this way, but none more so than our very own Philippine Pro Gaming League, operated by Mineski Philippines in partnership with Globe Telecom.

The Philippine Pro Gaming League (PPGL) is the largest multi-game esports league in the Philippines, and has served as a launching pad for the careers of many Filipino esports athletes that went on to compete in international leagues and even the Southeast Asia Games. With seven successful seasons since 2018, and over \$150,000 given out in prizes, it is one of the pillar events of Philippine esports. Usually, each PPGL season starts with national open qualifiers for multiple game titles, which all funnel into a live mall-based grand finals event attended by hundreds to thousands of fans.

With such live events banned in the Philippines during this pandemic, however, the league had to switch it up. According to Mineski Philippines General Manager Mark Navarro, their latest and seventh season was due for an evolution anyway.

"We had planned for a more accessible league at the start of the year. It is our vision with Globe Telecom to evolve the league to cater to not only esports die-hards but also to the casual gaming audience that could be introduced to this higher level of engagement with their favorite games," said Navarro. "In fact, we wanted to run offline LAN parties across the country and outside of Metro Manila, to both service gamers in other regions of the Philippines and create that beloved "LAN Cafe" feel from the early 2000s that most gamers grew up with. With quarantine restrictions, that was no longer possible, but in deciding to push through with the League's 7th season, creating that community experience became our objective."

The PPGL pushed through from April to September this year with the following major adjustments:

- The season was purely for mobile games, due to cybercafes across the country not being allowed to operate during the quarantine period.

- The grand finals was translated from a live mall event into an online viewing experience broadcast over a single weekend.

- The league also introduced influencer-led community cups where casual fans were able to play with or against community figureheads and even celebrity artists like popular indie folk-pop band Ben & Ben.

- A fraction of the prizes were allocated to charity, to help with the public health effort against COVID-19.

- The league catered to new communities with Marvel: Super War and PUBG Mobile, the latter allowed us to position the league as a feeder event to a regional PUBG Mobile tournament



In lieu of a bombastic live event experience, the organizers of the PPGL wanted to make sure that casual gamers could participate in the seventh season with minimum investment and maximum reward. The community cups in particular allowed gamers with no time to invest into a serious high-level championship run to still compete within their game’s community and win smaller prizes. For viewers, giveaways and streamer participation ensured that they, too, could be rewarded for simply watching the league.



The league was a massive success, with higher viewership and registration numbers than any previous season for Mobile Legends: Bang Bang, Marvel Super War, Call of Duty Mobile, Rules of Survival Mobile, and PUBG Mobile. **Over 7,600 players registered** to participate in the season’s competitive legs and community cups, with **867,164 unique viewers** tuning in throughout the season to watch. Gaming communities for the included mobile games were also thankful for their games to finally be included in the Philippine Pro Gaming League.

Ultimately, what allowed the PPGL to succeed beyond the obstacle of quarantine was not simply a rote transition to online operations but an insightful and strategic rethinking of how to best service gaming communities given the global pandemic. The season more than exceeded its target of 30% increased viewership from 2019, and the new inclusive strategies implemented by the team created a relationship with gaming communities that is sure to continue into future seasons of the league.

What does **GRASSROOTING** **MEAN IN ESPORTS?**

Grassroots is defined as a movement which uses the people in a given district, region, or community as the basis for a political or economic movement. These movements are associated with bottom-up, rather than top-down decision making, and are considered natural or spontaneous than traditional power structures.

This is how esports started. Small gaming communities coming together, driven by their passion for certain genres and fandoms. The esports movement was born out of everyone's collective passion and love for gaming, despite its very humble beginnings twenty years ago, before it became the **billion-dollar industry**¹ it is today. In the context of esports, this is "grassrooting". In Asia, specifically in Southeast Asia, agencies and brands have been targeting gaming communities rather than the mass public when it comes to holding competitions and tournaments. Mineski Global in particular has been very active in Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines when it comes to these types of tournaments. An example of their efforts in their respective markets are the Philippine Pro Gaming League (PPGL) and the Garuda Cup back in 2018.

Other organizers like the eSports World Federation (ESWF) have also concentrated on grassroots development of esports in countries like the Philippines with their **own versions of community cups**² centered on Mobile Legends: Bang Bang, the most-popular mobile game in Southeast Asia at the moment.

Countries such as the **United Kingdom** have also delved into **grassroots**³ tournaments such as the Multiplay UK Masters, ESL Premiership, and Gfinity to name a few. The United States of America has SKYLLA as their grassroots league program.



However, marketers, brands, and other agencies tend to overlook one important audience segment of grassroots development in esports: students.

In an effort to cater the academe, Mineski Global is diving deep with its partner brands in offering tournaments that are open to students as well as building comprehensive programs that hope to engage and enrich their esports experience as well help them in their future careers in esports.

Mineski Indonesia was one step towards that direction in holding the **PUBG Mobile Campus Championship** back in 2019⁴ as well as establishing the **ASUS Campus Elite program**⁵ with ASUS in the same year. In the Philippines, Mineski Global has partnered with the **Philippine Collegiate Champions League (PCCL)**⁶ to launch the Youth Esports Program (YEP). Mineski Thailand as well has plans to launch its own student esports program named the Thailand Esports & Gaming Academy, with a slate of activities to launch in 2021.

Yes, esports is an entertainment industry that tends to tout viewership numbers in the millions or valuations in the billions, but it's still its community aspect that really drives the rich and authentic engagement that makes esports such a valuable platform for brands.

¹ <https://newzoo.com/insights/trend-reports/newzoo-global-esports-market-report-2020-light-version/>

² <https://rappler.com/brandrap/detours/grassroots-esports-bayan-ko-mobile-legends>

³ <https://www.hotspawn.com/grassroots-esports-recognition-is-important/>

⁴ <https://www.usatoday.com/in-depth/sports/2020/07/09/nba-bubble-takes-shape-disney-world/5387760002/>

⁵ <https://www.mineskiglobal.com/latest-announcements/mineski-indonesia-brings-esports-to-campus-with-pmcc-2019/>

⁶ <https://www.mineskiglobal.com/latest-announcements/asus-campus-elite-2019-in-indonesia/>



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