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‘SIR CLOUD’ STAYS GROUNDED DESPITE SUCCESS AS ESPORTS COMMENTATOR

5-6 minutes

When life seems to be against you and you are dealing with debts resulting from a gambling addiction, job loss due to the pandemic and the depression that followed, it can feel overwhelming.

Those were the real-life experiences of Andrew Cheong, 38. He found himself entangled in English Premier League gambling debts as early as his college days but luckily his parents bailed him out.

But life threw him another curve ball during the COVID-19 pandemic when he got laid off while at the peak of his C-suite career. He became depressed and kept himself occupied with esports to ward off suicidal tendencies. (Esports – short for electronic sports – are a genre of video games that are played in a highly organised competitive environment.)

Little did he know his fondness of online games such as Counter Strike, Dota, MAT (Mission Against Terror), Valorant, PUBG Mobile and Mobile Legends: Bang Bang, which became a space for Cheong to ‘hustle’ a bit, would enable him to overcome his depression and earn an income.

RISING FROM THE ASHES

Life then unexpectedly took a positive turn for Cheong, who is now better known by his moniker Sir Cloud. For people involved in the esports scene, Sir Cloud is certainly a difficult character to avoid.

“These days, I’m an esports commentator, an analyst and a content creator. I also teach esports at the Tunku Abdul Rahman University of Management and Technology,” he told Bernama in an interview here recently.

In other words, Cheong wears different hats – as an esports player or commentator giving his commentaries in Bahasa Melayu or English, or as an analyst, observing games and reviewing them afterwards.

This hypecaster (live commentator of competitive video games) has a degree in communication and a Master's degree in human resource management. Cheong is currently pursuing a PhD in psychology.

His involvement in the world of competitive online gaming goes back to 2000 when he used to play Counter Strike at cyber cafes.

“When I started working later, I pursued it (online gaming) as a weekend hobby. I would call it a serious hobby,” he said.

He used to take up challenges to participate in small online tournaments within Malaysia, often without receiving any payment as players needed exposure and, at the same time, collect “flying hours”.

“I did it for free because I had a full-time job then. So, this was purely a hobby for me before the pandemic struck,” he said.

Recalling his earlier days as a gamer, Cheong said he was welcomed by the gaming community and organisers and he would try to fill his weekends with tournaments.

“Eventually, the organisers started to pay me (for giving commentaries)... initially, it was (as little as) RM5 or they treated me to a *teh tarik*,” he added.

He said the low payments seemed “alright at that time” but he hoped it does not become a practice as it would disrupt the hypecast profession.

CONTENT FOR THE MASSES

Cheong has now become a household name in the world of esports commentaries. He also has his own website and YouTube channel, which has 4,400 subscribers, where he interacts with the esports community.

He also said it never crossed his mind that he would go on to become the manager of the national esports team at the 2023 SEA Games in Cambodia.

Prior to that, Cheong built his credentials by bagging the Creative Talent award at the Golden Bullet Awards 2021 and winning the Caster of the Year (English) award at the Malaysia Esports Awards 2023.

Cheong is also a nominee for the Popular Sports Commentator award at the forthcoming Sportswriters Association of Malaysia (SAM)-100PLUS 2024 Awards. Being nominated for this category is meaningful for the esports community as it is finally receiving recognition as a sport. Meanwhile, keen to do his part to train inexperienced esports players, Cheong posts educational content on his YouTube channel @SirCloudMY where he shares gaming techniques.

“When people don’t know the basics, every game becomes difficult. For example, in football, there’s a limit to what a defender can do. I can keep the house clean. But if you don’t score the goal, we can’t win the game,” he said.

Cheong has also shared his expertise and life lessons in a book in Bahasa Melayu titled ‘Esports Selamatkan Hidup Aku’ (Esports Saved My Life), which was published by Rabak-Lit and launched recently at the KL International Book Fair 2024.