Interviewer: Hello and welcome everyone to this interview. I am your host Darthozzan, with me is Sean "Day[9]" Plott. I shall thank you for joining me today. I've noticed just by scheduling this interview how busy you are on a day-to-day basis.

Day[9]: Oh yeah.

I: You talked a bit on State of the Game about what people don't know about your everyday experiences. Now that you have your Masters in Fine Arts all done, what does a day in the life of Day[9] entail?

D: So generally when I wake up there's a decent amount of scheduled meetings that go on, whether it be with my team regarding various upcoming projects or various issues we're trying to repair, or something like this. I do that for a lot of the early portions of the day. At some point I figure out when food is going to happen, so that's also a fundamental component. But then the daily requires a good amount of prep work. It kind of depends on the day; for instance, on Mondays generally the entire day is Funday Monday. That generally takes the whole day because not only do I have to find the good replays--and, by the way, huge shoutout to my admins and mods who just help volunteer to sort through those, because we generally get like 2000 submissions so it's really nice that they help hone those down--but doing the Funday Monday, preparing for that, making sure that all the games are in the right order, making sure that the games form sort of a story arc.

But on all the non-Funday Monday days, there's meetings in the mornings and then some in early afternoon, and then it advances on to me preparing to the daily and then actually doing the daily. In my free time I've begun to try to play quite a bit more. I would say that generally my free time is in Saturdays and some in Friday evenings, but I work Sunday through Friday. Sunday is also a work day for me; I generally have meetings in the morning just like any other day and prepare for the daily as well.

I: Now that sounds almost like you're working all the time. Do you generally schedule time, or how do you find that personal time that you need to not burn out completely?

D: Generally the late evenings. If I really want to have a--like, if I really hate myself I'll stay up for the GSL. That's always the biggest temptress in the whole world. There's definitely times when I'm going to bed at like 11 or 12, I'm getting up at 9, I'm getting a good amount of sleep, but occasionally it'll be like 1:30 and I'm going to bed, and then 1:45 and I'm going to bed, and once it gets to get like 1:45 I'm like "Well, I could stay up and just watch one match..." and then all of a sudden it's 3:30 and I'm like "Man, tomorrow's going to be awful." So I'm trying to avoid that. I'm trying to rely a little bit more on the VODs, waking up, sipping coffee and watching the games from the previous evening, but I will say I'm addicted to the live stuff.

But yes, generally in the evenings is when I'll have most of my free time, but still often in the evenings there's more to be done. Like State of the Game happens in the evenings, or generally there's other little tidbits I'm trying to work on. There's a lot of written e-mail stuff that goes on, so that is always kind of trickling through the day. But I've tried to commit to having scheduled free time during the day, because I'm the sort of person who has a bad habit of just working and working and working and then frying out and feeling all frazzled. So I make sure to give myself a good bit of free relaxation. That said, the daily is like, wildly fun, so that's another big motivator.

I: That's actually a pretty nice tie-in to my next question. Now, there's been a lot of discussion amongst the community since you've announced you're doing Starcraft 2 full-time now. What exactly does this mean? You mentioned streaming your games on State of the Game yesterday. Are you returning to Starcraft 2 as a pro player and not just as a caster? What are you doing now?

D: That's always sort of a difficult question to actually address head-on because there's not really a clear definition of what makes a player pro or not. I would like to continue to play in a way--or, begin to play in a way that will make me quite competitive the way I used to be, like definitely in the beta and right at the start of the game. I had the ability to play more because it was summer break and the daily wasn't quite consuming as much time as it is now, especially

with the Funday Monday, Newbie Tuesday, trying to theme things more, trying to prepare a lot more for the shows; make them more fleshed out.

So definitely I'll be playing more, but I will always try to make sure that my skill level is at an appropriate level first. I would like to get good, and if for some reason--let's say that I just am incapable of being anything except the worst player in the whole wide world--then I guess I'll never compete in tournaments. But that's OK because I would still view it as a good tool for it to be able to improve my daily. I would like to play in some tournaments, I would like to compete. Largely because that's sort of my background and I really really really love competing. So I definitely will have--I will be able, I guess, to shoot for that.

But I don't really have any intentions of joining a team or trying to win the MLG season final or something like that. Really for me, even in Brood War, I liked playing for the sake of playing and trying to feel like I was getting good at something, less to have a bunch of achievements on the table. I think a lot of people viewed me in Brood War as a person who would seem to disappear for 11 months and then suddenly, mysteriously appear every year for WCG when in reality I was playing the whole time. I just kind of liked the whole private, personal act of improving and working on the game and just trying to develop some mastery of that.

I: Now streaming is obviously a bit of a detour from that. It's not the personal, private practice that you so much like, that you improve with. Is this something that worries you at all?

D: Not really. In my eyes, it's another form of training. I'll definitely be doing the vast vast vast majority of my playing privately. That will always be true just because that's the sort of environment that I really like. But even in Brood War I would do ridiculous strain on myself to try to practice certain things. For instance, first I'd be practicing privately with some practice partners, and then I would take that to like the iCCup or PGTour or ladder and work really hard on that. And then when I was really good, I would do things like set my thermostat to 85 [29] degrees and try to play when it was really hot, and then set my thermostat to 55 [13] degrees and try to play when it was really cold, and then try to raise the height of my chair, lower the height of my chair, change angles of things to make myself feel out of my comfort zone.

So streaming would be another extension of that. Like, can I play with that feeling of pressure. Because that's one thing I actually had a hard time of in my early tournament days. I had no practice of this "oh my gosh, I feel the pressure of people watching, I need to try to push that

out of my head and just play properly." So what I started to actually do in college was just invite people over when I was playing, and just try to get that experience under my belt. Like someone who would not know that much about Starcraft and would only know that I was "supposed" to be good, so that if I lost that would be perhaps marginally embarrassing. I would impose that pressure on myself.

So that's kind of how I'm viewing streaming. So there's that part, and also when I'm streaming I feel that I would definitely talk in between games, and that's a useful mental exercise for me, to sort of make myself slow my thinking down, because honestly talking is a form of thinking for me. The process of trying to articulate something into words really helps me coagulate a lot of ideas into something that's useful. It's just another tool for training, in my eyes.

I: That's a very interesting approach. One that I think we see a lot of players want, but maybe they don't really go all the way, but I like that.

D: Why thank you.

I: So are there any rivalries or players you'd like to face? Maybe revisit the Artosis rivalry?

D: (laughs) You know, I actually... truly, personally, I try to steer clear from that. I mean, I have no problem with the idea of playing Artosis in some showmatch long down the line or something like that, but the honest truth is that the people who generally appear to be my "greatest rivals" are actually some of my closest Starcraft buddies.

I specially remember this was the case with my brother growing up, where we played everything together. We played Soul Calibur in high school, we played Goldeneye on the Nintendo 64 together, we played Sonic Racing on the Sega Saturn--games you've never even heard of. Even single player games like Fallout we played together, and then Starcraft, we played that together too. And people would say things like "Oh man, who's better? I bet you hate playing against Nick." It's like, no, I have always played games with my brother and I just like playing games with my brother.

And sure when we'd play games with each other at home and someone would lose, occasionally there'd be frustration. But the thing that I most remember is just the overwhelming comfort of playing with my brother because it was this familiar safe zone where I could lose and go over and be like, "Dude, man, what went wrong?" and he's like "Hey, I think this happened." There was nothing on the line; it was almost like complete and total pressure-free training. So with someone like Artosis, I don't really say like, "Man, I'm gonna crush that guy, yeah! Alright!" Because I really like Dan. But I wouldn't mind doing something like, perhaps, playing him down the line.

For the most--I'd just like to emphasize again that my favorite thing is to try to feel like I'm developing mastery and less to feel like, "Oh, I beat that guy." Because honestly, I have had so many experiences where there was--I even remember there was the Swedish player TreK. We were playing some games and I was trying something weird and he was trying something weird. Somehow, one of the games got posted of me beating TreK. Everyone was like "Oh my God, TreK did all this dumb stuff, man, why was he doing this and that" and all that stuff. Well, he was trying something. There's a million games you didn't see of him beating me. One game doesn't mean that much, and actually a lot of times if I do end up against a talented SC2 player on the ladder and I win, in my gut I feel "Yeah, you know, it's just a game, doesn't really... whatever." I like the sort of individual feeling of improvement rather than the I-beat-you feeling of improvement.

I: I think that a lot of what you said really rings true for me. For me especially, having a brother that I've always competed and played with, it's just an experience that really... I think I've played all of those games that you mentioned. So much fun just trying to compete with...

D: Well, I actually think it makes sense from a viewer standpoint because a very very difficult question to answer is, "What is skill and what is improvement? What does that mean?" And it's always a really good feeling whenever you feel like you've improved using whatever metric. So some people it's if they get promoted in the league, for some people it's if they hit a certain amount of points in their league. A very common one is, "Well, I know that guy's good and I respect him, and I beat him, so maybe that at least says something." People always love the discussion of, let's say, oh yeah the Day[9]-Artosis rivalry. Who's better? Well, I guess it should be settled with a showmatch. It's a sort of fun little way to answer.

I will say I think that my all-time favorite story of a feeling of improvement--and this one happened to me a lot on PGTour--that when you were playing up at like the A or A+ level, there were just not that many people there. So you'd have to play a lot of games against the same people. I distinctly remember where the map of the week changed and it was a map that I had some experience on but I didn't really feel that good on it. And I played against this guy, and we played ten games and I only won three of them. Three or four of them. And the games felt gross. I was just like, ugh. Even the wins were just euuugh. It was kind of one of those things like, "Man, that was not pretty. I'm not showing that game to anybody." And I just thought to myself, yeah, you know what, let me create a new account and let me try to work on this map starting at a D level. And I worked and worked and worked and I played like 150 games that week just trying to practice and train.

And then, near the end of the week, I got paired up against the same guy. When we played-- we played like nine or ten games again--and I won almost all of them, and it was weird because it wasn't just that I had won, but it's that what he did felt predictable, and his units felt slow and his armies felt smaller. I actually compared the games and he played comparably between the early set week and then the later set in the week. So it was this remarkable feeling of, "Holy cow, I think--I think I maybe actually improved at this game! I think I may have actually gotten a little bit better! Oh yeah, alright!" In particular that feeling of, "Wow, those units just feel slower and smaller and feel less intimidating." So that was--that's the feeling that I really, really, really, really go for a lot. It's just that, "Aww yeah, that felt good."

I: Nice. Have you picked a race yet, or are you--you're not still going to play as random, are you?

D: I probably will, but I kind of try to make sure I still stay focused, because I think the biggest mistake that anyone can make when training is just like, "I'm gonna sit down and play." Especially if you're trying to play random. You can't be like, "Well I'm just gonna play random on the ladder a lot and I'll just sort of swim my way through to stardom." I remember that definitely happened to me late beta, early release where I'd be playing and I'd be feeling really good. I'd be on a sick win streak and then suddenly I'd get ZvZ and think, "I don't think I've played a ZvZ in like 3 weeks." And then I'd just get mauled and be like, "Oh God, ugh." So then I'd start working on my Zerg and then, okay, I've been feeling really good. And then I'd get like, TvZ. And then I'd be like, "Well I actually haven't played this in like a week. Ugh."

So what I generally try to do is play one race per day, where I'll play Protoss for a day, and then Terran for a day, and then Zerg for a day, or I'll even play Zerg for a week if I'm really feeling like it's lacking. Et cetera et cetera. That kinda thang. But I probably will still play random. I think Zerg is probably my favorite to play though.

I: So you haven't been tempted to go for the, quote unquote "imbalanced" race of the week, so to say?

D: Well that's always going to change. That's always going to be rotating in and out, like so. I try to ignore that. From an epistemological standpoint, I don't think it's possible to claim that a game is balanced or imbalanced if it's as complicated as Starcraft 2 is. Part of me feels like there's not enough evidence to state that one race is clearly superior or that one race is clearly inferior. And at the same time, I don't think it's possible to ever state that perfect balance that has been achieved, because I still feel like if it's 50.001% win rate for one race and 49.999% rate for the other, well, it's still technically imbalanced.

So my real attitude is that I just don't care, and I'd rather sit down and try to play and improve because I go for that feeling of, "Oh my God I improved," more than that feeling of, "Oh my gosh, I have won, I'm so awesome." There's games that I've lost that I feel really happy afterwards, and games that I've won that I feel miserable afterwards. As a matter of fact, if anything, if there was some way to definitively point out one race is being just absolutely, clearly inferior, I would probably favor that race just because I like trying to crack problems.

I: That's an interesting approach compared to some other prominent figures in the e-Sports community.

D: I don't know if my opinion's necessarily better or worse, but I know it definitely aligns to my personality a little bit better.

I: You recently talked on State of the Game about some theoretical balance issues using game theory-esque reasoning. Could you perhaps expand a bit on that?
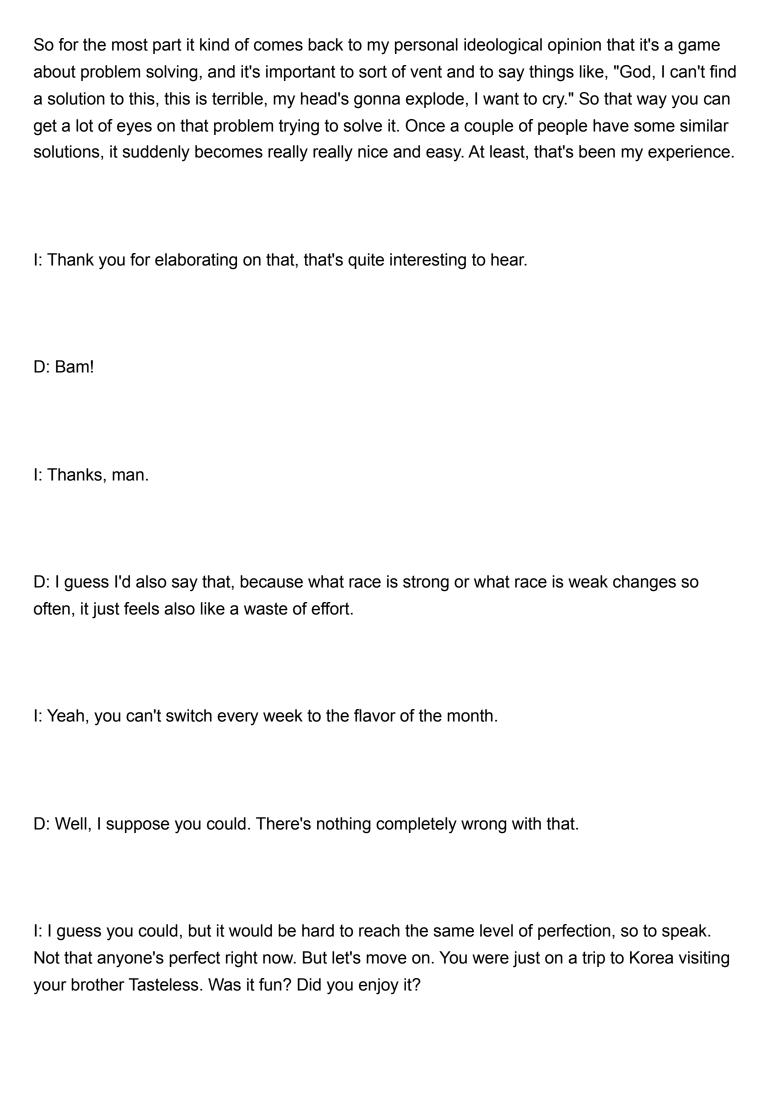
D: Yeah, I didn't really do the best job of articulating myself, but it was sort of useful because I've never actually been pressed to articulate it. So it was actually useful for me after the fact to go, "Huh, how really do I feel about that?" I will say that in terms of problem solving, in an RTS game, it is much like trying to find a beautiful woman to fall in love with.

Imagine if you have tried to go out and date someone wonderful, tried to find the one for you, and 49 times in a row you've had your heart broken. It's been miserable and it sucks. But the 50th time, you find the perfect person for you. Once that happens, it doesn't even matter that you had all these miserable experiences, because you only need one to work.

And the weird thing is that that is a 2% success rate--1 out of 50 relationships that you had worked. And of course, if you've ever gone to a school, you've been taught that like 85% is normal. Or maybe 90% if your school has grade inflation. Or 50% if you went to Harvey Mudd. That sort of thing I'm sure everyone can relate to, where you've had tons of miserable relationships, but then when you have one that works it feels amazing.

And so too this ends up happening a lot of times in RTS games where you end up in this rut where nothing at all seems to work. Everything feels terrible. However, once you end up cracking the problem, you're done. You don't need to do any more work. Everything's amazing. There was actually this wonderful graph on TeamLiquid that discussed ZvT in Brood War in the pro scene, where it showed the win rates for the respective races swinging wildly back and forth, where the 2 hatch Mutalisk all-in style became very very popular, and the Zerg win rate jumped up to 80%. And then all of a sudden Terrans figured out how to hold that off, and were doing this very very weird Medic/Marine timing pushes, and then their win rates swung over to 70%. And then Zergs responded with a clever twist on the 2 hatch style that would let them get an extra base up, and then it swung back over to the Zerg side.

So all in all, it's this very sort of weird process where you end up getting stuck and it feels terrible, and then once the problem's solved everything's just totally amazing and it feels great and everything's totally kickass. It's really hard to make good judgements as to when that will happen, because if you imagine all the shifts in metagame that go on and all the shifts and trends in strategy, there must necessarily be a first one that is really really hard, and there must necessarily be some that are very very very easy comparatively.

So for the most part it kind of comes back to my personal ideological opinion that it's a game about problem solving, and it's important to sort of vent and to say things like, "God, I can't find a solution to this, this is terrible, my head's gonna explode, I want to cry." So that way you can get a lot of eyes on that problem trying to solve it. Once a couple of people have some similar solutions, it suddenly becomes really really nice and easy. At least, that's been my experience.

I: Thank you for elaborating on that, that's quite interesting to hear.

D: Bam!

I: Thanks, man.

D: I guess I'd also say that, because what race is strong or what race is weak changes so often, it just feels also like a waste of effort.

I: Yeah, you can't switch every week to the flavor of the month.

D: Well, I suppose you could. There's nothing completely wrong with that.

I: I guess you could, but it would be hard to reach the same level of perfection, so to speak. Not that anyone's perfect right now. But let's move on. You were just on a trip to Korea visiting your brother Tasteless. Was it fun? Did you enjoy it?

D: Dude, it was awesome! It was the greatest ever! Oh my God. First, it was great to see Nick because I haven't seen him... I guess since last Blizzcon. It was funny because when I was gonna leave, my mom was like, "Alright Nick, well it was great seeing you." My mom had also not seen my brother in a very long time, and then with me and Nick it was like, "Alright, I'll see you in like two weeks at MLG." Seoul is like unimaginably gigantic. I cannot express how huge Seoul is. It is SO big. That was honestly the most exciting, insane part about the entire trip for me, that I would get in a taxi and drive for 45 minutes and there would be endless skyscrapers all around me. I just could not believe how huge it was.

I: Yeah, I can't wait to go myself. I really want to go at some point. Speaking of Korea, there's been a lot of discussion in the community lately--a lot--about the validity of players traveling to Korea to compete in all that. What's your take on this?

D: I want to ask--are you inquiring more about the FXO move to the team league or just about individual players moving out there?

I: Whatever you feel like addressing. Both, why not?

D: Yeah! Let's do both, yeah! In terms of the individual concern, I was talking a little bit about this on State of the Game, I don't actually know if there are that many other leagues in Korea other than GSL and the GS Team Leagues.

I: I've heard that there isn't. I think that they have an exclusive contract with Blizzard from what I've been able to discern.

D: That would make a lot of sense. There might even be some smaller, offline tournaments, like little PC cafe cup, where you go there and they pay... you know, 1000 won, which is like a

dollar. 75 cents. You're gonna win that tournament and do your laundry or go to an arcade and play some Street Fighter, yeah. But that in itself creates a significant restriction because--I will say, I personally do not really like the format of, "We're gonna have a tournament over a weekend." I think that that is just a little bit too much for all the parties involved.

My personally favorite viewing experience has been the OGN Starleague and the MBC Starleague in Brood War. For me, it was Tuesdays and Fridays were the days that I would watch the OGN Starleague, and it was 16 players in the league and it was 4 matches. It started out as round robin groups of four, so every single match had this incredible wait to it, and there were four matches on Tuesday and four on Friday, and I would stay up and watch them. During the week, if I really needed my Starcraft fix, maybe I could watch some Challenge League games. For me, I literally would watch every single match from every single OGN Starleague every single season, because it was spread out, there was a lot of tension, there was a lot of hype, there was a lot of time for players to practice so you saw a lot of cool strategies pop out, a lot of cool storylines emerge.

In terms of the weekend blast, I do think the weekend blast is an absolute ridiculous measure of skill, but at the same time there's so many games that happen so rapidly that it's very easy to have a lot of early games left by the wayside. There were a ton of games that can happen in round one where you want to watch all of them and you just can't. That can potentially be a little bit rough. But the one advantage that the weekend tournament format does have is that it's all in a weekend, and players can prepare and train and focus and get ready and go there and then measure their skill and then go back home and train and prepare more.

It's quite rough in a tournament like GSL--which, again, I do like to say as a format, I think I like a little bit better than the weekend blast, but it's just so difficult for a foreigner to actually justify going out there because it's literally just the GSL. That's it. I honestly think that the fact that it does have this long, extended, drawn-out format, though I think is good for a competitor who is trying to train, is difficult for someone who is trying to immerse themself in another culture. You have to really commit to it. If you wanted to go somewhere like Dreamhack and you're flying out there for a weekend, let's say no one in Sweden spoke English at all, it's okay, you're still just going for a weekend. I think that the experience of being in another country without really anyone to talk to can be very difficult.

So that's honestly my strongest opinion on that one, that it's more of like a cultural barrier that I think is the number one reason that someone would have a sort of struggle to go. However I do think that it can only be good to have people sort of moving around to these tournaments. It can only be a good thing. I've especially seen some criticism of FXO for entering the Team League, like "Oh my gosh, you're gonna go out there and you're gonna embarrass--oh, it's

gonna be so terrible." In my experience with everything I've ever done--actually, let me back up for a moment. What a lot of people are saying is, why wasn't there a dream team formed of the best foreigners and then have those entering the team league? Kind of like there was created in that foreigner vs Korea showmatch.
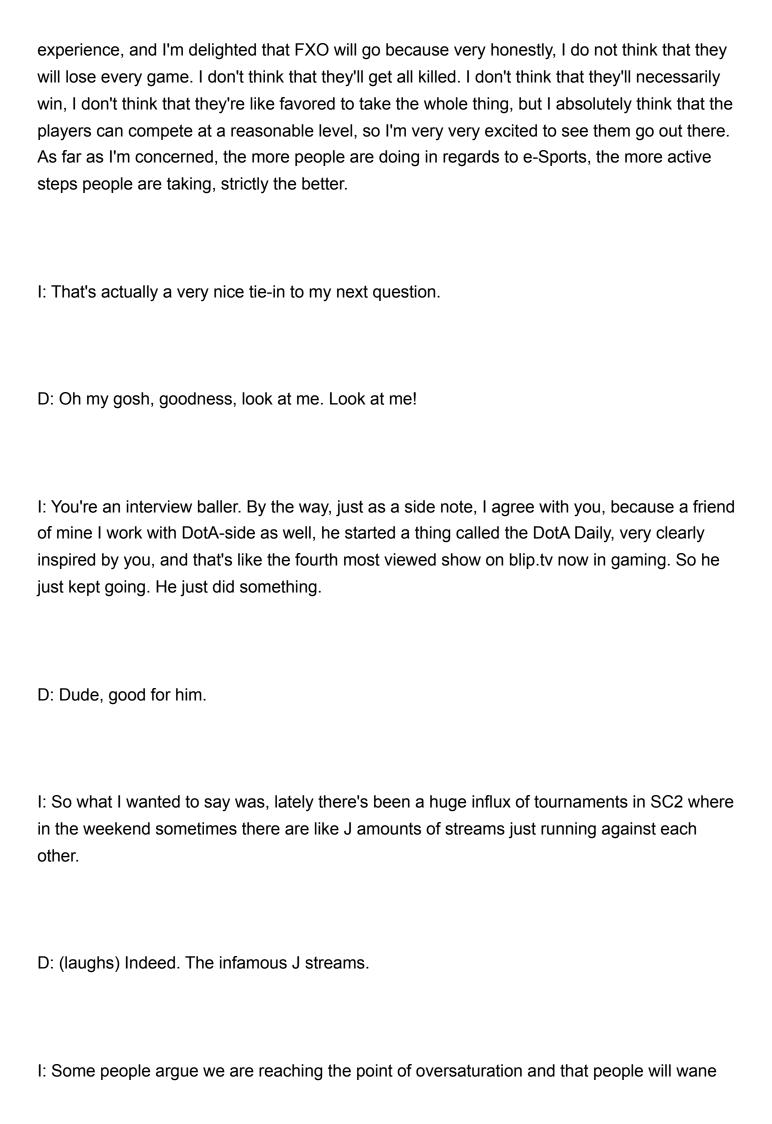
I: Yeah, the GSL World Cup thing.

D: Yeah, that's what it was called.

I: That was awesome by the way.

D: Yeah, that was frigging incredible and I lost so much sleep. Oh God, those were some fun days. But a lot of people are like, why isn't there a dream team that's created like that? In my experience with everything I've ever done in life, you will never, EVER get to like the 100% ideal perfect conditions. Even remotely close. You won't even get to 90%. Generally you'll be at like 40% and you're like, alright, that'll do, go. Especially like with the daily.

The dailies actually got success not because I sat crafting the perfect lesson in my room and trying to get it just right and then releasing it. It was me going "fuck it" basically, like, "let's just do this, alright, there we go," and just trying to as quickly as I could just get something up and sort of adjust it along the fly. Similarly I think that a team like FXO entering GSL, it might not be the perfect mix of foreigners but it can only be good. From a team's standpoint, the team's getting a lot of visibility because they're a foreigner team in Korea. From a player's standpoint, whether they're gonna succeed or not in this tournament is an amazing developmental experience to be specifically training for a cup hardcore for one month. And I also think it has the potential to inspire a lot of other teams to participate.

The only case where I think that it could potentially be argued as a negative is if FXO goes, loses 100% of games, has this humiliating showing that's there, but even then I don't think that that's that bad, because then other teams are going to be like, "Well, yeah, I'm better than FXO, I'm gonna go out there." There must be a first step into that sort of team league

experience, and I'm delighted that FXO will go because very honestly, I do not think that they will lose every game. I don't think that they'll get all killed. I don't think that they'll necessarily win, I don't think that they're like favored to take the whole thing, but I absolutely think that the players can compete at a reasonable level, so I'm very very excited to see them go out there. As far as I'm concerned, the more people are doing in regards to e-Sports, the more active steps people are taking, strictly the better.

I: That's actually a very nice tie-in to my next question.

D: Oh my gosh, goodness, look at me. Look at me!

I: You're an interview baller. By the way, just as a side note, I agree with you, because a friend of mine I work with DotA-side as well, he started a thing called the DotA Daily, very clearly inspired by you, and that's like the fourth most viewed show on blip.tv now in gaming. So he just kept going. He just did something.

D: Dude, good for him.

I: So what I wanted to say was, lately there's been a huge influx of tournaments in SC2 where in the weekend sometimes there are like J amounts of streams just running against each other.

D: (laughs) Indeed. The infamous J streams.

I: Some people argue we are reaching the point of oversaturation and that people will wane

because of too much content. Do you think this is the case, or that it's just awesome with more Starcraft?

D: I think that it is a very exciting and absolutely necessary part of the growth of anything, really, when enough of certain types of content start getting made even though there might be disorganization and there might be a gross glut of content. It allows gradations to occur, where there's really good leagues, there's sort of middleish leagues, and then there's smaller leagues. If you're a tip-top amazing pro, you can participate in just these amazing leagues, or if you're an up-and-coming player there's more opportunities for you to step in.

Most importantly, it means that the tournaments are now competing with one another and only the highest quality will live, because people will vote with their eyeballs. If I created some imaginary league; if I'm like a boot manufacturer and I really want to get into gaming and I make the boot league, if it's of mediocre quality no one's going to actually tune in at all. Literally no one will watch. And I love that spot where people are trying to compete for my eyes. People are trying as hard as they can to make the best, highest quality tournament and the only real way that can happen is again if you have this ridiculous amount.

So this is like... I don't want to call it the calm before the storm, but this is the storm before the really awesome production quality? I don't know what you call it. When people are saying, "There's too much Starcraft, I don't know what to watch," that is perfect because what they're going to watch is what they end up really favoring the most. I've even known that to be the case for me as well where there's leagues--for instance, the GSL, where I'm like, "Well, there's too much Starcraft on right now so I'm gonna play some games," but then I'll watch the GSL. GSL has really good quality games and really good production quality.

I: What do you think draws in audience more? Good production quality, good casters or good players? Or do they have to be a trifecta?

D: That's actually an interesting question. Yeah, I don't know. I would argue that it has to be the trifecta, yet in my experience that doesn't necessarily have to be the case. There are plenty of tournaments that are low production quality, the players aren't of high quality, but if you get a good caster in there tons of people will watch. And there's definitely cases where

you get amazing players and a not very well known caster and not that many people watch.

I don't actually have the best answer for that in terms of what's most important, but what I will argue is that now that there's this glut of content out there for Starcraft, you really are going to need to have some of all three to succeed, where I think that before you maybe did not even necessarily need even two of them to be able to do well, and that again is a very very very good spot for the industry to be in as a whole where everyone really just has to step up their game hard.

I: Yeah?

D: Yeahh. That's my answer.

I: I'm pleased with it. I guess no one can really claim to be omnipotent or we would have a person who has a weekendly 50k stream. I guess there's no real answer to that. Anyway, so we just had a Heart of the Swarm single player event done by Blizzard. I believe you were there to do some casting?

D: I was there doing some playing-of-the-single-playerage, which was frickin' incredibly kickass. Holy cow that was awesome. I will say, it kind of comes back to this discussion I was having with someone earlier about how everyone tends to view most of the people in the Starcraft community--like the competitors specifically--as competitors, and that's what they do. You kind of forget that at the end of the day we're actually all gamers and we all do that sort of gamer-type thing. Like a lot of people view me as like a player and a commentator but there's a ton of single player games that I just love playing, especially single player RTS games.

I was even playing the old Command & Conquer Covert Operations not that long ago. Like, the original Command & Conquer. Yeah, baby. None of this like Command & Conquer 2 or Red Alert bullshit. So the chance to play the single player was actually quite awesome because I love the Starcraft 1 single player. And I actually like the Warcraft 3 single player a lot, and now that you have Kerrigan as a hero unit, it gives me that same fancy fun feelin' that I

got when playing Warcraft 3. Blizzard does a good job of making their games ridiculously fun, and the abilities for Kerrigan--especially the spell where you just cast it on a unit and it just instakills it and spawns five broodlings; I felt really cool while using that. I was like, "I am good at this game." Then I looked around me and people who were one-handing it with a mouse, playing with like 5 APM doing the exact same thing, also feeling like a badass, and I was like, "Ooh, you clever little designers, you."

I: The splitterlings were caught my eye. Those look amazing.

D: Oh yeah. I actually played through the single player twice upon devoting all my mutagen upgrades to the zerglings, and then realizing that my banelings can split into smaller banelings and I was like, "What am I doing?" and just rebooted immediately, saved all my mutagen and then I had super banelings. And again I felt very powerful.

I: There's also been some talk about--someone slid in some comments about the multiplayer, and Blizzard said that they might remove units and add units. How much impact on the game do you think it would have if they, like, removed the Overseer and added a new unit... say, like a Lurker.

D: The Underseer. (laughs)

I: The Sidewayseer.

D: It shoots creep into the sky, onto the camera. Yeah. I think that... hold on, my thoughts are coagulating here. So I think there's this very weird moment in all of media where people feel that they have a right to... or, people just feel like they have ownership over the content that they watch. I feel that this initially began with the fandom of franchises like Star Trek and Star

Wars, where characters would follow certain arcs or movies would come out that told certain storylines and the fan community would literally say, "That didn't happen. That's bullshit."

Like a lot of Star Wars fans from the early movies, when the new ones came out, were like, "This is not Star Wars canon. This did not happen." And now with the ability of the internet to sort of be able to communicate with people across long distances, a game of Starcraft is not a game but it's like a community experience or even like a lifestyle for some. You see people who honestly feel like they have ownership over the game. People say, "God, Blizzard messing up my game again," and will use those sort of words. I think it's interesting to note that, I think, of all gaming companies, Blizzard is the most bold with being willing to make drastic changes to their game for the betterment of the game.

I think one of the greatest examples was Warcraft 3, where the original Warcraft 3, the Ancient of War--just going mass Ancient of War was eventually discovered to be the strongest strategy. Ancient of War and Druids of the Talon. The game was essentially broken; there were other strategies that were alright but that was basically it. Then when Frozen Throne came out they completely redid how the game worked in a fairly dramatic way. There's a lot of other games and game studios that will make kind of some adjustments to their games but I don't think any are willing to do as drastic of stuff as Blizzard is, and they're very very very careful about what they do and very very reasoned and well-thought out about what they do.

So even though the game state might be in a situation where a lot of people don't quite like it, I think that of all companies Blizzard is definitely going to be the one that's willing to make some dramatic changes, and if you think about it it was quite clever to break the game up into three portions--Wings of Liberty, Heart of the Swarm and Legacy of the Void--not just for the single player experience but also because it allows them to reserve the right to make dramatic changes to the multiplayer experience as they see fit. I think that it's a very sort of interesting point where you have this shift in how people consume media to where they think that they have ownership--I don't want to say they think that they have ownership because in a sense they kind of do, but where they really sort of embrace this idea of ownership over the content and Blizzard is this really bold studio that's willing to make good changes, and as far as I'm concerned makes super kickass games. Like when Diablo 3 comes out I'm literally fucked. I'm not gonna make the dailies for like a month. Just gonna play that game.

So this feeling ownership really makes people feel like Blizzard is doing a bad job, that they're not changing things rapidly enough, that the experience is not the way they see fit, that they're violating my game, argh. But I would say that I'm not worried, I'm actually really excited, because given the huge change between Reign of Chaos and The Frozen Throne, I would not

be surprised if Blizzard did a huge-ass change to Starcraft 2 to literally create almost a new kind of game.

I will say this--I'm not breaking any NDA because I don't know anything about the multiplayer that's coming up; I literally don't know anything, I have no freaking clue. People like to view me as this arbiter of Starcraft knowledge, that I can call up Blizzard and be like, "I need your design documents immediately," and they're like, "Right away, Sean," and then mail me a Zip drive in a black envelope. I don't know shit. I know nothing. I do know that I went and played Heart of the Swarm. It didn't have any new units in the demo that I played, and it was extremely fun single player-wise, and I still have confidence in the design team that they will be willing to do some dramatic changes if they see fit to create a different kind of gameplay.

Allow me to steal a lesson that was taught in my design program that game design is a second order problem. Art is a first order problem. I want to make a painting that looks like this, so what I do is make a painting that looks like that. Or programming: I want to make a program that does this so I code it to do that. In game design, you are trying to create a type of play. But you don't create that kind of play. You create rules that you think will foster that kind of play. Blizzard, more than likely given the narrative of Starcraft 2, tried to create Zerg to be this race of masses of tiny little units overrunning the enemy and destroying them with sheer force of numbers.

How did the gameplay end up coming out? Well, it didn't quite create that because a lot of people make the slow mud units, the Roaches and the Hydras, and you have this very immobile, blobby army and are steering away from the more ninja-like units of Zerglings or Mutalisks. Well, that technically may not have lined up with the way that they wanted to create the game. Again, I would like to emphasize that is a second order problem. They create the rules to create the play they hope will happen, but since it didn't happen perhaps the way they intended, I have every confidence that they are willing to sort of re-experiment with some new rulesets. Bam! Oh my God, I answered that question.

I: We are rolling now. Now Blizzard has actually been, unlike in like Star 1, they've been actually actively patching the game and fixing balance issues as they come along. Do you like this approach or do you wish they'd gone with the more Sean Plott, looking down at the floor and saying "it is what it is" approach?

D: I wouldn't necessarily argue that that's my opinion on things. I would say that I'm a player. They're designers. They should take in every kind of feedback. They should be reading all the forums. They should be listening to pros, inquiring from pros, about what their thoughts are on the game and trying to adjust it to create that experience. And they do do that, so that's great.

But I as a player, I can't do that sort of thing. So I feel like it is my duty to say something like, "I cannot seem to solve this problem." I don't think it's my duty to say, "I cannot seem to solve this problem therefore there is no solution to this problem." That's how I would argue my viewpoint is. But again, it's very important to voice what my frustrations and concerns are. What was the original question though? I'm sorry, the coffee's just not kicking in.

I: Nevermind, let's just move along.

D: Yeah, let's do it. Moving along.

I: So you're casting MLG this weekend. Who do you think--do you have any favorite going into the tournament to win the whole thing or do you think it's up in the air?

D: Generally, SeleCT 'cause he's just so consistent and he's so handsome and his play's so good.

I: He's a good singer too.

D: You know, I'm one of the only people on the planet Earth who have not seen that video, but I've opened it up multiple times and been like, "Yeah, I'll watch it just after I finish this little bit of work," and then three days pass and my computer crashes and I reopen it again and... it's just, I live a tragic life I guess is what I'm saying.

So SeleCT is always a person who's up there. I'm always quite excited to see the Liquid folk to participate because I've known a lot of them for a very very long time. But I think the number one player I'm really looking for is Saint Bomber. And I know he's Startale Bomber but it has ST_Bomber so I always want to call him Saint Bomber or Street Bomber, one of the two. But good old Saint Bomber, man. I'm very very excited to watch him play.

I would just like to note that I really like this myth that the Koreans are leagues and head-and-shoulders above the foreigners. I definitely think that, on average, probably the top Koreans are performing better than your top foreigners, but the reason I'm interested in Saint Bomber is not because LOL he's the Korean Terran and I want to see a Korean Terran do well, but because his style is so ridiculously aggressive. His units are never nearby his own base; he's always really marching cross map. Even when his army is smaller than his opponent's he's still really getting in his opponent's face, and that is a hard, hard style to be able to learn to execute well.

So I'm very excited to not only be able to see his play but to commentate them, so that way I will have control of the camera and can inspect whatever region of the map I so wish to look at, because I am the guy who controls the camera at the MLG events.

I: Oh, I see. So you guys don't have a dedicated observer like Hot_Bid for TSL.

D: That is correct.

I: Do you like that approach or do you prefer having an observer?

D: I prefer controlling it, but it took me a very very long time to be able to talk and sort of control it at the same time. It's kind of like if you're a drummer and you have to get your left and your right hands to do independent things. I have to have my mouse and observer hand doing something independent of what I'm talking about.

So it's generally my eye and my hand sort of getting coordinated, trying to look at the minimap and trying to move around a lot and trying to recall things I should be looking at while I'm trying to commentate on the game, but the fact is the daily was a great training ground for that. I would not recommend it for anyone who's trying to get into commentary, to just try to like, "Oh yeah, I'll just do all the mouse control myself." It's actually a real pain in the ass. I've had a lot of conversations with my brother about it because he and I both kind of had to do that.

I: Speaking of Startale Bomber, someone recently told me something: you know MLG is going to go pick him up at the airport, have a kind of gathering for the players as they come in.

D: Oh my God.

I: Wouldn't that be a problem? What if someone says, "Hey, Street Bomber!"

D: (laughs) Oh my God, Saint Bomber! Saint Bomber! And all the airport personnel are like, "Excuse me, excuse me. Sir, did you pack anyone's bags?" Like I don't know what they ask him, but...

I: Wait, why would they ask him if he packed someone's bags?

D: 'Cause any time in the air port they're like, "If you or anyone you don't know packed your bags, please contact someone." I've never like woken up and looked at my room and been like, "Hey, my bags are packed. Maybe I'll just go get on a plane and just bring these." That's never happened to me. So I assume that this is like the number one question and concern of all airport security personnel. "Who packed these bags? Did you pack them, or did a stranger pack them?" "A stranger did and I just let him do it--I dunno, I trusted him."

I honestly think the number one concern is that a flight coming from Korea... it's exhausting, man. When I get off a plane I'm always like haggard and miserable because I'm 6'3 [191], I don't fit on the airplane. If I lean back my knees push against the seat in front of me and it cuts off circulation. If I learn forward I'm too tall, so I can't actually put my head on the tray to go to sleep. So what I have to do is I have to lean forward and just press my face against that monitor with your in-flight movie and just try to sleep that way.

So I'm hunched over and my breathing doesn't work right when I'm at that angle so it actually fills up in my stomach so I'm burping constantly as I'm trying to sleep, and my face keeps turning on the touch-sensitive screen, and I've gotten to the point where I can just unconsciously turn it off. I'll just be sitting there with my arms dangling, I look like this Overlord just leaning against the screen, it turns on, just turn it back off again. It turns on, I turn it back off.

Except on my last flight to Korea with my mom. I woke up 42 minutes into the movie Bolt. I had no idea how I got there. And the screen's like really hot so my forehead's like burning and I'm sure I'm getting radiation into my brain from leaning that hard onto an LED screen but the idea of me getting off an airplane, people being like, "Day[9] welcome home!" I'd be like, "Oh God, hello, I'm at my worst." Hopefully Saint Bomber is a little shorter than me and he can sleep.

I: Oh man. I would want to sit next to you on a flight to be honest.

D: Oh God, I'm so uncomfortable on airplanes. I actually have to spread my legs off and then cross them and tuck my feet back. That's the only way that I can actually not lose that much circulation in my legs when I'm sitting down.

I: (laughs) You wake up, do the Overlord scream, everyone's just looking at you.

D: Yeah, I actually pace the airplane a lot. I'll just get out of my seat and walk around, just til I get some circulation in my legs again.

I: (laughs) I just remembered a certain story that I read on TeamLiquid from you about pacing on an airplane.

D: Yeah man, you've read my *fictional* adventures.

I: Yes I have. They were hilarious. I must have thought I was going to laugh until I died. Anyways, this has been going on for quite a while so I'd like to wrap this up. Being a Redditor myself, I love /r/starcraft, so I put up a post like, "Hey, I have an interview coming up with Sean 'Day[9]' Plott. Please troll us; I will pick the highest rated troll question and ask it."

D: Great. Alright. Let's do it.

I: So what I got from admplaceholder, 96 points upvoted: "Hey Sean, how'd your game go?"

D: ...How'd my game go? Wow, that's a good troll question. You just ask that and it's like I'm just caught off guard, like, how'd my game go? If you're asking for the game, I can only assume that you're referencing the free-for-all that I played during my stream test last night where I got this gigantic big badass sick-ass computer and I needed to make sure that it was actually functioning properly. So I went and did a random free-for-all while streaming, and of course everyone who was watching immediately went in search of free-for-alls; I was playing against like 3 dailiers. And a guy went mass Void Ray/Mothership and I lost. So it did not go so well.

I: Wait, you lost?

D: Yeah. Dude, I wasn't playing free-for-all logic. He just picked a unit and built only that unit, and I was like trying to get Stalkers and Sentries and I was like expanding, trying to poll the stream to find out if the quality's good. That's just not a good free-for-all build.

I: Well, you could transition into losing your whole base.

D: I did, I transitioned into losing my whole fucking base and then I left the game.

I: Are you amused by the random stuff that comes up in the community from stuff you've done, like oGsUniden on the master's ladder?

D: Ohh, that was like the greatest thing ever. No, actually my favorite was when TeamLiquid was updating results on who qualified for GSL and they noticed that someone who was running a thread or a post on GosuGamers was just straight copy-pasting what was in the TeamLiquid thread. So they started to just post random names as people who qualified so they put like, oGsUniden as one of the qualifiers and then they're like front page news: oGsUniden qualifies for GSL. That was a pretty strong little troll move there.

I: Actually, I thought of a better ending question: will you make grandmaster before Artosis?

D: I actually would like to state that my real goal is for JP McDaniel to hit grandmaster before Artosis. That is the real question, and the answer is: it better be yes. I will take money out of my own pocket and pay top pros in Korea to log on to JP McDaniel's account and just get him in grandmaster. So that way itmeJP: grandmaster, Artosis: number one master.

I: Forever masters, Artosis. Well thank you Sean for joining us today. Where can people check out all of your stuff?

D: Well, you can go to www.day9.tv for all things related to Day[9]. twitter.com/day9tv where you can get my random musings and the Day[9] song of the day. But especially go to day9tv.blip.tv to get access to mah archives, so you can watch dailies current, past and present.

I: Thanks, Sean. I am Darthozzan from root-gaming.com, check us out there. I just recently wrote a blog on my experience of Dreamhack, be sure to check that out. Thank you Sean and goodbye guys.