#1 Victory Royale!

Player 2: Don't Press Start - « Secondary Players » and « In-Person » Game Spectatorship Practices

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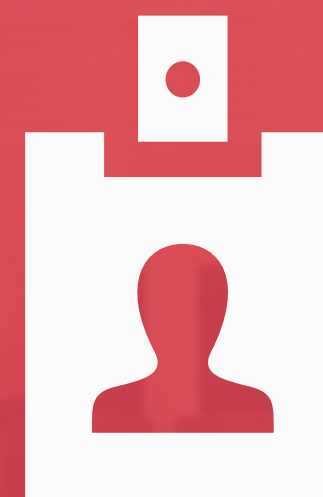Literature

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Watching others play — whether attending tournaments, bars or arcades in person, or simply watching others in between turns at the controls — has arguably always been an integral, albeit understudied, part of gaming culture (Alloway & Gilbert, 1998; Lin & Chuen-Tsai, 2011; Taylor, 2012).
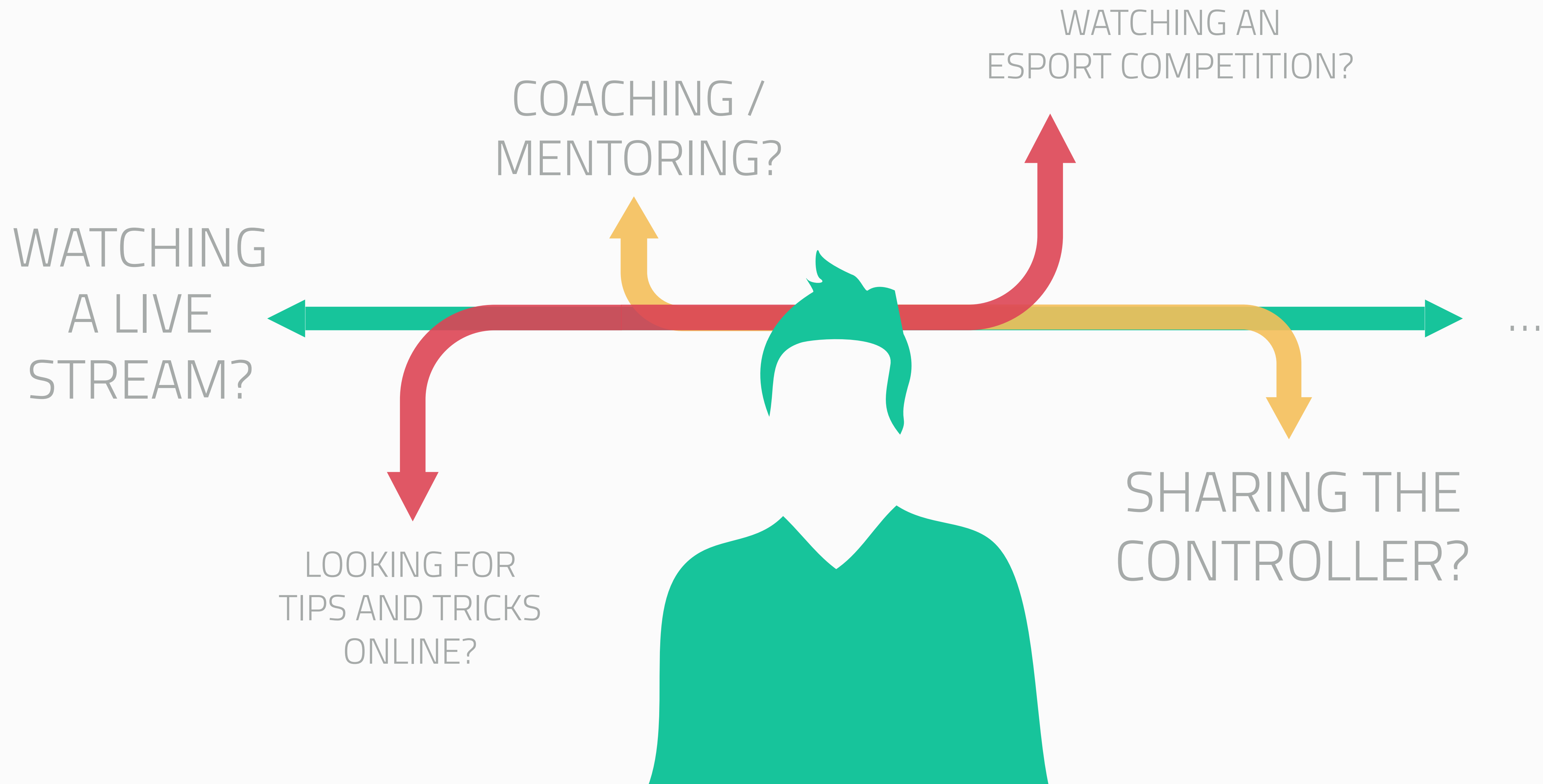
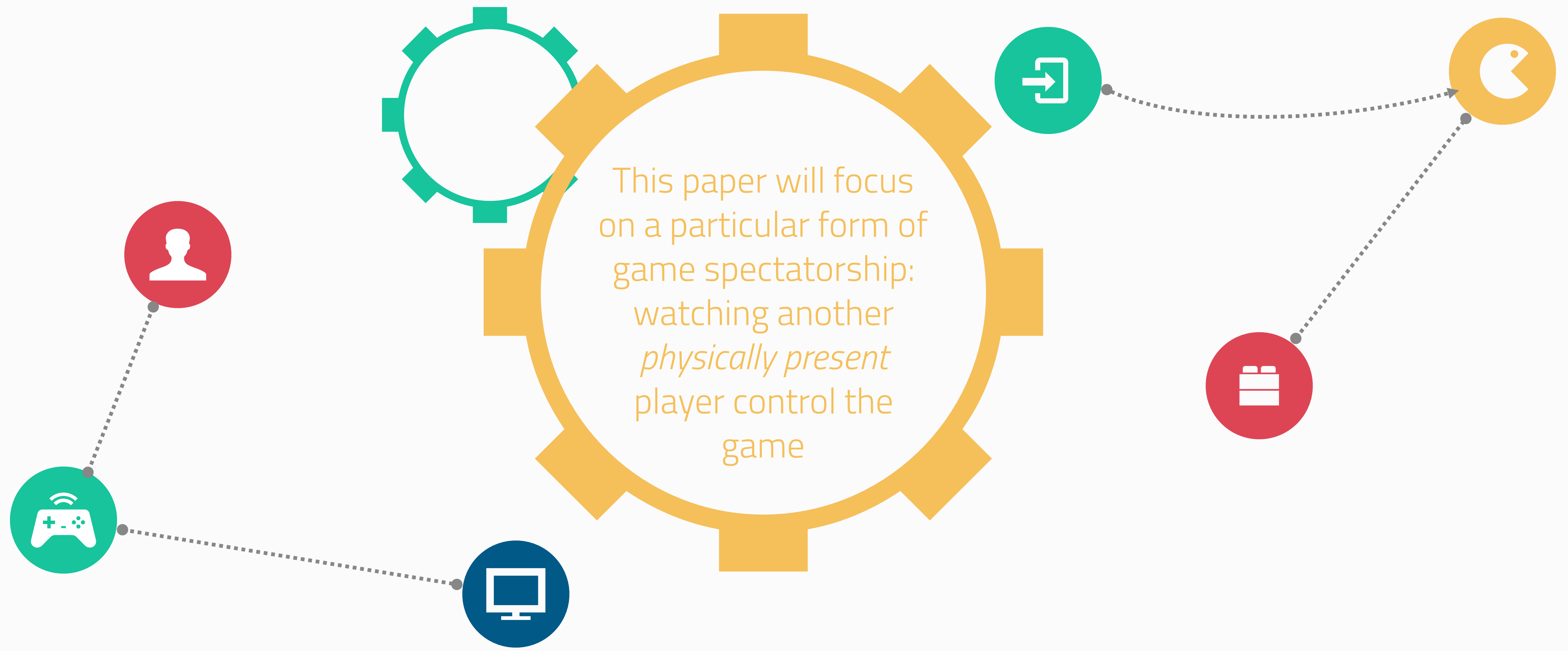[Taylor, Szablewicz, Bowman, Harper, 2013]

Even ostensibly single-player games [...] are often played by 'teams' — with the primary-player performing the traditional task of control while others (secondary players) — interested, engaged with the action, but not actually exerting direct control through the interface [...].

[Newman, 2002 : 3-4]

Game spectatorship

WATCHING AN
ESPORT COMPETITION?

COACHING /
MENTORING?

WATCHING
A LIVE
STREAM?

SHARING THE
CONTROLLER?

LOOKING FOR
TIPS AND TRICKS
ONLINE?

...

« In-person » game spectatorship

This paper will focus on a particular form of game spectatorship: watching another *physically present* player control the game
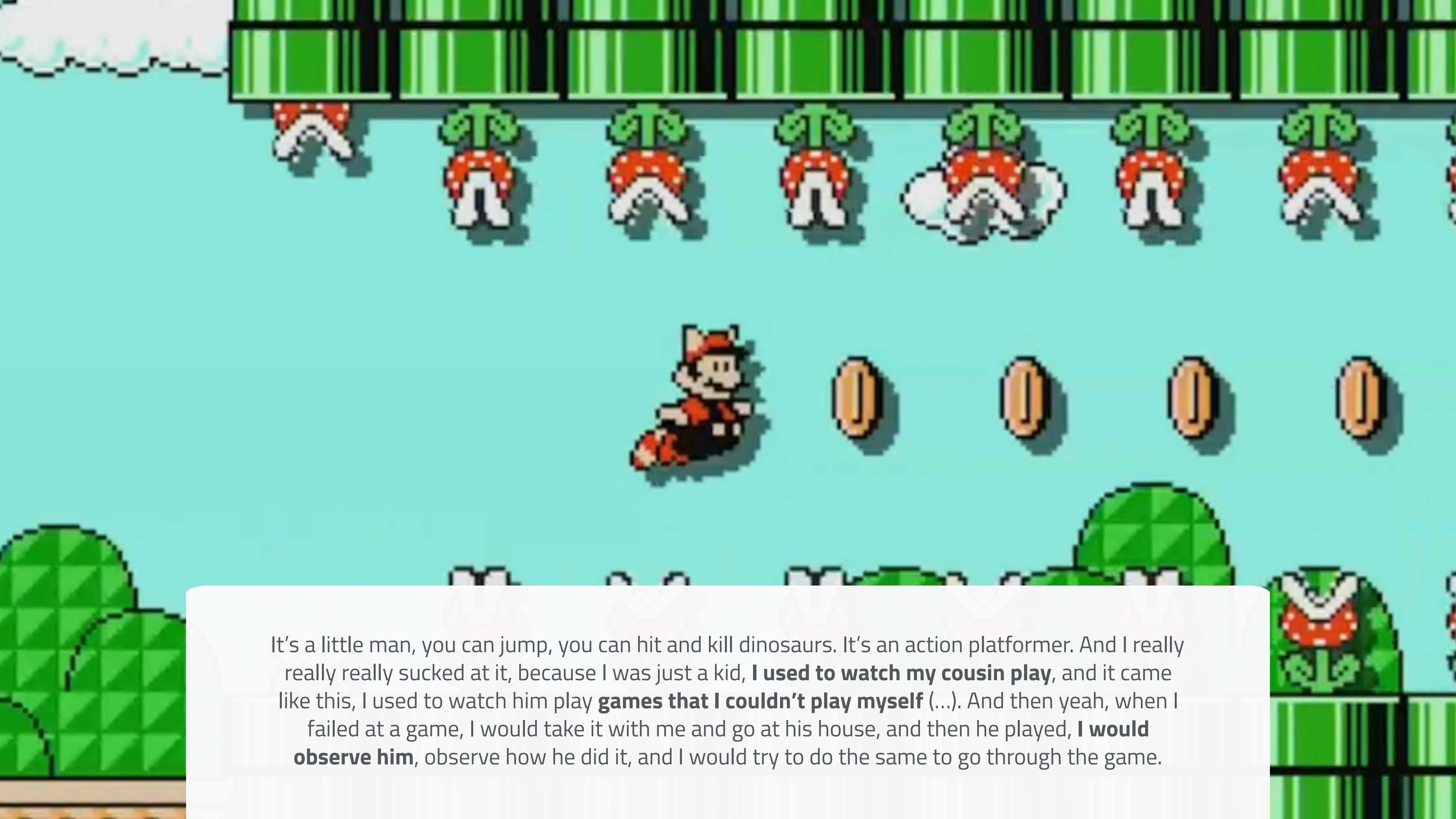
It's a little man, you can jump, you can hit and kill dinosaurs. It's an action platformer. And I really really really sucked at it, because I was just a kid, **I used to watch my cousin play**, and it came like this, I used to watch him play **games that I couldn't play myself** (...). And then yeah, when I failed at a game, I would take it with me and go at his house, and then he played, **I would observe him**, observe how he did it, and I would try to do the same to go through the game.

«Viens par ici, nouveau venu.
Suis-moi.»

(...) when I was with my cousin, and he played for example FF7, I would **have the solution in my hands** and he progressed in the game, and I helped him or I was looking the map and telling him « you must go here, you must go there » (...) **I was his copilot** in a sense, and from time to time we would switch, when he was tired to play I would take the controller (...)

I talked a lot with one of my friends about The Witcher before playing it, because I knew nothing about the universe back then (...) who is Geralt de Riv, I didn't know. And so he talked to me about the character, who he was, his story, his relationships with his lovers, with monsters, the world in which he lives, all that, and then **he watched me play from time to time** and he told me Geraldt de Riv would act *that* way, and often, **I wasn't playing the way he thought I would** (...).

Until Dawn is **initially a solo game**, you switch from one character to another [...] but we were **four players sharing the controller**, each time the character changed, we would give the controller to someone else [...]. It was really fun to see other people's choices [...] because I probably wouldn't have done the same things [...]. It's really great to **be able to transgress the rules**, knowing that the game is offering you an experience where you switch from one character to another [...] and here we decided to say 'no', we are going to play each our own character.
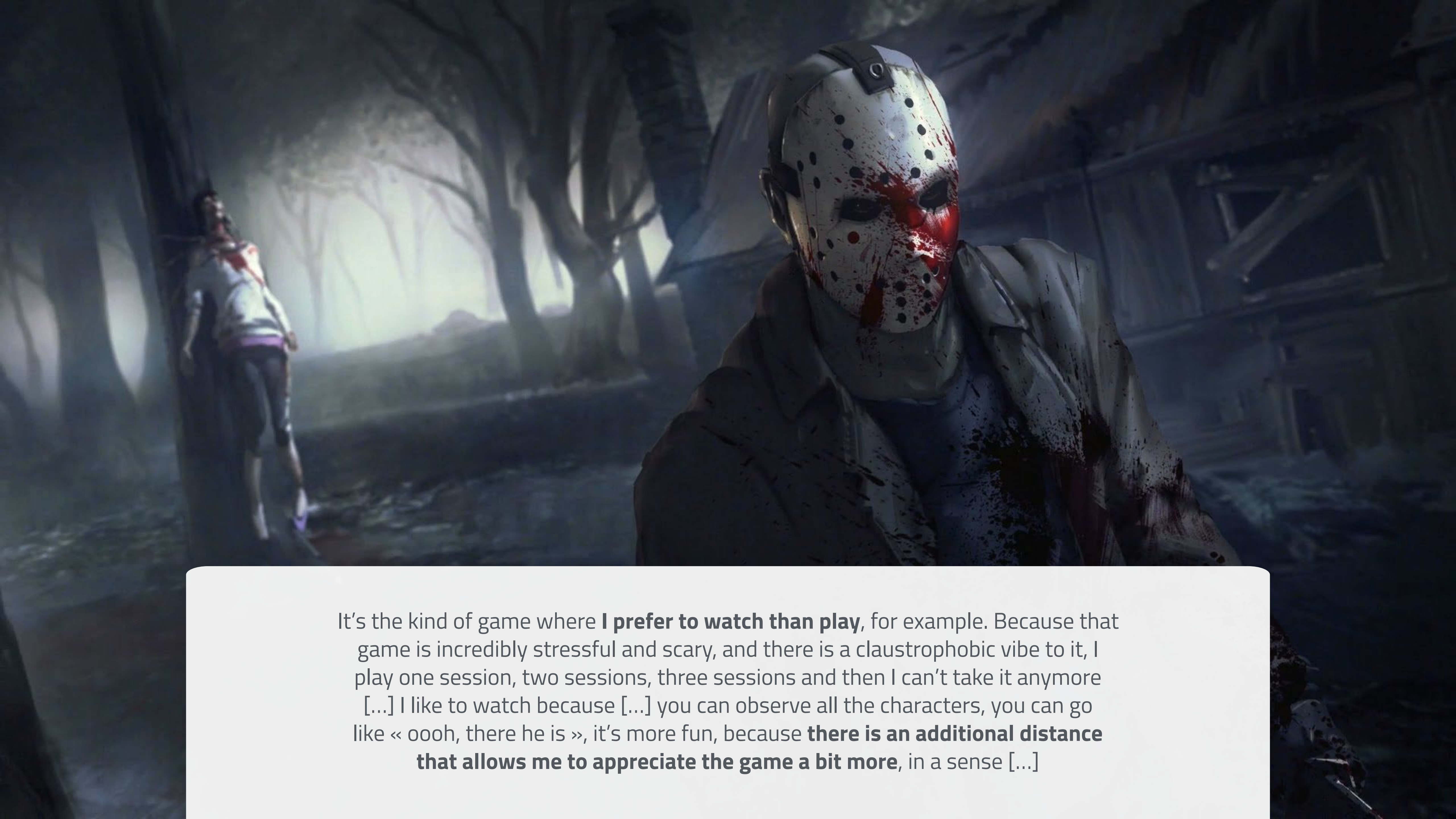
It's the kind of game where **I prefer to watch than play**, for example. Because that game is incredibly stressful and scary, and there is a claustrophobic vibe to it, I play one session, two sessions, three sessions and then I can't take it anymore [...] I like to watch because [...] you can observe all the characters, you can go like « oooh, there he is », it's more fun, because **there is an additional distance that allows me to appreciate the game a bit more**, in a sense [...]

Conclusions

Our goals were to shed some light on not only understudied, but also frequently understated playful experiences, and to show that these practices are more than just a way to learn or develop some skills, but could also present characteristics often associated with *play*.

Our next step, which will take the form of a postdoctoral research project, will be to try and determine more precisely how these particular practices reshape our understanding of « play », and to propose a theoretical frame to analyze in-person game spectatorship practices.
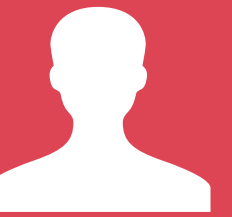
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Any questions?