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FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH **0500/21**

Paper 2 Directed Writing and Composition **October/November 2020**

INSERT **2 hours**

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INFORMATION

- This insert contains the reading texts.
- You may annotate this insert and use the blank spaces for planning. **Do not write your answers** on the insert.

This document has **4** pages. Blank pages are indicated.

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Read **both** texts, and then answer **Question 1** on the question paper.

Text A: eSports in the Olympic games?

eSports is the short name for electronic sports, where players play video games against each other with fans watching them. This article discusses whether eSports should be included in the Olympic Games.

eSports currently enjoys enormous attention and funding. Last year, the global audience for eSports grew by millions with global revenue for the eSports industry huge and still rising. In many countries, audiences pack stadiums and concert venues to watch teams compete against each other in a range of video game tournaments. People from around the world also watch from the comfort of their homes thanks to entire channels dedicated to streaming live footage of people playing video games.

Fans argue that eSports athletes are athletes in the real sense of the term – citing shooting, archery and dressage as examples of Olympic sports where the skills and talents of individuals are recognised. It takes dexterity, intelligence, reflexes and coolness under pressure to succeed in gaming. eSports athletes are legitimate competitors who happen to wield a joystick. How's that so different from a pole vault?

Experts on sports law are cautious: 'Many sports want to get Olympic recognition. It's a public demonstration to the world, and a surge of interest often follows. Although eSports is growing, that still doesn't necessarily make it widely accepted.'

eSports is young, its players and audiences are young. The dismissal of eSports, its sponsors argue, is just another example of older people scoffing at what occupies young people as 'fads' or unimportant activities. eSports is an opportunity for young people to take an existing passion, competitive gaming, and make something more of it, even earning a living from it – after all, this is often given as a reason to celebrate and support sports in general.

eSports, it is claimed, is the real deal. But arguments around popularity and difficulty only go so far. Becoming a prima ballerina is so difficult it's virtually impossible: as a sporting endeavour it is far harder than qualifying for the Olympics in any sport. Should dancing to *Swan Lake* be an Olympic sport? No. This activity knows to stay in its own lane.

There's a logistical problem too, one that threatens eSports as an Olympic event far more than narrow-minded traditionalists like myself. The different games played in various eSports competitions have definitive lifespans and age quickly. Games are frequently replaced by sequels and upgraded versions. It is an impressive effort to call playing video games 'eSports' and hope that saying it enough will convince people it is actually a sport. But, no. Moving a joystick simply has no athleticism, physicality or exertion – things that make something a sport. Competitive eating sounds good too, but no one is suggesting that features in the Olympics.

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Text B: Resistance is futile: eSports is massive ... and growing

This text discusses the popularity of eSports.

Imagine a stadium full of screaming fans. Zoom in on the contestants, sweating from the intensity of the competition. This is not football, basketball or boxing. It's eSports, and the 'athletes' are headset-wearing, energy-drink-guzzling video-gamers. Couldn't happen? Think again.

More than 20 years after the first video game tournaments, top eSports tournaments now draw audiences that rival the biggest traditional sporting events; popular midweek live streams routinely attract more than 100 000 online viewers. Massive global brands have weighed in as sponsors. Gaming is what every traditional sports league is desperate to become: young, global, digital and increasingly diverse. eSports is here. It is real. It is growing – and we have the numbers to prove it.

So how big is this gaming thing? Let us start with this: according to market research so many millions of people watched or played eSports that if the eSports nation were actually a real nation, it would be the fifth largest in the world. eSports has long been biggest in Asia. Now North America and Europe also claim tens of millions of eSports fans, with numbers growing by 21 per cent a year.

The most popular video-streaming site boasts 55 million users and is arguably the most important contributor to eSports' recent growth. It offers streams of games and tournaments, and access to gaming's stars. It's also where the next generation of would-be gamers post their own streams.

Apparently someone's watching.

Although the gamer stereotype is young, single, male and living in some sort of basement, the reality is that more than half of eSports fans are employed full time, 44 per cent are parents and 38 per cent are women. eSports fans do tend to be young. Just 28 per cent are over 35, a selling point to advertisers looking to reach the next generation of consumers.

People watch this thing? Well, in a word, yes. Today, eSports' biggest tournaments rival practically any sporting event.

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