

How gaming star and influencer Andrew 'Nasher' Telfer is growing the sport of hockey

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Andrew Telfer is not the first gaming personality to sign with a major sports brand. However, Telfer isn't your average gaming personality. Telfer, better known as "Nasher," is simultaneously a leading NHL gamer and streamer, savvy social media influencer and content creator, hockey ultra-fan, and an NHL esports broadcaster. Telfer's diverse content is so rooted in the sport of hockey, in September, Telfer became an official Bauer athlete, signing an apparel and equipment deal with the hockey brand.

Telfer grew up in Ohio as an avid hockey player and fan. He was also a regular EA Sports NHL gamer. In 2012, Telfer became one of the first gamers to upload EA Sports NHL game-play videos to YouTube. As a college student at Ohio State, Telfer began supplementing his YouTube gaming content with real-life hockey videos that included training videos, product reviews, and GoPro videos of himself skating and performing stick-handling drills. "I realized that [the NHL game-play videos] was too niche of a market to grow," says Telfer. "I wore a GoPro camera on my helmet and gave people a first-person point of view of what a hockey game looked like." After graduating from college and a short stint working at the Wendy's headquarters in Ohio, Telfer focused on creating hockey content full-time, ultimately accumulating an audience of over 300,000 subscribers on YouTube and over 38,000 on Twitch.

Telfer's number of subscribers and followers does not rival that of traditional gaming personalities, who tend to have a more significant following. However, Telfer's following is unique. His digital and real-life content draws a diverse audience from the esports world and the traditional hockey world. "My goal with my channel has been to reach every single person that I can," says Telfer. "Whether it's people that are in to the gaming scene and not in to hockey, or in to hockey and not in to the gaming scene." Telfer's varied content connects him to gamers and hockey fans of all ages and abilities. It has connected him to professional hockey players, such as Columbus Blue Jackets defenseman Zach Werenski, who met with Telfer to play NHL 19 and skate at a local Columbus hockey rink. Telfer's unique celebrity has also led to his attending the Bauer Combine, an event sponsored by the hockey brand, which invites some of the NHL's upcoming stars and social media influencers.

While other sports brands have ventured into esports by signing gamers as brand ambassadors and announcing sponsorship deals with leading esports organizations, Telfer's deal is different. Telfer is an actual Bauer athlete, just like the professional hockey players signed to the brand. Telfer receives Bauer apparel and equipment to use in his content. "I only partner with brands that I am truly passionate about," Telfer says. "I legitimately have used Bauer sticks, Bauer skates, and all Bauer gear growing up."

Telfer's reach as a brand ambassador is different, as well. Telfer's ability to crossover among audiences and formats is what makes him an appealing brand partner. Hockey brands can reach traditional hockey fans without a problem. However, hockey can be an expensive sport to play, which creates financial barriers for some. The esports version of hockey may be the only connection to the sport some people have. Telfer's content bridges the gap between those audiences, allowing brands like Bauer to reach non-traditional consumers. In Telfer's case, Bauer is connecting with individuals who are NHL gamers, but not necessarily actual hockey players or fans. Telfer is enthusiastic about his role in expanding brand awareness and, more importantly, growing the sport of hockey. "[Growing the game] has been one hundred percent my goal since the beginning," says Telfer.

In addition to streaming content, Telfer provides color commentary for the NHL Gaming World Championship esports competition. A position that he admittedly was reluctant to accept because broadcasting was so foreign to him. "I told them that I'm not a broadcaster," Telfer says. "Luckily enough, they kept pushing me." As a broadcaster, Telfer provides his expert NHL gaming insight and a connection to the NHL gaming community, of which he is such a visible part.

Going forward, Telfer is focused on returning to gaming and hopes to become a top player in the competitive scene. Telfer also expects to continue

creating more digital and real-life content. He also plans to spend time working with the NHL and its franchises as they expand into esports and host their own esports events. Today, many young audiences receive their first exposure to a sport by playing it in video game format, so it makes sense for the NHL to grow its esports presence. It also makes sense for the NHL to partner with someone like Telfer, who despite not being a professional player, has a ubiquitous influence in the sport.

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