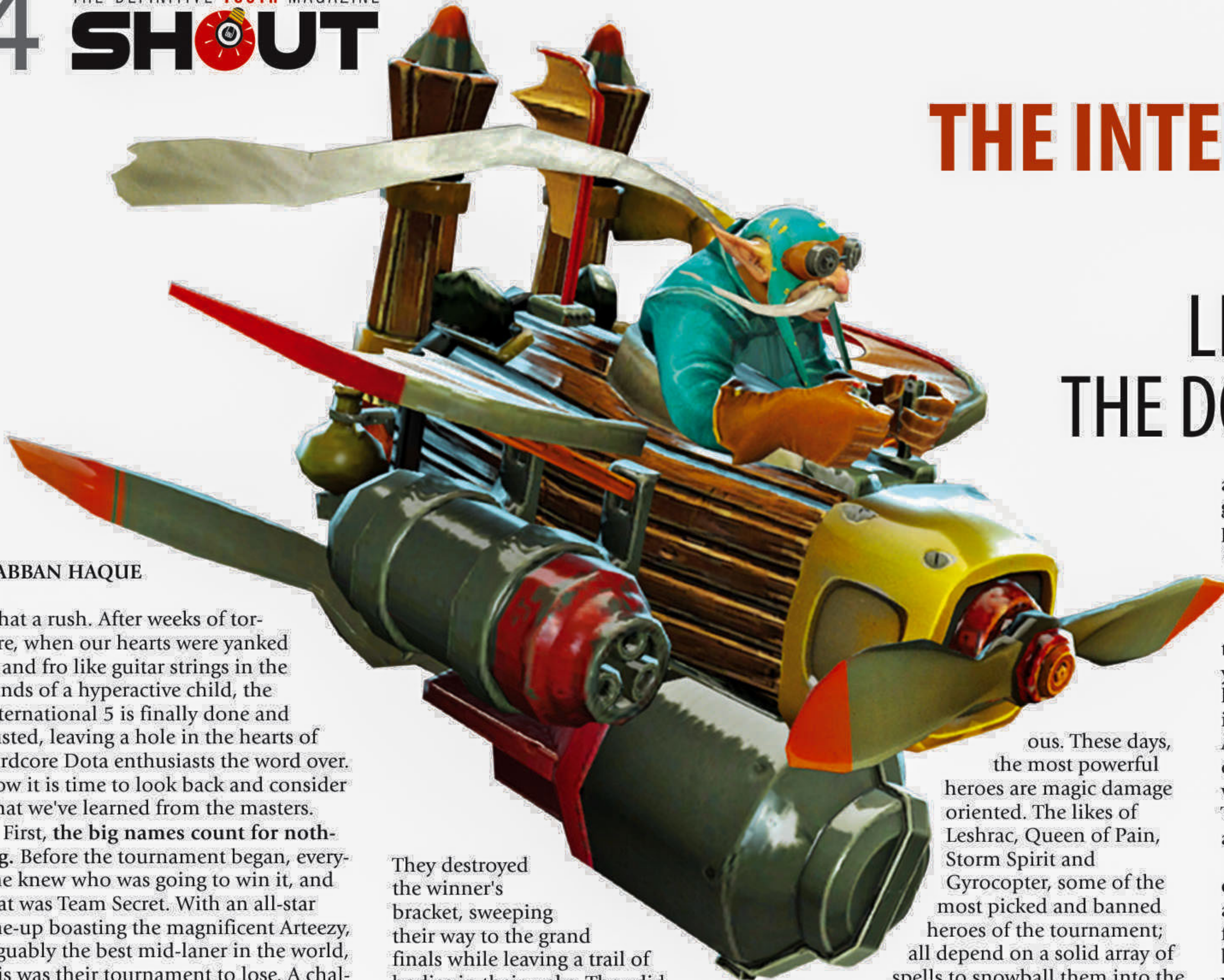


# THE INTERNATIONAL 2015 LESSONS FROM THE DOTA MASTERS



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What a rush. After weeks of torture, when our hearts were yanked to and fro like guitar strings in the hands of a hyperactive child, the International 5 is finally done and dusted, leaving a hole in the hearts of hardcore Dota enthusiasts the world over. Now it is time to look back and consider what we've learned from the masters.

First, **the big names count for nothing.** Before the tournament began, everyone knew who was going to win it, and that was Team Secret. With an all-star line-up boasting the magnificent Arteezy, arguably the best mid-laner in the world, this was their tournament to lose. A challenge they accepted with gusto. Before anyone even knew what was going on, they were in the loser's bracket, where they bowed out against Virtus.pro and had to settle for 7<sup>th</sup> place. They may have pocketed over \$800,000 for their efforts, but no one expected them to fall short of a full million. They weren't the only big name team to bow out early either. Favourites such as perennial contenders Team Empire, EHOME and the veteran Natus Vincere (Na'Vi) all bowed out early. Dendi and Artstyle may have been playing, but Na'Vi still did not win a single match as they marched out the exit door.

Second, **never count out the underdog.** The story of CDEC Gaming is one of both heartbreak and mind-boggling accomplishment. A near-completely unknown entity, CDEC Gaming qualified second in China and got through to the main event as the wildcard. Once they got there, though, they hardly looked back.

They destroyed the winner's bracket, sweeping their way to the grand finals while leaving a trail of bodies in their wake. They did not drop a single match, not even against the eventual champions when they played Evil Geniuses in the Winner's bracket finals. When in the final of finals, however, the challenge just proved beyond them and the tournament's shining light finally burned out. To have come so close to the ultimate prize must be maddening, however there's nothing like a cool \$2.8 million to cushion the blow.

Third, **6.84 absolutely rules.** Dota is a game that will always have balance issues. With over a hundred heroes on offer, there are some which are bound to be stronger than the rest, and you have to constantly keep an eye on the metagame. In the current patch, yes there are still a few heroes that are overpowered, but the nature of those heroes ensures that games are bound to be interesting. Gone are the days of Sniper and Troll Warlord, when a Mask of Madness and a Sange and Yasha were all you needed to become danger-

ous. These days, the most powerful heroes are magic damage oriented. The likes of Leshrac, Queen of Pain, Storm Spirit and Gyrocopter, some of the most picked and banned heroes of the tournament; all depend on a solid array of spells to snowball them into the

late game. Sure, some of these guys may verge on being overpowered but, even if they are, they require a lot more skill than just running around, right-clicking on people. Combined with the massive overhaul of the shops, heroes and a myriad of new and wonderful items, games in 6.84 are just more interesting than they used to be in 6.83.

Fourth, **competitive Dota and pub matches are completely different animals.** While this may at first seem to be an obvious statement, it wasn't that long ago that both were very similar. You got the aforementioned Troll or Sniper, had them farm up and then simply overwhelmed your opponents with damage. Who needs to be tanky when you can just kill your enemies before they kill you? This is no longer the case. While there is an element of this in pub games, competitive Dota is all about getting that early advantage and capitalising on it. Your carries can't just sit in the lane and farm

anymore; they have to get some early game stat boosting items and actually participate in fights. Once you have that early advantage in kills, you have to convert that into some objectives, whether this be a tower or a Roshan, and with that your victory is all but assured. Key to this is a rework that has ensured that you gain more gold and experience from hero kills than you do from farming, even if the rewards are split between the team. Assist gold has been buffed to such a degree that kill stealing is now something which only bad players complain about. The last hit doesn't even matter, as long as you're in the vicinity of a hero kill.

Fifth, **there is no substitute to experience playing the game.** How can you argue with that, when Old Man Fear finally has an International under his belt? One of the longest serving Dota veterans in the history of the game, it was Fear that set the tone for EG's victory in the championship decider. Despite fan favourite and darling of the Dota world Sumail feeding horribly with his signature Storm Spirit in the opening game, Fear's impeccable reading of the enemy team ensured that every time there was a team fight, CDEC walked straight into his Gyrocopter ultimate. Sumail eventually came back into the game thanks to some diligent stacking from the EG supports, but it was Fear who was for once the star of the show, running out the game without a single death. From there, EG had all the momentum, and stormed to the title dropping only one match out of the four played.

All in all, what did we really learn? Dota is a dynamic, team-based game, and even the best need a little help from their friends. Without good co-ordination and a snowballing mentality, ensuring that you don't let that early advantage slip, you won't get anything done these days.

