



## THE KING OF NHL 94 II IS CROWNED

October 3, 2017

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**A WORLD NHL 94 VIDEO GAME CHAMPIONSHIP TOURNAMENT HAS THE SAME CHARM TO IT AS THE WORLD SERIES OF POKER.**

Anyone, from a lifelong pro who has won multiple tournaments, to a complete unknown who was the best among their respective buddies and wanted to try their luck, can have a go at winning the tournament. And the King of 94 II World championships this past weekend in Las Vegas was a tale of two completely different paths to glory.



### **SNES: “We’re Getting Steaks Tonight, Boys!”**

Jamil is a 34-year-old insurance broker from Vancouver, BC. He is a hockey fan, having grown up playing the game and even pursuing a pro career at one point, playing at the Junior B level.

He and his childhood buddies in VanCity play NHL 94 often at a friend’s house, on the patio, with two 50 inch screens blasting the beautiful blue ice and unmistakable soundtrack. The space is decked out with special controlled lighting so that the home team plays with their colors surrounding the patio. For the game’s 20th anniversary in 2014, the crew brought in a special NHL 94 cake.

Jamil was the best among his friends, but is unknown in the NHL 94 online community. Like many that play the game, he saw the tournament advertised online and decided that it would be a fun trip with his buddies, win or lose.

But there he was, several hours and dozens of games later, in the finals. His opponent? Bob Kudelski.

Ok, not the actual Bob Kudelski, though he is in the game if you were wondering. BobKudelski26, also known as Adam, is a government employee from Ottawa. Over the years, Adam has been very active in the online community and was considered one of the favorites to win the SNES side of the tournament, especially after defeating KingRaph (we’ll get to him later).



Both men took completely different paths to get to the finals. While Adam has played countless hours online against other passionate NHL 94 enthusiasts (yes, the community modified the game so that you can play online – iron sharpens iron, after all), Jamil has only ever played against the computer or someone actually beside him.

The two men battled back and forth with very close games. It went to a final Game 5. Three periods solved nothing, and off to overtime they went. Then, early in the first extra frame, Jamil scored.

Jubilation. Celebration. Pure joy.



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The Garden of Dreams Foundation helps kids facing obstacles in the Tri-State area, including Rangers fan Taylor Ryan who is battling a rare blood disorder called Langerhans cell histiocytosis. Dec 1, 2016



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As Jamil was popping a bottle of champagne outside, one of the long-standing community members asked, with impeccable timing, “what is his name again?”

You can call him, the SNES World NHL 94 Champion. To the victor go the spoils

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The prize money (for both tournaments) was \$2,320 for first place, \$910 for second and \$300 for third. It’s not at the level of League of Legends, but the earnings are still impressive for a game that is 23 years old.

### GENESIS: The G.O.A.T.’s Lock Horns

Ask anyone who is anyone in the NHL 94 community and they will point to two people who are considered the best players in the game’s history.

On one side (literally, they are both on opposite coasts), you have Raphael, AKA KingRaph. He grew up in New York as a **Rangers** fan and lives in Jersey with his wife and two kids. He holds the Guinness World Record for **largest margin of victory (70-1!)** in NHL 94, and also holds records in 92, 95, etc etc... Basically, he’s really really good. I played him last week and got crushed, and my team was modified to be full of 99 overall players.



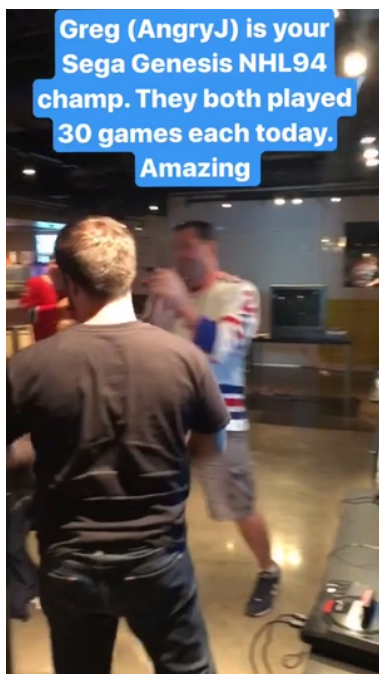
I played him in the round robin (spoiler alert, I lost 12-2, but hey I scored 2 goals) and asked him about how he prepares for tournaments like these. His answer? "I play with six skaters on the ice, the six worst on a team, pull my goalie, and make the computer a good team. It's usually a competitive game."

Let that sink in for a second. Imagine what your score would be if you played a full game like this. And "AJ" (as the community affectionately calls him) tends to win. He estimates he's played over 10,000 games in his lifetime, a number that would make Malcolm Gladwell well up with pride.

The Sega Genesis version is considered by many to be the superior NHL 94 game, but don't tell that to the SNES crew. There is definitely a 'line in the sand' debate amongst the two passionate fan bases. Both AJ and KingRaph played in both tournaments, and by the time they met in the finals of the Genesis side, they had played 30 games each in a span of six strenuous hours. Even as a kid it would be impossible to stay interested in playing at pace of five games an hour for six hours straight, let alone against the best possible level of competition!

But when the dust settled, there they were. KingRaph and AJ, side by side, ready to do battle. While Jamil and his buddies were celebrating his epic SNES win, both vets were poised, easily tuning out the background noise, ready for a battle they had done hundreds of times before.

On this night, AJ was firing on all cylinders. Everything was going his way. He would barely flinch after a goal or a win. Barely any competitor remained after being eliminated, to stay in the room to watch this all go down. And to see, in the end, AJ capture the crown.



**UP NEXT:**

Knicks Protect  
The Garden,  
Fizdale Still  
Sees Work To  
Be Done

The Garden of Dreams Foundation helps kids facing obstacles in the Tri-State area, including Rangers fan Taylor Ryan who is battling a rare blood disorder called Langerhans cell histiocytosis. Dec 1, 2016

In his post-championship victory on the **Twin Galaxies** Twitch live stream (if Twin Galaxies sounds familiar it's because it was made famous by the documentary "King of Kong"), AJ called KingRaph the best player in the world, but he was better tonight. KingRaph said the same thing... before saying he needed a beer.

The after party was at a nightclub full of celebrities, models and \$10,000 champagne.

Actually, it was better. We literally took one of the TVs and set up NHL 94 in the lobby of the hotel and played until the sun came up.

There, KingRaph and AJ, now just Raphael and Greg, talked about their respective tournaments like two veterans recalling their heated battles on the ice:

**Raph:** How was it for you?

**AJ:** It's funny, it's always the same thing. It's always going to be AJ and Raph, Raph and AJ. It's like everyone thinks we will always make it to the finals together.

**Raph:** Yeah. I thought I played well. It wasn't stressful. I'm pretty happy. I only lost to you today. You played really good defense. In Toronto (the previous World championships in 2015), I felt like I lost it. This one, you deserved to win. I'm happy with how it came out.

**AJ:** It was a coin flip in the finals between us. Two overtimes, two close games. I just didn't want to finish third.

**Raph:** I knew when we played exhibition last night you were on and it was going to be tough. Congrats again man.

on the forehead' sign.

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She didn't see world champions, she saw a group of 30 something people playing video games in the lobby of a Las Vegas hotel, as drunk party animals stumbled by.

Come Monday, this collection of people, who are the best in the world at something, will go back to their jobs, as an accountant, a COO, a government food inspector, and a movie director. All in different cities, brought together by their love for one game. They love NHL 94 so much they would rather play all night and have a stranger laugh at them in the lobby of a Vegas hotel rather than to go paint the town red.

And they wouldn't have it any other way.

ARDA OCAL, ARDA'S WORDS ON A BLOG, NHL 94