

Hello everyone, this was never going to be an easy post, but it is necessary to make. After some weeks of reflecting on everything, it finally feels like the appropriate time to hang it up as HD's team leader, and ultimately close HD's MK8 team. This is likely to be a permanent move, nor is there any plan to make a comeback at a later date, as things stand. This of course was not an easy decision to make, as it's bittersweet for everyone involved. We have prided ourselves on our longevity and the community we've built for quite some time now, but are also proud of what we have been able to achieve together.

If we really wanted to, we could have still continued on. We have never had any issues rebounding from non ideal circumstances in the past, and coming out of them stronger than we were before them. In fact, there's been many such times in our history where we've been through this, and seemingly every time it feels like I read a bunch of posts and comments speculating about our future or if we're going to die. All of these posts felt almost amusing in the past, because it felt like there was a misunderstanding about the type of team we were, with people assuming that any adversity meant imminent death, when it was never going to happen.

That makes typing this message today strange for me. The difference today comes in the timing. I have reached a point in my life where my time is becoming much more limited, and I have more decisions to make about how to spend the time I do have. I have other things I want to pursue, and some current projects, like MKC and my YouTube channel, that aren't finished products yet. But up to this point, they have always been secondary priorities to me. This is because HD has always been that top priority, due to the special qualities it has going for it. This is of course, its sense of community. While HD was originally designed to just be a MKWii team, it accidentally turned into a lot more than that, and after a while, it turned into home. HD is home to so many lifelong friends, and I am so incredibly lucky to have all of these people in my life. They laughed with me during good times, helped me through hard times, and made me a better person overall. HD's team was always going to be a huge priority for me as such. With this all said, HD has achieved everything it has ever set out to do, and then some. I have realized for a while now that I could walk away from it, knowing that I always gave it the 110%, with no regrets. If I wanted to try new things, I could do that. But before that was ever going to happen, the time had to feel fitting, and now the time seems to be.

We have been around through the peak activity of 4 different MK games now, which should really be 5, given the BCP/MKT and just how long Deluxe has been out. Our team is composed of players who were in this community from the very beginning, and people who are still somewhat new. Our team is very large, considering we have more than just our active group of MK8 players right now too. It is very cool to have a team like this, that spans across multiple generations. After a while though, it gets very tough to manage. Many people have different goals now, and many people want different things out of this team. The majority of our players are on the older side of the community now, and we have an understanding that a new generation will join the community soon and dominate this game or the next one. At a certain point, the generational gap will become a bit too noticeable. As such, it feels perhaps responsible to encourage entirely new teams to take our place, rather than trying to hang on any longer than we need to. As mentioned, our legacy is already set.

It is still of course really sad to come to this conclusion. I understand that you have to rip the band-aid at some point, but it never feels appealing. When announcing to the team that we wouldn't be playing MKU Season 26, all the comments I saw speculating about our future started resurfacing again when players started transferring. I knew that they weren't unwarranted this time, but it still felt undeserved in a way, based upon our track record. It's honestly irritating to hear from our players that MKU Staff members have been in their dms trying to get leaks about our team for the last month, just because of the transfers / hearing rumors. When this day came, I was always going to want to make a tribute post breaking the news myself, and it would've been pretty upsetting had the staff just did it instead.

But when thinking about it more, I realize that perhaps it doesn't really matter a whole lot. Perhaps the team will no longer be playing MKU, but HD itself won't really be going anywhere. Our community has always been what has held this group together, and that has been what has allowed us to withstand the test of time, and return stronger every time in the past to begin with. Even without competitions, there is no reason to think it will be any different this time. MK has always been an activity for us, but not everything. So we will continue on as a community like always. With that said, I don't know what the status for the next MK game is, nor is it really something I plan to think about for a while anyway. I guess we will see when the time comes.

Running this MK team has been something I've done for an incredibly long time now, back since the early days of MKWii. I still remember the early days vividly: I didn't really have any set ideas of what the team's goals were even going to be - I just wanted to have a team really. Initially, we just aimlessly scrimmaged other teams in any format we could find, whether that be 5v5s, 3v3s, you name it. It took us well over a year before we even figured out how to sign up for the World Clan League, and when we entered, we were promptly placed into the bottom division. Of course, the goal was always technically to win the top division and any tournament we entered, but the idea of this seemed incredibly outlandish. Really, I just wanted to try to improve and become the best team we could be, and I never knew what our actual limits were.

Despite wanting to aim for the sky, I realized pretty early on that aiming to become the greatest MK team ever was a pretty silly goal. I mean, it just wasn't realistic. I had started this team with a bunch of my friends from school, and none of them were really like me. I mean, they were all above average players, and some were even able to hit 9000vr on their own, but compared to the best players in the world... It was an uphill battle. But as I transitioned to the online community, and as they stopped playing MKWii in favor of other games, I met new people and made new friends. Pretty accidentally, HD gave me an additional friend group with people all across the world. It gave me many friends that shared the same interests as me, which is something I didn't really have back in grade school. And this was incredibly valuable to me.

In many ways, this team helped me grow up, and learn more about people in general. I always felt as if I had good intentions, but I was not exactly great at showcasing that early on. This team helped me better understand how to make difficult decisions, when I needed to swallow my pride, and who my true friends were. Very early on in the life of the team, I had to face a pretty difficult decision between a trusted team veteran and an upcoming team leader, who were giving

me conflicting stories, and could no longer coexist. As a team that was traditionally very behind on community standards such as using Skype, this new player was helping us modernize and finding all of our wars at the time. But yet, I could sense something was off. Ultimately, I would choose my long time friend, and while the short term effect ended up forcing the team to take a break to regroup, the long term effect clearly proved that this was the right call. From this point on, I placed a heavy emphasis on recruiting people who could add to the team's culture, even over players who were just incredibly talented, and I think this blueprint, a surprisingly under utilized one even, has proven to be an effective one. Not every decision I've ever made has been perfect by any means, but I think the members of the team have always had faith in me that I will always try to do what is best for the team.

We built something that was truly meant to last, and perhaps this was our ultimate advantage. Over the years, and throughout all the new games in the series, we would add to this community, and one of the coolest things for me to see was always some of our new players playing some games with the people who were around from the beginning. We always aimed to get better as a MK team, but never really rushed the process or ever tried to sell out on who we are. Ironically, by being patient and self reflective, and taking the swings when they were there, we would end up becoming a group that did achieve many of the outlandish goals that once felt impossible to achieve early on in our life. These goals were reached not by actively chasing them, but rather, focusing on this community aspect of our team.

I think in the present day, it is easy to look at a team like HD and question how I could ever attach any underdog narratives. It is true that my job as a team leader became significantly easier as time went by, and in recent years, I have even had the luxury of passing off some leadership duties to other trusted members of my team. In recent times, recruits have come to us often instead of the other way around. I understand that I have been privileged in many ways. But still, it was not always like this. I had my fair share of days where higher div teams would try to steal our players, and many days where I just had to trust that doing things the right way would ultimately work out. In the end, it did.

This is not because of any tournaments we won in my opinion. I know that this community in many ways are addicted to accolades like these, but weirdly, I think we delude ourselves into overvaluing the impressiveness of these achievements. MKU is notoriously not very balanced, and it is kind of by the design of our community, and we have taken part in that system over the years. The best players want to play together, and I get it. But what it often results in are lopsided matches where the outcome is frequently not doubted at any point.

We did end up winning 10 tournaments on MK8D, but I think my favorite statistic about all of these finals was the fact that we were not the favorite to win in well over half of them, and this was something that even extended into the semifinal rounds on occasion too. Practically every time the poll function was run on the MKC Twitch page, it felt like we got maybe 20% of the total. I know it was not always the easiest road for us, and there were plenty of hard losses on the way. We lost more tournaments than we won in the end, but looking back at it all now, it doesn't really feel like that. The success stories just shine that much brighter.

I want to end this by giving a bit of a shout to everyone who made this all possible, and to give some thank yous. I feel like the most fitting way is to simply go by generation, since well, it's something I can do with this team. I feel like every single game that HD has played over the years has brought me distinct new personalities that taught me so much, and added so much unique value to my being. So let's get it started:

To the Mario Kart Wii Era: I don't know what exactly drew you guys to our team back in the day, because as many of you surely remember, I was not exactly a role model. I appreciate that you guys were patient with me, looked past my relative lack of humility and even downright stupidity at times, and focused on the good qualities about myself instead, understanding that I meant well and could become better. You guys were genuinely the first group of people I ever felt I could talk to about anything, and you all taught me about what being a good leader was all about. You guys made me care more than I had any right to, and emphasized what it meant to be a true friend.

To the Mario Kart 7 Era: I think I truly didn't realize the potential challenges at the time of playing a new game within the same group as before, and this was largely because you guys made the transition so seamless. It was honestly remarkable how well you guys fit into the HD culture from the jump, and contributed back to it. Looking back at these days, I just have this permanent image of the old chatbox with all our custom emoji added in. It truly turned HD lore into this unexplainable thing that you just had to experience yourself to ever understand. Thank you all for helping me to expand my horizons and get into more games than just MK, and for being incredibly easy to connect with.

To the Mario Kart 8 Era: A year into this game's life, I felt like the HD experiment was finally ending, and there was not much I could really do about it: everyone just kinda didn't like the game, and it was admittedly a bit sad for me. Because unlike today, I was not really ready for this. The HD revival was something I wanted to believe in, but I wasn't sure if I was just delusional. Maybe I was, but it didn't really matter, because you guys believed in the team at its lowest point, and helped me rebuild it entirely. Thank you all for understanding the passion in my heart still, and for trusting me to make the experience worth it. Thank you all for getting me acclimated to group calls - it feels insane to think about now, but I was not really in a position where I could ever truly call whenever I wanted until this time period. You guys were so friendly, and made it so easy.

To the Deluxe Era: Finally, the rookies, most of which aren't even remotely new anymore. You guys were genuinely inspiring. Up to this point in HD's history, we had talented players, but players that I would say were a bit more relaxed about competitions and all that. You guys were some of the most driven players I've ever seen on the game, and what's crazy is, there were multiple waves of you throughout the many years of this game, all of which achieved great things and reached insane heights. You guys taught me the importance of perseverance, even when things were difficult. I could feel from all of you a deep intensity to want to be there for your teammates, and I think it separated us from many other teams. At times, it genuinely felt like we had some type of plot armor, yet somehow, it felt like it was earned, too.

With this all said, I think it is time to wrap things all up. I don't want to make this too long, but it is hard to express how grateful I am for everyone who contributed in making HD into the team it would become, in so few pages. I am obviously biased, but I think what we built was a truly special team, that was unlike any other team that came before, and will be unlike any team to come after it.

I don't know what exactly it means for everyone yet. Because our closing was largely a result of people just being at different points in their MK8 career, I anticipate that a lot of our members will still be around, and will compete with new teams soon. I'll be rooting for all of them, and I'm excited to see what else they achieve.

As for me, I don't know yet. I have a lot of questions on my mind, and I don't think competing is a top priority for me right now. It is possible that I get back into the game at some point, and I'll definitely be all in on the next game in this series. But until then, maybe I'll just be doing YouTube stuff on occasion. It is my hope that this next chapter will allow me to rest a little bit more than I have for a while now.

I plan on this being the last major post I make on this Twitter account as well. I've always been a fan of Twitter as far as social media goes, but I don't really support the direction this site has been going down for a while, and I know it's obviously unproductive to use to begin with. I will post on Bluesky in the future (probably less than I used to here), and you can find me under the hdrookie alias there. I plan to decrease social media activity in general, but I will use it a little at least. My Discord server is the best place to reach me, if it is needed.

Anyways, thank you all for reading. Despite the difficulty, I do feel a sense of peace now. Thank you for your understanding, and best wishes everyone.