

# YouTube top cheater hunter decodes the Elon Musk gaming lies and farce

Story by Gene Park

Elon Musk, the planet's richest human, has been caught twisting the truth about how good he is at video games.

He has recently been feuding with the games community over his achievements in a variety of video games, namely "Diablo IV" and "Path of Exile 2," two role-playing games that demand hundreds of hours of playtime to earn high-level characters and gear. While Musk's antics to grab attention don't interest me, I am fascinated by the psychology of cheaters, especially for something as low-stakes as video games.

I figured the best person to break down this behavior is YouTube's preeminent debunker of video game cheaters, Karl Jobst, a 38-year-old Australian with 1.1 million subscribers. Jobst is a respected speedrunner of classic games and has a history of fair but uncompromising takedowns of cheaters in the video game space. He's currently fighting a defamation lawsuit filed by Billy Mitchell, the 59-year-old hot sauce entrepreneur who gained international attention for his record-breaking plays of "Pac-Man" and "Donkey Kong" and who's the focus of the 2007 documentary "The King of Kong: A Fistful of Quarters." (Record keepers stripped Mitchell of those scores after allegations of cheating, then reinstated them last year following a legal settlement.)

Jobst recently announced that his next video will cover Musk. He posted online, "I'm not sure the story has been told entirely accurately."

Make no mistake, Jobst is unsparing in his criticism of how Musk boasts about his gaming skills.

"He shouldn't lie and make these claims," Jobst said in an interview, adding: "Maybe him being so deluded about his own ability is why he is where he is today. He thinks he's great at everything. It doesn't matter if someone else helped him get his

account so high. He thinks he's such a good gamer that he doesn't need to put in the thousands of hours." (Musk did not respond to The Washington Post's requests for comment about his gaming.)

But Jobst extends grace to how Musk has portrayed his prowess on "Path of Exile 2." Expert players of the game, such as Quintin Crawford, or Quin69 on YouTube, have criticized Musk's high-level character, saying that Musk paid others to play for him in an act known as "boosting." Musk has since admitted, via a reposted video sharing his private messages, that he engages in the practice, adding that he never meant to claim those achievements as solely his own.

"When I actually watched the stream with Elon, it didn't come across that way to me that Elon was boasting that much," Jobst said. "It was a test stream for data on X, and he barely played the game really. And he never said he was good at 'Path of Exile 2.' He never made the claim. Yes, he has a very high character, but he obviously paid someone to boost the account. The coverage of it was really, really exaggerated."

Outside the stream, Musk posted that his character's high level made the game feel easy.

Jobst still considers Musk a liar about his video game prowess, and he finds it bizarre how Musk reacted angrily to prominent critics, such as the streamer Asmongold, to the point that Musk leaked private messages to mock him.

"That's why I want to talk to Elon, because I want to ask him why he reacted so badly to Asmongold's coverage, and then immediately afterward admit he was right anyway," Jobst said.

Jobst takes bigger issue with Musk's claim to be "at one point ... maybe one of the best 'Quake' players in the world," another claim that people familiar with Musk's play have debunked. Then there's Musk boasting about speedrunning "Diablo IV," becoming a world-ranked player. "Diablo IV" isn't a game that requires technical skill demanded by action games such as "Fortnite" and "Quake." Instead, it's about playing the game long enough to earn the best equipment to be the most

powerful. Skill mostly equals understanding the game's systems and spending an exorbitant amount of time playing.

"I was disliking the way he was characterizing and he was pointing to things I didn't really like," Jobst said. "He obviously doesn't understand the core tenet of speedrunning, which is generally we start from scratch. We wouldn't be speedrunning with advanced characters like he did."

Jobst said there will always be people lying about video game achievements, regardless of the class or status of the player, because virtual achievements are by nature harder to scrutinize. Skinny people like myself can claim to bench-press 500 pounds, and the lie would be immediately obvious. For gaming achievements, Jobst said it's very hard to disprove unless people provide footage of their play to dissect, which is Jobst's expertise.

"His behavior is commonplace, and I've seen cheaters react very poorly to being exposed, probably even worse than Elon," Jobst said. "But, I mean, he's the richest guy in the world. It's just a bit more perplexing."

I've cheated in games before but have never boasted about those achievements because they weren't honestly earned. I cheated because it's often fun to be powerful in games. PC games offer mods, while many console games offer in-game cheats provided by the developers. Because Jobst has spoken with so many "caught" cheaters, I wondered whether he had insight on what motivates these people to publicly lie. He doesn't believe in casting moral judgment on cheaters.

"Sometimes they lie and fake things because it's funny," he said. "Sometimes they don't think they really know what's wrong and they really try to cover it up and feel guilty about it. Sometimes they lie and they just completely forget they did that. There's a massive spectrum of how important people think video gaming is and how much it matters to people about accomplishments."

Musk's gaming prowess was first called into question when he shared his character for 2022's "Elden Ring," a game that requires particular knowledge of its statistics and mechanics to create a functional "build" of a character. Musk's character build made little sense, reflecting a flawed understanding of the game's rules. It's acts

like these that make Jobst believe that Musk may just be ignorant of what it takes to be considered “good” at video games.

“It’s entirely plausible that he just doesn’t really appreciate how much effort it takes to be really good at something,” he said. “Does he actually have a good understanding of that, so when he does lie about how good he is, how much that’s disrespecting the work that actual best players are putting in?”

Jobst compared it to his own feats of juggling. He remembers seeing an old video of a performer juggling three balls in a synchronized performance to music by the Beatles. When Jobst was younger, he thought this performer was the best juggler in the world. It wasn’t until he started his own practice that he learned it takes much more skill to juggle more balls with more advanced techniques.

“I can envision someone getting into a position where they just didn’t know enough how good good actually is,” Jobst said. “Elon may not really care. He should. He’s got a lot of responsibility with his platform to not be a liar.”