

# Twitch Plays Pokémon

[Niall Whitehead](#) explores the new and twitchy dimension of Pokémon Red

Thursday 27 February 2014



He is alone, surrounded by creatures of vast and terrible powers. Twenty thousand voices pump through his head, surging from a dimension he cannot comprehend, drowning his thoughts. His sweat-slicked hands grapple in his pack for the closest crumb of comfort he can find: the long-dead whims of a creature from the dawn of time.

RED! This isn't the time to use that!

Twitch Plays Pokémon is an old game with a new concept: a single game of *Pokémon Red* being played by tens of thousands of people at once. They do this by typing commands to a bot created by an anonymous Australian programmer, which then controls the game itself. Between the constant surge of conflicting commands, the trolls and the lag, the end result is twenty thousand monkeys trying to write Shakespeare, except they only have one typewriter so half of them are screaming and fighting over it while the other half try to tip it over (shall I compare thee to a summer's da a a UP b START9?)

The result is chaos. Walking in a straight line takes several hours and a three-step action plan. They released their starter Pokémon in Celadon City while trying to remove items from the PC, and recently just released eleven more when trying to get Zapdos out. Trying to buy a Water Stone bankrupted them, and they spent 24 hours trying to get out of the first Team Rocket maze. But you'll notice I said Zapdos there, a late-game Pokémon – they're gradually moving forward, in baby steps (if the baby were tied to a few spooked horses). As of the time of writing, they've reached the Cinnabar Island. It's that progression, in the face of almost certain failure that makes the game so fun to watch and play.

However, partway through the stream a Democracy mode was added, after that aforementioned day in the Team Rocket maze. It tallies the commands of the mob and chooses the most popular every second, making difficult areas much easier to pass. That's fair enough, when progress becomes nigh impossible, but it's become somewhat of a crutch for whenever things become inconvenient. A check has been established, however (spamming START9 during Democracy exploits a glitch in the bot to make the game unplayable, forcing things back to normal), which has managed to keep things interesting. Beating the game's been done, after all: the journey's the fun bit.

Of course, the other main draw of the stream is the elaborate narrative that's spun up around it, to explain the madness. The player accidentally clicking the Helix Fossil a lot has been interpreted as him seeking wisdom from an ancient god. Eevee has been cast as the 'False Prophet' after trying to evolve it cost them their starter Pokémon. Their hideously overleveled Pidgeot is 'Bird Jesus', their Messiah and Chosen One.

Overall, it's been fun so far, and I'm intrigued to see where all this ends. You should too. Maybe even jump in the monkey pen and click a few keys.



## One comment

Johnny

27 Feb '14 at 7:51 pm

I really enjoyed this article, thank you!

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