

COMCAST SPECTACOR TO FIELD A TEAM IN NEW ESPORTS LEAGUE

Philadelphia is getting another professional sports team — but not one that will compete on a typical playing field.

This one will compete in the inaugural season of an esports league.

The Overwatch League announced Wednesday that a Philadelphia team owned by Comcast Spectacor is joining teams in Dallas and Houston for what is now the 12-team league's first season. The league will feature teams representing major cities in Asia, Europe and North America.

"An esports franchise is a great addition to our portfolio of sports and entertainment assets, and we believe that Overwatch League is uniquely positioned to succeed," said David Scott, president and CEO of Comcast Spectacor.

The Dallas team will be owned by Team Envy and the Houston team will be owned by Optic Gaming. Both Team Envy and OpTic Gaming are established esports organizations.

The Overwatch League — created by Blizzard Entertainment, a division of video game developer Activision Blizzard — will begin preseason play on Dec. 6 with a series of exhibition matches featuring all 12 teams. Its regular season will start on Jan. 10 and will run into June, with playoffs and finals scheduled for July.

"With the first 12 teams in place, we're now just a few short months away from the inaugural season of the Overwatch League," said Mike Morhaime, CEO and co-founder of Blizzard Entertainment. "This is a huge milestone for the league."

Activision Blizzard CEO Bobby Kotick said the esports league plans to "celebrate our professional players better than any league ever has."

For the inaugural season, all preseason and regular season games will take place at Blizzard Arena Los Angeles in Burbank, Calif. Further details about the Overwatch League, including team specifics such as team names, logos, and colors, as well as more information about the inaugural season's schedule and format, will be announced in the coming months.

Comcast Spectacor, a division of Comcast Corp., is the owner of the Philadelphia Flyers and the Wells Fargo Center along with a East Coast Hockey League franchise. Last week, the company was awarded a National Lacrosse League franchise that will begin play next year.

Comcast-Spectacor is not the first Philadelphia sports team owner to enter the world of egaming. Last year, the owners of the Philadelphia 76ers teamed up with venture firm NextEquity to purchase a majority stake in leading esports franchises Team Dignitas and Team Apex, making the Sixers the first U.S. sports organization to control a professional gaming outfit.

Earlier this year, the Sixers were one of 17 National Basketball Association teams to commit to participating in the NBA 2K sports league set to tip-off in 2018.