

Gaming wars go mobile

February 17 2011, by Sebastien Guine



The chief executive officer of Sony Ericsson, Hans Vestberg, speaks on February 14 during the opening of the 3GSM World Congress in Barcelona. Sony Ericsson packed a PlayStation pad into its latest smartphone, unveiled this week at the mobile industry's annual get-together in Barcelona.

The video game wars are going mobile.

Sony Ericsson packed a PlayStation pad into its latest smartphone, unveiled this week at the mobile industry's annual get-together in Barcelona.

And rival Microsoft swiftly replied by offering an Xbox link to lure gamers to its Windows Phone [operating software](#).

[Sony Ericsson](#) opened the new front on Sunday, the eve of the mobile show here, revealing the widely anticipated Xperia Play, already dubbed

the PlayStation phone.

Powered by Google's latest Android system, Gingerbread, the classic-looking black smartphone stands out from its Android rivals in one respect: it has a slideout PlayStation gaming panel.

It is the first PlayStation certified mobile, and the gaming pad will be familiar to gamers who know PlayStation I, II, III and PSP with the same basic layout of buttons and controls.

Nevertheless, "we're not competing really with the consoles," said Sony Ericsson product planner Christoph Jabs at a stand surrounded by Experia Play phones for people to test.

"It's a different offer. This one is a phone. The performance of the phone is important. Then we offer a better game experience."

The PlayStation phone, to be launched early April is aimed at 20-30 year olds rather than younger users because it will be pricey at about 600 euros (\$800) if sold without phone operators' subsidies.

For Jabs, it's ideal, for example, "if you have 20 minutes waiting for the doctor."

Games will be downloadable from Android Market for about 5-10 euros.

Microsoft, which already offers some Xbox games on its [Windows Phone 7](#) operating system, replied Monday by offering greater integration to lure players.

A connection with the Xbox will be available in a major Phone 7 update from about March, chief executive [Steve Ballmer](#) said, roughly the same time that Sony Ericsson's Xperia Play is due out.

Interaction with Xbox will allow a "richer experience," said [Microsoft](#) France mobile division chief Olivier Ribet.

For example, it would allow a player to start a [game](#) on the smartphone and continue it on Xbox, or for multiplayer games in which some players are on their smartphones and others on Xbox.

Other manufacturers are in pursuit.

South Korea's Samsung unveiled its Galaxy S II, touted as the world's thinnest smartphone at 8.49 millimetres (0.3 inches).

It features a "3-axis gyroscopic sensor", which Samsung says allows new gaming possibilities with titles available from partners such as Gameloft and Social Network Games.

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