

NHL takes esports on ice with gaming tournament

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Pittsburgh Penguins' Sidney Crosby (87) celebrates his winning goal in overtime of an NHL hockey game against the New York Islanders in Pittsburgh, Saturday, March 3, 2018. (AP Photo/Gene J. Puskar)

The National Hockey League is making its first foray into the world of esports.

The league is launching the 2018 NHL Gaming World Championship on Friday, a tournament that will crown a champion in June in Las Vegas. League officials and esports experts say it's a way to attract millennials to hockey and to find new ways to connect with current fans.

In what NHL executive vice president and chief revenue officer Keith Wachtel acknowledges is a basic start to esports, the tournament will allow players to match up 1-on-1 in "EA Sports NHL 18" qualification rounds. That will be followed by regional finals in the United States, Canada and Europe on PlayStation 4 and Xbox One ahead of the June 19 championship.

The goal could eventually be to put on something similar to the season-long NBA 2K League, which is set to begin in May, and eMLS, which has 19 of 23 teams taking part using "FIFA 18."



Washington Capitals left wing Alex Ovechkin, right, of Russia, fakes out Los

Angeles Kings defenseman Drew Doughty during the first period of an NHL hockey game, Thursday, March 8, 2018, in Los Angeles. (AP Photo/Mark J. Terrill)



Ottawa Senators' Erik Karlsson (65) plays the puck away from goaltender Craig Anderson (41) during second period NHL hockey action against the Buffalo Sabres in Ottawa, Thursday, March 8, 2018. (Justin Tang/The Canadian Press via AP)

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