

Disney to put live 'Overwatch' eSports matches on TV

July 11 2018, by Glenn Chapman



Overwatch video games will be broadcast live on US television under an agreement by the game maker and Walt Disney Co. to bring eSports to viewers

Fans of the "Overwatch" video game will soon be able to watch competitions on television under a deal announced Wednesday by

Activision Blizzard and Walt Disney Co.

Disney and its ESPN channels will be exclusive partners for broadcasting "Overwatch" matches on television in the US, in the "most significant commitment" they have made to video games as spectator sport, Activision Blizzard eSports league chief Pete Vlastelica told AFP.

The alliance is part of an effort to establish "Overwatch" eSports audiences and business models akin to those in traditional sports such as basketball or football.

Financial terms of the multiyear deal were not disclosed.

Playoff games beginning this week along with finals taking place in Brooklyn the last weekend of July will be on Disney XD or ESPN channels, according to the programming schedule.

"The Overwatch League Grand Finals is by far our most comprehensive television distribution for an eSports event over a single weekend," Disney and ESPN media networks executive vice president Justin Connolly said in a release.

A recap of the championship will be broadcast on Disney-owned ABC on July 29.

Coverage will include Disney airing matches during "prime time" television viewing for the first time, according to Vlastelica.

"It is a chance to increase the reach of our league content," Vlastelica said.

In a relatively short space of time, the Overwatch League has developed its own stars and legions of fans who follow the tournament either

virtually or in person at live events.

Launched in January, the 12-team competition comprises franchises representing cities on three continents, with nine teams from the United States and one each from Britain, China and South Korea.

The league's models are the major US professional sports leagues such as the National Football League or the National Basketball Association, with a postseason culminating in a July 26-28 grand final where a \$1 million prize will be up for grabs.

Overwatch itself is a first-person shooter video [game](#) which sees teams of six players battle rival teams in a fast-paced, futuristic setting.

The game was developed by Blizzard, the California-based company best known for creating the "World of Warcraft" online phenomenon.

The vision is for Overwatch League to become a true global competition, expanding to 28 teams, and featuring regular matches between teams on opposite sides of the world, such as Paris taking on Beijing.

"We are building this league for the very long term," Vlastelica said.

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