



GAMES

Xbox Live's new tournament tool makes Xbox One more attractive for esports developers

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Above: Microsoft wants to fuel competitive gaming on Xbox Live. Image Credit: Jeffrey Grubb/GamesBeat



Microsoft wants developers to use Xbox Live to facilitate the growing esports and pro-gamer scenes.

The company announced today that it is incorporating a new tournaments feature geared toward developers into Xbox Live. Xbox product manager Jason Ronald took the stage at the Game Developers Conference today in San Francisco to detail how Microsoft is working to improve its platforms for game makers, and one of the key points is that his team is launching a preview toolkit today that enables studios to implement the new Xbox Live Tournaments Platform directly into Xbox Live. This means a developer can set up a tournament inside their game that will have hooks into the Xbox Live multiplayer network. Newzoo forecasts the esports market to hit \$463 million this year, but most of this comes from online PC games. Microsoft's move here is clearly to expand Xbox beyond Halo and Call of Duty when it comes to esports.

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Players can see upcoming competitive events and even sign up for them and potentially even launch games right into the tournaments from a home menu. Esports is a growing space that has hundreds of millions of viewers online, and many of those audience members have dreams of professional gaming. Microsoft claims the tournament system is in line with its previous efforts — like releasing the Xbox One Elite Controller pro-gaming pad — to provide companies and individuals the tools to engage with esports on their own terms.

"Esports is not a new trend. It's not a new fad. It's very clearly here to stay," said Ronald. "If you're a developer that's already used to running your own tournaments, you can run your own tournaments. Everything from small, community-driven events up to large-scale pro events."

For developers, this will make launching organized esports events on Xbox One much simpler. They need to only implement one software development kit (SDK) from Microsoft, and that supports multiple third-party operators. Early partners for this include the community competitive-gaming hub Faceit as well as pro organizer ESL. Of course, publishers can also run their own, self-defined tournaments without ESL or Faceit.

"The launch of the Xbox Live Tournaments Platform is a monumental moment for the future of competitive gaming and the growth of eSports," Faceit chief executive Niccolo Maisto said in a canned statement. "With the new Xbox Live Tournaments Platform, Microsoft is embracing esports and enabling gamers to experience the fun and excitement that competitive gaming has to offer."

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While Xbox Live is getting this in preview today, the first games will launch with official support for this feature later in 2016.