



A screenshot from "Counter-Strike: Global Offensive" Valve

ESPORTS

Amazon's Twitch Launches 'Counter-Strike' Esports Championship Series

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Twitch continues to invest resources into eSports. And for good reason. eSports videos account for over 20% of the streaming platform's traffic, according to research firm Newzoo.

Twitch, which is owned by Amazon ([AMZN, +1.49%](#)), has partnered with competitive gaming platform Facelt to launch the Esports Championship Series (ECS). The first league under this new partnership launches today and focuses on Valve's popular first-person shooter, *Counter-Strike: Global Offensive* (CS:GO). It will be broadcast exclusively on Facelt's Twitch channel.

Unlike other leagues such as [ESL](#) and Activision Blizzard-owned [Major League Gaming](#) (MLG), ECS consists of 20 teams (10 from North America and 10 from Europe). These teams are co-owners of the league. ECS has committed \$3.5 million to prize money and team financial support for this first season.

Teams and players will also be given seats on the league's governing committee to help decide and enforce key aspects of the league, including regulatory framework, integrity, players' welfare, holidays, and best practices.

Stuart Saw, director of eSports strategy at Twitch, says the ECS is the first eSports league to meaningfully combine teams, players, the league organizer, and the platform to build a product that gives fair incentives and compensation to all the principal parties, with a laser focus on player satisfaction.

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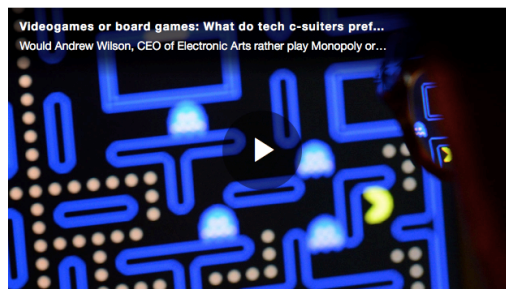
"The resulting system aims to solve common anxieties such as unstable incomes, unrealistic competition schedules, and inconsistent event experiences, so players can concentrate on playing their very best," Saw says. "Not only will players see growth through the league, the league's supporting initiatives will help them capture value from that growth to bolster their presence, marketability, and future career prospects."

As is customary with eSports leagues today, Twitch and Facelt will also be providing travel, accommodations, on-site concierge services, lounges, and parties for players.

With the launch of Season 2, the companies will launch a development league to feed new players and teams into the major league.

This is the largest in a string of eSports initiatives from Twitch, which entered the eSports fray with the Capcom Cup last year. This year, the company has partnered with Psyonix to launch a [Rocket League](#) Championship Series and Super Evil Megacorp on the mobile [Vainglory](#) eSports league.

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"We're expanding our core distribution, marketing, monetization, and sponsorship sales capabilities to support the scale of this project," Saw says. "In addition, we're rolling out new programs around hospitality and narrative development, two vitally important disciplines traditionally overlooked as cost centers. We're going to work with all the talented editorial partners to tell great stories for existing fans, as well as expand the overall audience for CS:GO."

Saw believes Twitch, as a platform, allows a more comprehensive eSports approach because the company cares about simultaneously elevating everything from individual player streams to grassroots tournaments to professional leagues.

"This synchronization promotes consistent growth of all the levels that feed top-level professional play, which means shiny capstone initiatives like the ECS are supported by a healthy and sustainable infrastructure," Saw says.

The plan is to further expand ECS across additional eSports games in the future.

Each month, more than 100 million community members gather on Twitch to watch and talk about video games with more than 1.7 million broadcasters.