

# Mashable

We're using cookies to improve your experience. [Click Here to find out more.](#)



- [Mashable](#)
- [Mashable Asia](#) [Mashable Australia](#) [Mashable France](#) [Mashable India](#) [Mashable UK](#)

• [Sign in](#)

- - [Like](#)
  - [Follow](#)
  - 
  - [see more >](#)

• [Search](#)



- [Video](#)
- [Entertainment](#)
- [Culture](#)
- [Tech](#)
- [Science](#)
- [Business](#)
- [Social Good](#)
- [More](#)

- - [Channels](#)
  - [Video](#)
  - [Entertainment](#)
  - [Culture](#)
  - [Tech](#)
  - [Science](#)
  - [Business](#)
  - [Social Good](#)
- - [Company](#)
  - [About Us](#)
  - [Licensing & Reprints](#)
  - [Archive](#)
  - [Mashable Careers](#)
- - [Contact](#)
  - [Contact Us](#)
  - [Submit News](#)
- - [Advertise](#)
  - [Advertise](#)
- - [Legal](#)
  - [Privacy Policy](#)
  - [Terms of Use](#)
  - [Cookie Policy](#)
  - [Copyright Policy](#)
- - [Apps](#)
  - [iPhone / iPad](#)
  - [Android](#)
- - [Resources](#)
  - [Subscriptions](#)
- - [Sites](#)
  - [Job Board](#)
  - [Social Good Summit](#)



Share on Facebook Share Tweet on Twitter [Share](#) [Share](#)

## NBC breaks into esports, starting with 'Rocket League'

Share on Facebook Share Tweet on Twitter [Share](#) [Share](#)



IMAGE: PSYONIX

BY KELLEN BECK  
JUN 21, 2017

*Rocket League* will make its television debut this summer thanks to a new partnership with NBC Sports Group, the companies announced today. This new partnership marks NBC's first big step into the world of esports with the potential for more NBC Sports/esports mash-ups to come.

The \$100,000 2v2 *Rocket League* tournament will kick off in July through the online competitive gaming platform, FaceIt, and move onto regional finals through select NBC Sports regional networks including New England, the Bay Area, and other non-NBC regional networks around the world — a first for *Rocket League*. The grand finals in August will be broadcast on NBC Sports Network in the U.S. and on Syfy in a handful of other countries.

Along with the TV broadcast, the tournament will be streamed live on the NBC Sports and Telemundo En Vivo apps as well as other unspecified social media platforms — traditionally with esports this includes Twitch, YouTube, and potentially Twitter or Facebook.

**SEE ALSO:** [15 amazing 'Rocket League' plays that explain why you aren't a pro](#)

For the uninitiated, *Rocket League* is basically soccer except the players have been replaced by rocket-powered cars and the playing field is completely enclosed. Players use their cars to push and launch the game's giant ball past opponents and into the opposing team's goal to get as many points as possible in intense, five-minute rounds.

Josh Watson, the head of esports at Psyonix (the developer of *Rocket League*), said last week at E3 that *Rocket League*'s ease-of-access could help it reach a wider audience than most other esports.

"We really believe the game is super accessible," he said, comparing it to fighting games like *Street Fighter*. "Our goal is to get *Rocket League* esports to everyone."

□ "We thought that [Rocket League] had some sports DNA to it, which would be a

## good fit for us and for our audience"

Some of the most popular esports in the world, like *League of Legends* and *Counter-Strike: Global Offensive*, require a deeper understanding of the games and their mechanics. Most people can't tune into a *League of Legends* match and immediately understand what's happening, whereas most people understand the basics of soccer and can apply that same knowledge to *Rocket League* and get the gist of it immediately.

*Counter-Strike* has already been featured prominently on TV through Turner Broadcasting's esports division, ELeague, which has also broadcast *Street Fighter* and *Overwatch* tournaments in the past year.

Rob Simmelkjaer, senior vice president of NBC Sports Ventures, said *Rocket League's* proximity to traditional sports made it a draw for NBC Sports.

"We looked at lots of different games in lots of different genres," he said. "We ultimately landed on *Rocket League* for a number of reasons. Number one, it's growing at a nice clip. We see its audiences are growing. It's got great buzz out there; the [*Rocket League* Championship Series] did pretty well this summer."

*Rocket League* has already proven itself in the esports community with dozens of community-run competitive tournaments and its own international *Rocket League* Championship Series, which recently concluded its \$300,000 third season with 2.29 million unique viewers.

"Number two, we thought that it had some sports DNA to it, which would be a good fit for us and for our audience — our sports-loving audience," Simmelkjaer said. "It's obviously got this sort of soccer mash-up with with motorsports, which are sports that we cover extensively on NBC Sports Network."

That sports DNA could be a draw for sports fans that haven't really dipped their toes into esports yet.

"We figured someone who is used to tuning into one of our networks for baseball, basketball, hockey games, soccer games, or a motorsport race would look at this this and say, 'Oh, this is interesting, it's cars playing soccer,'" he said. "We thought there would be some translatability to the non-core esports fan with the game."

*Rocket League* also isn't as violent as other esports titles. Sure, cars can be blown up in *Rocket League*, but there aren't any guns or real deaths during matches.



IMAGE: PSYONIX

Simmelkjaer said NBC Sports' staffers were fans of *Rocket League's* developers, too.

"Frankly, we just really like the Psyonix people," Simmelkjaer said. "We had really good conversations with them, they seemed really excited about working with us."

Psyonix particularly liked the idea of having more regional qualifiers through NBC Sports' regional networks, Simmelkjaer said.

If things go well with this tournament for NBC Sports, that could mean more esports on NBC.

"I don't think it'll be the last thing you'll see us doing," Simmelkjaer said. "This is one format that we think is repeatable and we can do it with lots of different games. We're always looking at other areas of the ecosystem and other ways to play in it. Hopefully it's just the beginning."

NBC Sports has been aware of esports' growth for years — they've been talking to all sorts of people in the space, including game publishers. The company seems poised to push onward with esports, using its first *Rocket League* tournament as a stepping stone.

"I think that we are going to look to make this our foundation as we build a house, and we'll add on more, whether its expanding this format to other games and other times, or whether it's also branching off into other formats," Simmelkjaer said. "We have relationships with all the publishers, we're aware of everything going on, we are regularly talking to pretty much everybody in the industry about what they're doing."

**WATCH: These sports VIPs are throwing millions at pro gaming teams**



**TOPICS:** [ENTERTAINMENT](#), [ESPORTS](#), [GAMING](#), [NBC](#), [ROCKET LEAGUE](#), [TELEVISION](#)

Get our hottest stories delivered to your inbox.

Sign up for Mashable Newsletters to get personalized updates on top stories and viral hits.

EMAIL

SIGN UP



[Culture](#)

**[A dog playing in snow for the first time is exactly what you need to watch today](#)**

Chloe Bryan

So pure, so wholesome.

16 hours ago

[Share](#) [Tweet](#) [Share](#) [Share](#)