



Rocket League's Roadmap: From RLCS S4 to China

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The RLCS is expanding, plus there's DreamHack, X Games, NBC and plenty more.

It's the offseason for the Rocket League Championship Series, following the [third-season finals](#) at the start of the month — so things must be pretty quiet in the competitive scene, right? That's how it seemed at the start of this year, following the end of season two, when only smaller or community events were trying to fill the gap.

What a difference six months makes. Not only is the fourth season of the RLCS on the horizon with huge changes in tow, but Psyonix and NBC also [just announced a 2v2 tournament](#) that will air on TV. Beyond that, Rocket League is coming to ESPN's X Games, there are official DreamHack tournaments, a trio of 7-Eleven Summer Series invitational online events and even collegiate play ahead.

As Josh Watson, the developer's Esports Operation Manager, suggests, "Everything is kind of moving at light speed right now." But what can we expect from the expanded Championship Series, and what does this all mean for players and viewers alike? Read on to find out more about Rocket League's competitive road map ahead.

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RLCS growth spurt

Psyonix didn't wait long after the last season ended, announcing the fourth season of the RLCS just a week after [Northern Gaming hoisted the trophy in Los Angeles](#). Things won't actually get underway until August, but the news made it clear that the next season will bring some dramatic shifts to the RLCS, which Psyonix produces with partner Twitch.

The biggest of those changes is undoubtedly the addition of a lower division of teams, which will play separately from what is now the upper division of teams. Eight teams will play in each division in both North America and Europe, with Oceanic region details still to be announced.



Here's how the new RLCS format will play out

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What's the point? Well, the lower division will be an ideal breeding ground for up-and-coming teams who maybe aren't yet at the level of the top squads, and might help produce more capable players who can move up the ranks in future seasons. It can also be a consolation prize of sorts for skilled teams that have a bad qualifying performance and miss the Top 8 — something that Team Iris could have benefitted from last season, for example.

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or players that are playing at the highest level — if not right below the highest level — who are just missing out on this play," says Watson.

Having another division of teams below the usual top tier brings multiple benefits to the league and its players. It provides more stability for organizations that field Rocket League teams, ensuring that their squads still play under the RLCS banner even if they miss out on the top division. It also lets those players continue to compete at a high level against similar talent, and make some money for their efforts.



Could the new champs come from the lower division?

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"It allows us to not only service the RLCS this year and allow them to continue to play at the highest level, but it also allows us to breed the best talent of up-and-coming teams and make sure that we're planning for the future — and make sure that we can create those stars of tomorrow," affirms Watson.

And it could amp up the drama, too, depending on how the divisions interact with each other. Will there be an opportunity for the top teams in the lower division to play their way into the higher division, or at least gain a spot at the World Championship? Unfortunately, Psyonix isn't saying for now — those details will follow later in the offseason. But the potential is there for some added excitement under this new format.

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around. It's critical to the players who want to stay in the spotlight and keep earning money, to the organizations that need the visibility for their sponsors and fans, and for a league that hopes to continue its growth and stick around for the foreseeable future.

Watson says that both Psyonix and Twitch have had conversations with the organizations, and know that stability is a key request from the teams. It's also the sort of thing that may pull even larger organizations into Rocket League, as established orgs become more willing to invest in the game knowing that their team has a better shot of staying in the spotlight.



Rogue just entered pro Rocket League last month

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"There's definitely a sense that the security is something that they're really hoping for, but aside from just the organizations, we honestly really want to make sure that we're providing the best environment for our players, as well," says Watson. "If you narrowly miss out on qualification, as we had some of our top teams do this last season, it gives those players an opportunity to continue to play at a high level without having to just sit out for several months."

Another part of the equation comes with the new community-driven open qualifiers. Instead of one big open-qualifying process, there will be three qualifiers in both NA and EU run by established community organizations (to be named) — and each team can play in up to two of

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division they'll fall into. That's another layer of security to ease the fears of organizations.

We have already seen one huge organization make the move into Rocket League this offseason. Team EnVyUs announced last week that it acquired the championship roster from Northern Gaming, and now Remkoe, Deevo and Maestro will play under a much more established banner. The current best team will play for what is now the largest organization in Rocket League today, which should help raise Rocket League's visibility as the fourth season gets underway.

EnVy Rocket League - Introducing EnVy Rocket League



"It's a really exciting move, I think, for those players. I know Northern Gaming was an incredible org. They've been such a positive force within the Rocket League ecosystem. We were really happy to see that all of those moves [happened on good terms](#), and everyone was very positive about it," says Watson. "We're really excited to see EnVyUs come into the system, and they have an incredible roster now."

"Any time you have one of these big organizations come into your system, it obviously adds a new set of eyes from people who maybe weren't already familiar with Rocket League eSports," he adds. "EnVyUs has a huge fan base across multiple games. It's all positive, and we really think that this sport will be positive for their fan base as well."

Plenty in play

Qualifiers will get underway sometime in August, which is also when NBC's event will conclude. The NBC/FACEIT tournament will provide the largest spotlight to date for the game's 2v2 mode (3v3 is standard), offering up \$100,000 total along the way. Some of the matches will be

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We [wrote about that event last week](#) after speaking with Watson, and it appears that some details are still being hammered out about the tournament and players' availability for it, given how crowded the competitive schedule has become of late.

How crowded? Just today, Psyonix and FACEIT announced a Rocket League Invitational event for ESPN's X Games Minneapolis, which will take place from July 14–16. Details are still thin and no teams have been officially confirmed yet, but \$75,000 will be up for grabs and everything will stream on ESPN3 and other online platforms.



DreamHack Atlanta is three weeks away

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DreamHack is another big event on players' radars right now, and with Psyonix and Twitch sponsoring \$50,000 tournaments in two different locations. The first took place this month in Sweden, with [season two RLCS champions](#) FlipSid3 Tactics (using Miztik as a stand-in for gReazymeister) rebounding from their spotty S3 finals performance to take the trophy. Meanwhile, the new Gale Force Esports roster, featuring [RLCS S3 champion Turbopolsa](#) and runner-up Kaydop alongside returning player ViolentPanda, finished second.

The next DreamHack tournament takes place in Atlanta on July 21–23, and as players from NRG and SetToDestroyX [told us last week](#), they'll be there — and we should see several other top

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between seasons.

Between NBC's 2v2 event, DreamHack, and the X Games, it's hard to believe we'll see that complaint this offseason. Quite the opposite, actually, given [the scheduling concerns](#) that emerged even before the X Games tournament was announced.

And more still

We also just saw the first 7-Eleven Summer Series streaming event this past weekend, in which eight NA teams competed in a single-elimination tournament with a \$6,000 prize pool. There were some unexpected teams in the mix, but the event ultimately yielded great drama.

After missing the RLCS playoffs last season, G2 Esports bounced back to win the Grand Finals 4-0 over [top NA team, NRG](#), anchored by a ridiculous all-around performance from JKnaps. Europe will have the next Summer Series event July 9, followed by another NA tournament August 6.



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Back in February, Psyonix announced that it was [committing \\$2.5 million](#) to competitive Rocket League this year, and while some players have complained that prize pools aren't living up to their expectations, that money is being spread all around the ecosystem. For example, Psyonix has been funding weekly tournaments in various regions via ESL, and has further plans to help support community organizations with their tournaments.

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series will span five weekly 3v3 tournaments — and it's promised to just be the beginning of the game's ambitions in the space.

"We think Rocket League eSports is as true to sports as you can get in the eSports ecosystem, and one of our big initiatives is collegiate play. We feel like it's an incredible environment for Rocket League eSports," affirms Watson. "It's all about community, and that's exactly what university life is like. We have all of these passionate students who want to create a community around the things that they love, so collegiate just seems like the perfect fit for Rocket League."

New challengers

China could be another significant new frontier for Rocket League. Last season [saw Oceania join the RLCS](#), but that's a relatively small competitive community — China is a dominant force in esports, and adding it and other Asian countries to the RLCS could be a massive opportunity to bring in fresh talent, along with new viewers.

Back in April, Psyonix announced that it was [working with Tencent Games](#) to reconfigure Rocket League as a free-to-play PC experience for that market, although the core gameplay will seemingly be unchanged. It's still in development, but if the fundamentals are exactly the same, then it may only be a matter of time before China's best players and teams are ready to take on the rest of the world.

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"Obviously, anyone in esports knows that China is an incredibly large market. They're incredibly passionate about esports. We're definitely looking into how the game and its release in China factors into that bigger ecosystem," affirms Watson. "Any way that we can get the best players in the world competing with each other ... if there's an appetite for that within China, then I think we're going to do our best to explore all opportunities."

Plenty is happening in the competitive Rocket League scene right now, and as Watson suggests, there's even more planned ahead. The guiding goal remains long-term stability as they build the overall ecosystem, ensuring that the RLCS can sustain itself and grow, that players can thrive within the competitive scene, and that organizations see enough reason to get and stay involved.

Watson says that they're mindful of other esports' successes and presumably missteps, too, but claims that they're not following any other game's specific road map. "We want to make sure that we're doing things the Rocket League way," he affirms.

"We'd like to see [Rocket League] everywhere. The sky's really the limit for the game," he says. "We've demonstrated that it is a serious competitive sport, and I think our road map is really just making sure that we can continue the successes on all fronts. We've got a lot of stuff in the works, but really, the sky is the limit."

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