London Spitfire Capture History in Overwatch League™ Grand Finals

July 31, 2018

The first Overwatch League championship was witnessed by a sold-out live audience at Barclays Center in Brooklyn, New York, and an estimated global average minute audience of 861,205

IRVINE, Calif.--(BUSINESS WIRE)--Jul. 31, 2018-- The crowd roared and confetti cannons boomed on Saturday, July 28, as the Overwatch League, the world's first global professional city-based esports league, completed its inaugural season with the Grand Finals at Barclays Center in Brooklyn, New York. In front of a sold-out live audience, the London Spitfire captured history—and the first Overwatch League championship—in a 2-0 victory over the Philadelphia Fusion.

"I can't put into words how proud I am of this team," said London Spitfire owner and CEO Jack Etienne. "The players, the coaches, Robin Lee, Susie Kim—all of them have shown such resilience to bring us to this triumph. A lot of people wrote us off, but no one on this roster and staff stopped working on getting better and they've shown that with this phenomenal playoff run. Thank you to our fans that never gave up and supported us, sometimes watching in the middle of the night. The support we've had has been overwhelming and we're thrilled to have rewarded that support. Thank you to Bobby Kotick, Nate Nanzer, Pete Vlastelica, Mike Morhaime, Jeff Kaplan, and everyone on the Overwatch League team for putting together such an incredible inaugural season. I know none of us will ever forget it. Aces High!"

The Overwatch League Grand Finals on July 27–28 were streamed worldwide via the primary digital viewing experience on Twitch, as well as on MLG; in China on ZhanQi TV, NetEase CC, and Panda TV; and broadcast to domestic audiences on ESPN, ESPN2, ESPN3, and Disney XD, along with a highlights show on Sunday, July 29, on ABC. The ESPN broadcast was the first time live competitive gaming had aired on ESPN's flagship network in primetime, while the ABC program was the first esports championship ever shown on that network.

Inclusive of these TV networks and streaming platforms, the estimated global average minute audience across both days of the Grand Finals was 861,205. The U.S. average minute audience was 289,175, with an estimated 45% of that total, or 129,792, falling into the 18–34 demographic. Worldwide, the 18–34 average minute audience was 605,013.

"Having cross-platform success, especially among the coveted 18–34 demographic, showcases the Overwatch League's strong fanbase. Marketers seeking to capitalize on the growth of esports among the mainstream population should take note of the league's multi-platform approach to broadening reach," said Nicole Pike, managing director of Nielsen Esports.

"Overwatch League started as one of the most ambitious projects in esports history," said Twitch cofounder Kevin Lin. "We worked together with Blizzard on many new innovative experiences, including a Cheering rewards program, the All-Access Pass, exclusive Twitch chat emotes, a feature-packed interactive Extensions overlay, and more. Seeing our efforts draw an impressive and passionate audience on Twitch for the Grand Finals reflects a promising future for the league."

"Congratulations to the London Spitfire, who had an unforgettable season and championship run," said Pete Vlastelica, president and CEO of Activision Blizzard Esports Leagues. "We had a number of ambitious goals for the inaugural season of the Overwatch League, and all of these came together during the Grand Finals at Barclays Center: we showcased the pinnacle of esports competition, we created value for our partners, and we reached millions of fans. I can't think of a better position to be in as we look ahead to the 2019 season of the Overwatch League."

The regular season may have ended, but the fun isn't over yet: the Overwatch League returns to Blizzard Arena Los Angeles Aug. 25–26 for the action-packed All-Star Weekend. Saturday will feature a series of custom skill matches, while Sunday will see the Atlantic and Pacific All-Stars go head-to-head in the official All-Star Game Powered by Intel®. The 2019 Overwatch League schedule will be announced at a later date.

About the Overwatch League™

The Overwatch League™ is the first major global professional esports league with city-based teams across Asia, Europe, and North America. Overwatch® was created by globally acclaimed publisher Blizzard Entertainment (a division of Activision Blizzard—Nasdaq: ATVI), whose iconic franchises have helped lay the foundations and push the boundaries of professional esports over the last 15 years. The latest addition to Blizzard's stable of twenty-one #1 games,[1] Overwatch was built from the ground up for online competition, with memorable characters and fast-paced action designed for the most engaging gameplay and spectator experiences. To learn more about the Overwatch League, visit www.overwatchleague.com.

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[1] Sales and/or downloads, based on internal company records and reports from key distribution partners.

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Source: Activision Publishing, Inc.

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