

# NJ looks to become destination for esports companies

AHMAD AUSTIN For The Press

The New Jersey Economic Development Authority is working with partners throughout the industry to "make sure New Jersey is a destination for esports companies," according to a release from the authority.

"As the COVID-19 pandemic persists, finding new ways to bring people together virtually and supporting industries that can thrive without in-person interaction is crucial," NJEDA CEO Tim Sullivan said in the release. "Esports are uniquely positioned to address both of these priorities, and the NJEDA is excited to help to bring the benefits of this new industry to communities throughout New Jersey."

Fans are able to bet on esports competitions in the same way they bet on traditional sports like basketball and football.

Their first opportunity to do so is during the VIE.gg CS:GO Legend Series, a two-week tournament for the online shooter "Counter-Strike: Global Offensive," featuring 16 professional teams from around the world.

The tournament began Monday and runs through Sept. 13.

"Esports is quickly emerging as an economic and cultural force on par with many other traditional sports, and it is important that New Jersey accommodate the many ways fans engage with their favorite teams and events," said David L. Rebuck, director of the New Jersey Division of Gaming Enforcement. "Allowing betting on esports not only provides more variety for sports wagering enthusiasts, but also makes New Jersey more attractive to the innovative companies that drive this growing industry."

Fans are able to place both "single outcome" bets on which team will win at each stage of the competition and "in-play" wagers for components of each match.

The NJEDA is also helping facilitate the creation of Conference One (CF1), a college-specific league that will be headquartered in New Jersey.

Due to the current lack of a college league in the industry, esports players must compete as either amateur or professional.

CF1 will bring together teams of students from more than 128 schools across the country for live open league and tournament play.

The CF1 season will include a round-robin style of matches from October through February 2021. Teams will compete against other schools in their region in the game "Valorant." The top teams from each of the four regions will compete in Regional Championships, and winners will move on to compete for the National Championship in April. The grand prize is a \$50,000 scholarship.

"Finding the ideal location to establish Conference One was challenging," said

Anthony Gaud, CEO of G3 Esports, which established and manages Conference One. "We needed a place with a robust technology infrastructure that could handle the demands of major livestreamed events, a highly skilled and adaptable workforce, and an established sports wagering industry. Not many locations offer all of that, but New Jersey has it all. We look forward to collaborating with the NJEDA and other partners throughout the state to grow Conference One while supporting New Jersey's emerging status as the hub of the American esports industry."