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Tucker Roberts was like many boys of his generation in Philadelphia: He gamed.

Little did he know then that, thanks to his family connections, the interest would lead to an early boost for his career.

Roberts, the son of Comcast CEO Brian Roberts and his wife, Aileen, will head the company's new Philadelphia esports team Fusion in the just-launched Overwatch League, a group of city-based teams that will play competitive video games before live arena audiences and be streamed online. On Tuesday, he participated in the Fusion's first media event in Los Angeles, a coming out of sorts for the 27-year-old Comcast scion.

Roberts said in a phone interview that he thought that esports was "the future of sports for millennials" and that after he heard that Comcast Spectacor had secured an Overwatch franchise, "I wanted to be part of it." He will be the Fusion's president.

Backed by some of the biggest pro sports owners in the United States, the league seeks to tap into bounding global popularity of competitive video-gaming that has attracted hundreds of millions of participants.

Esports fans pay to watch the video game competitions on big screens in arenas. Some popular games also can be viewed on television and online.

It's the first significant job at the Philadelphia cable and entertainment for a third generation of the Roberts family that controls Comcast through a block of super-voting shares. Tucker's grandfather Ralph Roberts founded the company in the 1960s with two partners, and his father, Brian, built it into a cable-TV, internet and entertainment giant through relentless acquisitions. Brian gained broad experience in the company's corporate trenches before he was made an executive. Neither of Tucker's two sisters, Sarah and Amanda, works at the company.

The Fusion team itself is owned by Comcast Spectacor, a company unit that owns the Flyers and operates the Wells Fargo Center in South Philadelphia.

Roberts, a 2013 graduate of the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School, initially thought that he would pursue a well-trod career in finance. But the Great Recession made him rethink this ambition. Instead of looking to Goldman Sachs and New York, Roberts said, he looked westward to Silicon Valley, tech, gaming, and entrepreneurship. He had a college internship with video-game maker Activision Blizzard, which owns the Overwatch League, and a post-college job for three years with Electronic Arts, also a game developer in California. He recently had experience working with Comcast's venture arm in the San Francisco area, where he lives.

Roberts joined the Fusion project as a "strategic adviser" in late September after Comcast Spectacor announced it had bought a Philadelphia franchise for the Overwatch League. He has managed the team's day-to-day operations since then, signing players, negotiating initial marketing deals, and launching the brand. Roberts will report to Comcast Spectacor CEO Dave A. Scott.

Though based in Philadelphia, the 12-member Fusion team will play its games this first season in California. The Overwatch teams are expected to relocate to their respective cities — Philadelphia, Boston, New York and others — in later seasons. The Fusion players are living as a group in a big home in the Los Angeles area. Fusion's first game will be Thursday evening and the team is holding a Philadelphia watch event at Wahoo's at 3180 Chestnut St. in West Philadelphia for fans.

As a teen, Roberts said, his favorite video game was Star Wars Galaxies. He still plays games, sometimes on his mobile phone, and says he looks forward to moving back to Philadelphia and the cheese steaks.

As for Brian, an accomplished squash player, “he was not a big gamer,” Tucker said. “He was a competitive guy, though. I love beating him in squash and I am reminding everybody that I can do that now.” – *Philadelphia Inquirer*



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