



For Immediate Release

PROFESSIONAL HOCKEY RETURNING TO PORTLAND

Comcast Spectacor acquires ECHL franchise to play at Cross Insurance Arena

Portland, ME -- June 15, 2017 The Cross Insurance Arena Board of Trustees is excited to announce that professional ice hockey is returning to the Cross Insurance Arena as Comcast Spectacor, the parent company of Spectra, announced today it has purchased the Alaska Aces ECHL franchise and will relocate the team to Portland. The yet-to-be-named team will begin play with the 2018-19 season. The Trustees and Comcast Spectacor, praised the partnership as the most feasible way to return professional ice hockey to Portland.

“We are grateful to Comcast Spectacor for the work they are doing at Cross Insurance Arena and for bringing hockey back to Portland,” said Mitch Berkowitz, Chair, Board of Trustees, Cross Insurance Arena. “This is an exciting time for the Board of Trustees, Cumberland County and hockey fans throughout the region.”

Spectra at the Cross Insurance Arena has been committed to the community since taking over management in 2014, including securing a 10-year partnership with Cross Insurance for the naming rights of the arena. For four months during the winter, the Cross Insurance Arena was a place where High School teams, Men’s leagues and Ice Skating Clubs occupied the building five days a week. Sponsorship sales increased by over 700% and Group Sales increased over 300% since 2014. There have been close to a dozen sold-out events, including Brantley Gilbert, Jeff Dunham, Panic! At the Disco and Phish, which set a record for the highest grossing concession sales in one night at the arena.

“Spectra has made a big impact on the Cross Insurance Arena, which is evident in the quality of shows, the variety of events and their willingness to always go the extra mile to make the experience better for the guests,” added Berkowitz. “In our efforts to work together, the parties quickly recognized the advantages and logical business compatibilities that would support this major initiative.

“This new long-term partnership we are entering with Spectra and Comcast Spectacor shows how committed the company is to Portland and to the success of the Cross Insurance Arena,” Berkowitz added. “They are good community partners and we look forward to many more successes with Spectra.”

The new ECHL franchise will add 36 home regular-season games and potential playoff dates to the Cross Insurance Arena’s schedule. The new franchise will create numerous marketing and sponsorship opportunities for local businesses.

“We are excited to bring ECHL hockey to Portland,” said ECHL Commissioner Brian McKenna. “The city has a long and rich hockey tradition. In addition, Comcast Spectacor has a history in the market and is an ideal partner to reintroduce professional hockey to Southern Maine.”

The Cross Insurance Arena’s Board of Trustees issued an RFP to several potential businesses and individuals to bring a team to Portland. A Strategic Development committee composed of Joe Gray, Jon Jennings, Sue Witonis and Dale Olmstead thoroughly reviewed the RFPs and determined that it was in the best interest of the Arena and the Portland region to move forward and work with Comcast Spectacor.

While Comcast Spectacor will seek an NHL affiliation for the team, it is not anticipated to include prospects whose NHL rights are currently held by the Philadelphia Flyers. The Flyers have an active ECHL affiliation with the Reading Royals that is unaffected by this transaction. The new team’s roster will mirror that of many other ECHL teams in that most of the players will be under contract to the team itself, and will be recruited and signed by the team’s own hockey operations staff. Players will enjoy state-of-the-art locker room and training facilities thanks to an 18-month, \$33 million renovation of Cross Insurance Arena that was completed in 2014.

A formal celebration is being planned in the near future as a joint effort to kick off the arrival of the new team to the Cross Insurance Arena and to encourage additional sponsorships, marketing relationships and fan participation that are critical for the successful operation of this major Portland venue.

About the ECHL

Began in 1988-89 with five teams in four states, the ECHL has grown into a coast-to-coast league with 27 teams in 21 states and one Canadian province as it celebrates its 30th season in 2017-18. There have been 623 players who have started their career in the ECHL have gone on to play in the National Hockey League, including 24 who made their NHL debuts in the 2016-17 season. The ECHL had affiliations with 26 of the 30 NHL teams in 2016-17, marking the 20th consecutive season that the league had affiliations with at least 20 teams in the NHL. Further information on the ECHL is available on its website at ECHL.com.

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