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## THE ALASKA ACES HEADED TO MAINE IN COMCAST SPECTACOR DEAL

The Alaska Aces had better like lobster.

Comcast Spectacor announced it has acquired the Alaska Aces hockey franchise and is moving the team to the Cross Insurance Arena in Portland, Maine. The yet-to-be-renamed team will begin playing in the 2018-19 season.

Comcast Spectator owns Spectra as well as the NHL's Philadelphia Flyers, which will oversee operations minor league team once it gets to Maine.

"This is a great day for sports fans here in Portland," Mike Scanlon, Spectra's Divisional SVP said in a statement. "We're excited about adding 36 great nights of affordable, family-friendly entertainment to an already vibrant event calendar."

According to the Philadelphia Inquirer, the move from Anchorage to Portland is 4,741 miles. That breaks down to a 76-hour and 46-minute drive without stopping, the newspaper found.

The relocation of the franchise will result in 36 regular-season home games and potential playoff dates for Portland's venue. Flyers President Paul Holmgren will serve as the team's governor, and former Flyer Danny Briere will oversee the day-to-day operations of the new club.

"We are excited to reignite the hockey tradition in Portland," said Holmgren. "The Flyers organization has a strong commitment to winning and developing future stars, and we intend to bring that same culture to this franchise. We're also happy to have an opportunity to assist Spectra in its commitment to the Portland region and the Cross Insurance Arena, a great facility that has recently benefited from a major renovation."

Players will enjoy state-of-the-art locker rooms and training facilities thanks to an 18-month, \$33 million renovation of Cross Insurance Arena that was completed in 2014.

While Comcast Spectacor will seek a National Hockey League (NHL) affiliation for the team, it is unlikely to include prospects whose NHL rights are currently held by the Flyers, the statement said. The Flyers have an active minor league affiliation with the Reading Royals, and 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.

In 1977, Comcast Spectacor purchased an AHL expansion franchise to play at the then-brand-new Cumberland County Civic Center. The Maine Mariners were a Flyers affiliate until 1983 and played in Portland through 1992, when they were replaced by the Portland Pirates. The Mariners won the Calder Cup in each of their first two seasons and added a third in 1983-84.

According to the statement, the Flyers for the past four years have run the business operations for the Hartford Wolf Pack, an American Hockey League franchise owned by and affiliated with the New York Rangers. From 1996 to 2009, Comcast Spectacor founded and owned the Philadelphia Phantoms AHL franchise. The team currently plays at the Spectra-managed PPL Center in Allentown, Pennsylvania.

Portland's entry into the ECHL rekindles fierce New England rivalries with previous AHL cities that now compete in the ECHL, including the Manchester Monarchs in New Hampshire and the Worcester Railers in Massachusetts.

Comcast Spectacor will shortly begin the process of hiring a staff, establishing a team website for ticket information, and conducting initial steps that will include naming the team. More information will be announced as it becomes available in the coming weeks.