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AS ESPORTS INDUSTRY GROWS, DOCTORS DEVELOP PROTOCOLS TO MEET UNIQUE NEEDS OF A NEW TYPE OF PROFESSIONAL ATHLETE

From personal training to mental health support, esports athletes receive care to keep them at the top of their game

Orlando, Fla - Esports is shaking up the sports world, selling out stadiums and attracting millions of fans. In fact, the [NBA 2K League](#) is now in its second season and features the NBA 2K video game. As more esports athletes play professionally, doctors are learning more about their unique needs and challenges. Now, [Orlando Health](#) has partnered with [Magic Gaming](#) as the official medical team to the Orlando NBA 2K League team, establishing a new protocol to keep players at the top of their game, both physically and mentally.

“With any emerging sport, medicine has to evolve with it, and it’s important to treat the whole athlete. Professional esports players are prone to musculoskeletal injuries like tendonitis and back issues, and they’re also dealing with intense pressure to perform.” said [Todd Sontag, DO](#), a physician at Orlando Health who is leading Magic Gaming’s care team. “We have specialists ranging from physical therapists and personal trainers to mental health counselors to address any and all concerns.”

As a gamer himself, Sontag is able to relate to players on a personal level. “If professional gaming was an option when I was a kid, that’s probably what I would have wanted to do. It’s great to work with these young men who are doing their dream jobs,” said Sontag. “I’m hoping they can give me some tips along the way so I can compete against my 10-year-old.”

As esports become a bigger part of mainstream culture, Sontag says more people are recognizing just how difficult it is to go pro and how hard players work to get there. “These players are truly athletes. It takes incredible skill to play at a professional level, and they maintain a grueling training schedule that takes a lot of endurance,” said Sontag.

For Brendan "Reid" Hill, his love of video games started around the age of six. He was drafted to Orlando’s NBA 2K League team after competing in a combine against thousands of other prospects. “Being a part of the draft was an incredible experience,” said Hill. “It was in this huge venue, with tons of people and media there. I had no idea it was going to be so big, and it was a little overwhelming walking in and waiting to find out if I was going to be picked to do this as a career.”

Now, at the age of 19, he moved from Tyler, Texas to Orlando to join his team and play for a

championship. The team practices, strategizes and scrimmages against other teams for up to 10 hours a day. "It's a grind, and I just hope that people can see it as a real profession like I do," said Hill.

He says he's grateful that Magic Gaming and Orlando Health are providing the resources to help him keep doing what he loves, and that mental health is just as important to playing well as physical health. "When I get done with a long day I sometimes feel pretty drained," said Hill. "This profession can be pretty stressful, and it's so important to have someone to talk to if there was a problem during the day or just if I need that extra support."

Sontag is hoping more healthcare providers will implement the standard of care being developed in Orlando to treat professional esports athletes nationwide. He will be monitoring Hill and the rest of the Magic Gaming team throughout the season to stave off any injuries, keep them healthy and help them compete at their best against the 20 other teams in the league. The NBA 2K League regular season tipped-off this week and games are streamed live on [Twitch](#).

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Courtesy: Orlando Health

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ABOUT ORLANDO HEALTH

Orlando Health is a \$3.4 billion not-for-profit healthcare organization and a community-based network of hospitals, physician practices and outpatient care centers across Central Florida. The organization is home to the area's only Level One Trauma Centers for adults and pediatrics, and is a statutory teaching hospital system that offers both specialty and community hospitals. More than 2,900 physicians have privileges across the system, which is also one of the area's largest employers with more than 20,000 employees who serve more than 112,000 inpatients, more than 2.4 million outpatients, and more than 10,000 international patients each year. Additionally, Orlando Health provides more than \$450 million in total value to the community in the form of charity care, community benefit programs and services, community building activities and more. Additional information can be found at www.orlandohealth.com.