

NBC Sports Group Media Conference

Thursday, November 18, 2021

Pete Bevacqua

Jon Miller

Press Conference



Shell and Mark Lazarus to really allow us to put our best foot forward and continue this partnership for the next six years and, quite frankly, well beyond that.

With that, I'll turn it over to my colleague, Jon.

JON MILLER: Thanks, Pete. Thanks, everybody, for joining. Today has been a long time in the making. It didn't just happen overnight. Obviously, there's a lot of work that went into it from both the production side led by Pierre Moussa, our brilliant executive producer of Premier League, to our talent, whether it's Rebecca Lowe in the studio or Arla White (phonetic) calling games for us.

We have a wonderful team of people who work day to day with the Premier League who work closely to make this happen, and we're excited about what it means and what it represents.

The fact that we've been able to watch the growth of the sport, you know, firsthand, growth in terms of audience acceptance and where we're taking it to, and I think the Premier League clearly recognized it and saw what the partnership does and what the partnership means.

We have had a great relationship, and as Pete said, we hope it goes for many, many more years to come, and we can't wait.

PETE BEVACQUA: Okay, operator. Sarah, we can go ahead and open it up for questions.

THE MODERATOR: If you would like to ask a question, please signal by pressing star 1 on your telephone key pad. If you are using a speaker phone, please make sure your mute function is turned off to allow yourself signal to reach our equipment.

A voice prompt on your phone line will indicate when your line is open. We ask that you please state your name before posing a question. Again, that is star-1 to ask a question. Then we'll pause just a moment to allow everyone an opportunity to signal for questions.

We'll take our first question.

Q. This is Joe from The Associated Press. Jon, just wondering with this deal how much more of a priority

GREG HUGHES: Thank you, Sarah, and thanks everybody for joining us on short notice today. We're here to talk about, as you all know, the new six-year agreement that NBC Universal has signed with the Premier League, which will take our relationship through 15 years. We're through nine with this season, and the new agreement starts with the August 2022 beginning of the season.

We're going to start out with some opening remarks from NBC Sports Chairman Pete Bevacqua and NBC Sports Jon Miller, so let's go ahead and start. Pete.

PETE BEVACQUA: Thank you, Greg. I appreciate it, and I appreciate everyone joining us. Certainly an exciting day for us at NBC and NBC Sports. To see the continuation of this partnership that has been cultivated over the course of the last nine years was certainly a priority for us, and what we're so proud of is I think it's a testament to the great work that the team has done over the last nine years and the relationships that have been formed between NBC and the Premier League.

Really, when you think about the importance of this deal for us, it's certainly a key move for us at NBC Sports, but really for all of NBC. And whether that is as we move forward with the transition from NBCSN to USA with the advent of Peacock and how the Premier League has been such a powerful element and such a key contributor to the success so far of Peacock, and, obviously, the continuation of the great work that we've done for the Premier League on Telemundo and Universal. This really touches so many aspects and so many different parts of NBC.

This was something that we had signalled internally as a key priority for us to retain the partnership, and I just want to thank the team that's worked on it. You're going to hear from Jon Miller, who has been such a champion of the Premier League internally with NBC and such a key part of our success with the Premier League.

And, also, just to thank the support we received from Jeff



did it take on after you guys lost the NHL? And, also, how important is this deal now in terms of streaming in Peacock, considering the other deals that have been done, you know, with Paramount and ESPN Plus the past year or so?

PETE BEVACQUA: Maybe I'll hop in first and then turn it over to you. I would say, first and foremost, we obviously had a wonderful relationship with the NHL and wish the NHL well going forward, but if we were to dial the clocks back over the course of the last year or so, you know, there were certain partnerships that were an absolute priority for us.

And knowing that this renewal and this moment in time was coming upon us, this was a strategic priority for all of us at NBC. And, absolutely, with the advent of Peacock and the move we've made to support Peacock and the way that sports has performed so well on Peacock, as it's had its growth out of the gate, whether that was what we did in Tokyo with the Olympics, what we did with Notre Dame football when we put the Toledo game, where we've seen other sports, the Premier League has consistently been a driving force on Peacock.

I know that the fact that this is a property that really works so well for all of NBC, whether that's broadcast on NBC, cable, as we make that key transition from NBCSN to USA, and then certainly the power and the impact it's had on Peacock. All of that came together. All of that was aggregated, and this was one that just made all the sense in the world for us to continue forward with.

Jon, please add on, but I just wanted to make sure that was the perspective put out there.

JON MILLER: I think your comments about the NHL are correct. It was a great property. We had a wonderful run with them, and we certainly wish them well. Premier League does a lot of other things for us. The number of games, the number of fixtures and exposures and windows become very important, but I think that our strategy has been from day one, and it's something that we've been very consistent about, is that we are the network of the Premier League. We are not the network of soccer.

It's been very important to us, and it's been important to the Premier League, to know that we put them on equal footing with all of our other major properties. As a result, you know, they saw that, and that's been a big point of emphasis and focus for us.

And while we talk about it, we've actually lived it, and we've seen the way they've grown their audience. When we took over the Premier League in 2013 they reached about 13

million viewers. At the end of their first three-year cycle they were up to 39 million viewers per year, and that number continues to grow.

I think that's what we've shown that we could do, and we're having one of our best seasons ever. (Drop in sound) is key and they see that.

Q. Congrats on the deal. Can you guys hear me?

PETE BEVACQUA: I can hear you.

Q. Congrats on the deal. I think the first question is one that obviously you've seen a lot of people are already asking, which is is there anything in this deal specifying whether all of the games will be on Peacock in addition to cable?

JON MILLER: Yeah, I would say that's an easy answer. These games it's so important for us and the Premier League, we'll continue to balance games throughout NBC, USA, and Peacock.

I think it's very important for the Premier League that there was a strong linear presence. That will continue. That's critical to them. That's critical to us.

I think one of the great advantages we have at NBC is that we have this platform flexibility. We have such key platforms in broadcast, cable, and streaming. It sets us up well for the future, and part of a great relationship is working together to make sure that we position those games properly each year.

I think that formula as it comes together, can change each year, the balance of games on those three platforms can change each year, but it's absolutely our intent to maintain a strong linear presence for these games on NBC and USA, while, of course, also delivering a strong series of match-ups on Peacock, as we have in the immediate past since the launch of Peacock.

PETE BEVACQUA: Yeah, you won't see much difference in terms of the number of linear exposures. We will be at roughly the same level of games. The games that have been on NBCSN will now be on USA. You'll still see the same number of games on NBC. You actually may see an increase in the number of games on NBC.

Fans will be able to watch them on multiple platforms, but there will be no difference, and certainly it will be -- it will work out very well for fans that way.

Q. I don't know if my line is still open. I know I've had a connection issue. Can you hear me still?



JON MILLER: Yeah, it is. Yep.

PETE BEVACQUA: We can hear you.

Q. I think the way I meant to ask the question was this: The games on broadcast NBC are simulcast on Peacock. The games that are on cable right now are not simulcast on Peacock. Is that going to stay the same, or is that going to change?

PETE BEVACQUA: That does not change. Those games that are exclusive to our cable and satellite partners will remain that way, and the games that are on Peacock, as well as on broadcast, will -- the broadcast games will be simulcast on Peacock.

Q. I think that is the main question that I have for now. Thanks. Good afternoon. Wanted to get a sense looking broadly at soccer. A number of your competitors were also seeking the rights or building up other soccer rights, both global rights and domestic rights. What is sort of the broader thinking from your standpoint now that you've got this locked down long-term about the MLS, maybe some other global entities in terms of building a broader critical mass of soccer rights?

PETE BEVACQUA: I think Jon said it well -- go ahead, Jon.

JON MILLER: Yeah, we look at all opportunities when they come up. There are a lot of very strong competitive soccer offerings out there that we have looked at. It was our goal to make sure that we got the number one soccer property renewed, and the Premier League is clearly the best property in all of soccer.

And now NBC, and as the Premier League, Telemundo has the Premier League and the World Cup, so we feel we are very well-positioned when it comes to soccer. I think that we'll look at opportunities when they come up, and there will be -- there are a lot of other properties that are on shorter cycles in the Premier League that are only on three-year cycles.

So we will clearly take a look at some of those, but our feeling is it was important for us to have the best of the best. You know, the Premier League, Sunday Night Football, we think we have the best package in golf, we have the Olympics, we have the Kentucky Derby. We like having the best properties and the best of the best, and this was consistent with that strategy, so that's kind of how we look at that.

Q. Thanks very much. Congratulations. As you noted before, NBC does a great job building up fan bases, particularly for sports which in the U.S. might not have gotten as much attention. You did it for the NHL, with Premier Lacrosse, and now the Premier League. Was that a big factor when sticking with NBC?

PETE BEVACQUA: Yeah, Michael, I would say it is -- sorry, Jon. I've done it again.

JON MILLER: That's okay.

PETE BEVACQUA: Certainly, you know, I think one of the elements that we deliver so well on is building that fan base. Again, we're not trying to be in sports all things for all people. When you talk about the power of Sunday Night Football and having the number one show in Primetime now for ten years in a row and well on our way to the 11th when you talk about the power of the Olympics.

I think what we're able to do and what is a strategic priority for us is bringing the entire universe of NBC behind these properties, so it's not just the sports group, but it's how we all come together, what we call kind of a symphonic approach through symphony and bring attention to these great properties.

I think Jon said it well. When you see the growth of the viewing audience here in the U.S. for the Premier League over the course of the nine years that we've been in business with them, that should continue well into these next six years.

I think the fact that we focus on the Premier League, that we treat that like we treat the NFL, like we treat Notre Dame Football, like we treat the Olympics to grow the audience, what we're doing with Fan Fest around the country, some new ideas we'll initiate over the new relationship with the Premier League.

I think that was very important to them as they made their decision to continue with us.

JON MILLER: One of the elements that we did when we first got the Premier League is we created a new event in Championship Sunday. The Premier League on the final Sunday of the season has all ten fixtures taking place at the same time. NBC Universal was the only company that could accommodate showing all ten of those games on different platforms, which really, you know, caught the attention of Premier League owners.

I think it's what really caused, for example, Major League Baseball to go to the situation where they -- on the last day of the season they have all those games taking place at



once. Those are unique opportunities that we're fortunate enough that we can bring that kind of thing to bear.

Now on that Championship Sunday we still put the majority games on television, and we'll still have the other games available on Peacock, but we're able to expose that in a way that really blows the Premier League out, which they're very happy with.

Q. For Jon and Pete, how would you go forward -- or what words would you use to describe international soccer's growth over the last few years in the U.S.?

JON MILLER: Well certainly it's become -- young know, it's a very young sport and it's a very hot sport, and I think we've shown that as our country has grown and more and more people come here from other places and fall in love with the sport and bring their passionate fan bases with them, I think it's much more accepted.

I know that I've worked for NBC for a long time. You go down into Midtown Manhattan, and you used to see people walking around with MLB jerseys or NBA jerseys. Now it's not uncommon to see Arsenal, Liverpool, Manchester City, Tottenham jerseys just at the same level. I think that the game has grown a lot.

I think one of the unique things that we've learned is by putting the games on Saturday mornings, we created a new day part that people had not used before, and I can't tell you the number of people who will tell me or write me and tell me that they sit down and watch the 7:30 game or the 10:00 fixture with their kids or with their grandchildren, and it's given families a new way to connect.

We're very, very excited and proud of that too.

Q. What word would you use to describe that?

PETE BEVACQUA: I think Jon said it well. Were you following up with me?

Q. Yeah. I just wanted to know how would you describe the growth from watching it and the other corporate sponsors and the outstanding growth of soccer. I started to follow it myself. There's friends of mine, I see the day parties, I see what you mean, and I'm wondering like what...

PETE BEVACQUA: I think this is a reason that it's continued to be a priority for us. Its continued growth and its continued acceptance, you know, the broad demographic that it brings in, how it's really kind of a sport in general that continues to grow in the U.S.

I think there's no reason that should slow down, and we'll do everything we can in partnership with the Premier League to continue to contribute to that growth. I think if you just look at -- if you go to one of our Fan Fests like the one we had just a few short weeks ago in Los Angeles where thousands of people line up early in the morning, and there was one of these days in L.A. where the weather wasn't perfect, but people were waiting to get in and enjoying the day, and to see that audience in the U.S. rallying around the Premier League, I don't think that's something you saw 10, 15, 20 years ago, and that's encouraging.

We feel strongly that that will continue to grow.

JON MILLER: I think there are two other points, Pete, that are important. No one in America has a hometown team, so everybody has to go find a team to root for.

Early on I think we were excited about trying to get people to associate with a team and help them find a team or find a way to increase their fandom, and the other thing was Ted Lasso.

It started off as a marketing campaign for its first year with the Premier League in 2015, and we utilized Ted Lasso in our first season, and then we utilized it again the third season. We knew how it resonated with fans and resonated teams and even resonated internationally.

Now we're excited to see that Ted Lasso and the Premier League have come to an agreement where you're going to start to see Premier League marks in the third season of Ted Lasso.

So for us it's those kind of things that help grow fan engagement and fan affinity, and that translates into viewership and success.

Q. Apologies if this was asked earlier. I just jumped on. This is for either or both of you guys. How surprised are you, if at all, that you ended up as the exclusive solo rights holder as opposed to sharing the deal with another entity or entities?

PETE BEVACQUA: Jon, I can start, and then you can follow up if you will. It was important for us. We made it known early on to the Premier League that exclusivity was critical for us, Richard. We wanted to do everything we can to retain the exclusive nature of the partnership.

We thought it was important, and quite frankly, why it was so important for us is because of the ability to spread these matches out on NBC, USA, and Peacock, and having the power of the full schedule is really what makes this such a



wonderful partnership for us.

We let that be known to the Premier League. Obviously, that made sense for them. We think putting the full power of NBCU behind this and continuing to grow the sport, I think our track record of success there over the last nine years speaks volumes, and I think the Premier League and their executives and their ownership group felt compelled by that.

That was a key part of this for us.

Jon, you may have something to add.

JON MILLER: When we first acquired the Premier League for the 2013-2014 season they had been split among three partners. They were on ESPN, FOX, and Uni Vision. While those entities did a good job, it was not a priority for any of them, and we showed the Premier League that we were going to make the Premier League a priority.

We came to them with a plan and a mission to do that, and they saw the resulting increase in ratings, increase in value for the franchises, increase in kit sponsorships, you name it. Then, obviously, they saw the increase in revenues in their second deal, and they have seen it here.

It's not a secret that there were others that wanted to partner with us, and while we were flattered, we had made the decision early on that for us it was an all or nothing proposition. There are very few sports -- in fact, none of the major U.S. sports any longer are just with one entity.

Everything is shared, whether the NFL, the NBA, Major League Baseball, or the NHL. The Premier League is unique in the way that their fixtures are set up and the way their business model is done that we felt it was important and critical to them to be with one partner and one voice.

The power of NBC to promote them on our different platforms, I don't think anybody could have equalled the level of promotion and showcasing that we're able to do for them, and I think the Premier League felt that as well.

Q. I had one question. We and others have reported that the price you're paying is nearly triple what you were paying in the previous deal with the Premier League. What is the rationale behind paying that much more? Is soccer three times more valuable than it was in 2015?

JON MILLER: I would say that's not accurate. You know, certainly the value has gone up. The price has gone up. I think that's because the property has proven itself to be incredibly valuable in the U.S.

We had a range of a rights fee that we felt comfortable committing to this property. Obviously that was thought out on our part. This has fallen in that range, and we're comfortable moving forward because we know that this will continue to be a success for our company, will continue to be a success on NBC, on USA, and on Peacock.

It fires on all cylinders. It helps us in all of those areas, and that's why this was a real strategic priority for us. Because not only do we love the property, but it also works for us strategically, it works for us financially, and we feel very confident that that will continue to be the case.

PETE BEVACQUA: Right. So for us it's got a strong advertising base. Our sales teams have done a tremendous job bringing people into the Premier League. The audience is hugely desirable, so that -- when you control it exclusively, that works. It's also very important for all of our cable and satellite partners to have so that becomes important, and then it's become a big driver as well for Peacock. On all of those different levels, it justified the investment.

Q. Congrats on the deal. In terms of the threat of the other platforms and companies getting it, did you guys feel -- how are you going into this? Did you expect this result? What was your level of confidence?

PETE BEVACQUA: You never want to take anything for granted, that's for sure, and Jon knows because Jon and I have talked probably 20 times a day for the past six months. We were going to make sure we were prepared. We were going to make sure we could put our best foot forward.

We knew we had a great history of success with the Premier League. We also knew we couldn't rest on our laurels. We knew this was going to be an incredibly competitive process.

I think that's a testament to the Premier League, and quite frankly, it's proof of the really great job that the NBC team has done cultivating this property in the U.S. over the last nine years. We went into this not taking anything for granted, being fully prepared, putting our best foot forward and being aggressive.

We knew we were going to have to be aggressive strategically, financially, putting a good plan in place in front of the Premier League, committing to using all of our resources to continue to grow the sport here in the U.S.

And, you know, thanks in such a large part to the great people on our team, starting first and foremost with Jon.



We had a nine-year head start of that great track record and building a wonderful relationship with the Premier League, and did that help? Of course, it did.

But we still had to be super competitive to make sure that we got this done. Jon, please add on.

JON MILLER: Well, I think what was interesting, you're right, you don't take anything for granted in this business. I've been fortunate to be part of a lot of different deals, and so you have to really listen and listen to the people that you are working with.

There were nine different entities that came to the table that were interested in acquiring Premier League rights as of last week when the initial bids were submitted, so we knew we had our hands full.

We were very fortunate that we work for a company that was very supportive all the way to the very, very top of our company. To have that kind of support makes a big difference, and I think the Premier League saw the level of support that we knew we could have, and not just financial support, but it's the marketing support, it's the fan engagement, it's the work that Jenny Storms and the marketing team does, the way they promote it.

They saw Sunday Night Football this past week. They saw multiple promos for this week's Liverpool-Arsenal match reaching 20 million people. That's a huge thing for them.

The other thing I know that's important to the Premier League is that our soccer message is not diluted in any way. That if we're going to promote the sport, that they're the ones that will be the beneficiary, and we capitalize on that, and we drove that home in every conversation and every kind of marketing pitch and conversation that we had with them. I think it paid off.

I think the club owner, the shareholders, and the club owners recognize that, and I think that's why they eventually came to the decision that they did.

Q. In follow-up, when you did the NHL deal -- I know you guys ended up making a sincere offer to NHL. When you looked at your budgets, how much did the Premier League have to do with your decisions in terms of what you are willing to offer for the NHL?

PETE BEVACQUA: Andrew, I would tell you we always have your priorities. You always have to make smart decisions. You can't chase after everything. That's not our approach. We have to chase after the properties that we feel position us the most for success, and where we know we can do the best job for the partnerships.

All I'll say is I'll kind of repeat myself that retaining the Premier League was a key strategic priority for us. It was something that we very much wanted to get done, and that starts at the Jeff Shell, Mark Lazarus level. All of us really wanted to make sure we could get this deal done.

We're delighted and looking forward to continuing to do the best we can for the Premier League over the course of the next six years.

JON MILLER: Well said.

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