

NBC Sports Group Media Conference

Wednesday, July 24, 2024

Molly Solomon Snoop Dogg Mike Tirico Press Conference



with "Gold Zone" anchored by Scott Hanson and company.

And on Peacock we're also going to have all of these contributors, plus Leslie Jones is going to be joining us for social coverage, and she's coming the second week of the Games to bring it on home.

Also, of course, joining us in prime time is a man who needs no introduction, Snoop Dogg. His general love of the Olympics and respect for the athletes has been shining bright for months, and now here in the host city, I can't wait for you to hear about his experiences so far in Paris. We know that viewers can't wait to see his daily adventures here in Paris.

Really, that's enough from me. I think you want to hear from two other guys, Mike Tirico and Snoop Dogg. So let's get started with your questions.

CHRIS McCLOSKEY: Thank you. Depending upon where you are, good morning, good afternoon, and good evening, and thank you for joining us today. In a moment, we'll hear from our three speakers, NBC Olympics and Paralympics executive producer Molly Solomon, our prime time in Paris and daytime host Mike Tirico, and our prime time correspondent, Snoop Dogg.

Molly will make opening remarks, and then we'll open it up for questions. Now I'll turn it over to Molly Solomon.

MOLLY SOLOMON: Thanks, Chris. Hello from Paris. After years of planning, it's just so amazing to think that the Opening Ceremony is just two days away and that the Olympic competition is actually already happening right now.

Mike Tirico, who is here with us, took us on the air two hours ago on USA Network and Peacock, and we welcomed viewers to really what promises to be one of the most spectacular Olympic Games ever, and we're here to showcase all of it for the American audience with more than 7,000 hours of coverage.

As we've been saying for more than a year, all the best content will be live across the country on NBC in daytime, and we're re-imagining the prime-time show to provide the in-depth storytelling about the best events of the day, and Peacock has everything, all 329 medal events, plus replays and all the original programming we've been talking about and so much more.

As we've also said, we've taken a really different approach to these Games by bringing in some nontraditional voices with expert communicators to provide their perspective on Paris 2024: Kelly Clarkson and Peyton Manning on the Opening Ceremony, Jimmy Fallon on the closing, watch parties with podcaster Alex Cooper, and the most comprehensive whip-around show ever in Olympic history

Q. Molly, we'll start with you. Two years ago at the Winter Olympic Games, you made the call to have all the play-by-play and the color commentary people not go to Beijing because of issues with the Chinese government, other things too, and do it from the NBC Sports studios in Stamford, Connecticut. It looks like the majority of play-by-play people and color commentary people are doing the same thing again. There are some play-by-play people that will be in Paris the entire time, for gymnastics, for swimming and so forth. Why that? Why this move? Given the fact the pandemic is over, it must be easier to go to Paris rather than Beijing, why that determination?

MOLLY SOLOMON: Actually, our mix is the same as it was in Rio way back in 2016. You're right that COVID prevented us from sending a lot of our commentators to Beijing, but we're back with so many of the popular sports. We've got play-by-play and analysts here. We have nearly -- I would say nearly 70 commentators and announcers on the ground, plus we have reporters able to go to any sport and cover any sport that happens.

So we're really excited about everybody we've got here. It's, like I said, almost 100 announcers on the ground here in Paris.

Q. Another one for Molly. Molly, you took this role in November of 2019, and we obviously know what



happened after that with COVID and delayed games and higher security around games. How much more has this experience felt like maybe what you thought this job might feel like when you first took it back in 2019?

MOLLY SOLOMON: I couldn't be more excited about Paris, and what I love about working on the Olympics is every time you start to begin on a new city and a new four-year cycle, it's a blank slate.

So when we realized we had Paris 2024, the first thing we thought about, how can we take advantage of the time zone and show all the most popular sports live on NBC in the daytime?

And you see that on our coverage on NBC and Peacock. We'll start right out of the "Today" show at 9:00 and go all the way to 6:00 Eastern with live sports across the board.

Then, of course, there's Paris. I think you're really going to see Paris interwoven in everything we do. You harken back to some Games of old, and what I remember, particularly in Beijing, London, I could go all the way back to Barcelona when I started, and the host city was always the co-star. That's where we're elevating Paris, back to that point, and we just can't wait.

This job is everything I hoped for in 2019, and I just can't wait for the audience to experience what NBC Olympics has planned.

Q. Hi, I don't mean to ignore the others, but I had a question for Molly as well. You talked a bit about how you're going to differentiate the prime-time broadcast from the daytime live showings throughout by making a more produced situation in storytelling. What's the situation going to be for the Opening Ceremonies? Are you going to do just a strict run of the Opening Ceremony? Are you concerned that not as many people would want to watch it in the evening because it's been on in the afternoon?

MOLLY SOLOMON: We love what we've done showing the live ceremony in the afternoon, but if you're a huge fan of the Olympics and if you're available in the afternoon, it's going to be there for you live. But a lot of people are on vacation, they're at work during the day, they don't have access to be able to watch it. So of course we're going to package it again in prime time.

When you're live, this is a movable feat. The parade is continuing live on the air. It's really hard to include some elements -- for example, we're going to have Maria Taylor on the U.S. boat, so we'll be able to include even more of

her interviews with the U.S. Team, for example.

We've got some special storytelling planned, but I can't give away those surprises. So, yes, I would say that the prime-time presentation is going to be enhanced. I'd watch it twice.

Q. My question is for Snoop. Snoop, let's say there was an Olympic event for rapping. Who would be four American rappers you'd take with you to represent the U.S. for the Olympic Games? And that could be from any era.

SNOOP DOGG: That's a great question. This is rap Olympics you're talking about, right?

Q. Yes.

SNOOP DOGG: I definitely would take Eminem. Got to have that global experience. Then I definitely would take Rakim from the old school. Then I would go grab a female, I would grab Queen Latifah because that's where I've got some loyalty. And naturally I've got to take Snoop Dogg. Come on, man, what are we talking about? What do you mean, dream team, let's go.

Q. Question for Snoop. Can I ask you, just I think people -- some people who don't know you are probably surprised to see you covering sports and covering the Olympics. Have you done anything to kind of train for this? Have you talked to anyone who's done it before to get some tips? Tell me about your preparation for prime time.

SNOOP DOGG: My preparation for prime time is being me. Google me. Look me up, dog. I've done fighting a bit. I've done sporting events. This is what I do. I've been doing this since y'all have been goldfish. What they're going to find out is I know the sport, I know the angle, I know the conversations. Tune in so you can be a part of it.

MOLLY SOLOMON: I've got to jump in. Snoop got here ten days before the Opening Ceremonies, and I've seen his schedule. He's been at the team performance center, meeting athletes, creating deep relationships. So next week he'll be able to communicate with all of them, be on the ground with them.

But you've got to tell them what you've been working on.

SNOOP DOGG: Just so you know, I've been sliding into the practice facilities with different teams, whether it was judo, weightlifting, 3-on-3 basketball, fencing. I'm one of those individuals that likes to get involved. Not only do I communicate and talk with them, I may try the event.



(Indiscernible) me learning the backstory of these athletes and their families, and then learning the backstory of some of these events, these sporting events I have no clue about but learning and loving them at the same time.

It's going to be a great experience because the way I speak it, you tend to want to pay attention to it because it's going to be something different, and it's going to be a little bit more insightful because I have spent time with these athletes and some of their family members as well.

You can't type that fast.

Q. My question is for Snoop Dogg. I was wondering how the hip-hop now got into the Games because there hasn't been any (indiscernible) for lots of years, I think. And now we have you, Snoop, carrying the Olympic torch, MC Solaar carrying the Olympic torch, Flavor Flav pushing the U.S. water polo team. What's your opinion on that? Why has it become so big in hip-hop? Have you been in contact with Flavor Flav? Will you give him a call or something? Is there anything planned?

SNOOP DOGG: Just so you know, entertainment and sports go hand for hand. So a lot of times, a lot of these entertainers dream of being athletes, and a lot of those athletes dream of being entertainers. So when we come together, we hang out, we chill, we enjoy each other's company.

When it comes to hip-hop in the Olympics, I believe that hip-hop has always been a part of the Olympics. It's just now being recognized because it's global. Like breakdancing is in the Olympics this year, and it's on a global scale because breakdancing is one of the first elements of hip-hop.

So hip-hop and the Olympics have always had a great relationship. Now is the time because the world that we're living in now, a lot of the people that are in the top positions in their country were raised off of hip-hop. So hip-hop is a part of their life, so it makes sense for it to be connected to the Olympics.

And what's cooler than hip-hop in the Olympics? I mean, it is what it is. It's peanut butter and jelly, you know what I'm talking about? Over here it's coffee and biscuits. That's what that is. It's a great mix.

Q. And what about Flavor Flav?

SNOOP DOGG: Flavor Flav, that's my homeboy. We've got a spot together in Vegas. We stayed two blocks from

each other. He's with the water polo team, he's handling that, making sure they're underwater and boogying. I'm handling the track and field and other events.

What we're going to do is spread ourselves around so we are making sure that every athlete in every section of the Olympics has attention, and we want to pay attention to everybody. We don't want to leave nobody behind.

So while he's over there doing that, I might be over there with volleyball, with weightlifting. We want to make sure we're touching all the athletes and their families because this is a hell of an experience for people who have been waiting for four years to get here. So it's more about them than about us. We're just here to cover.

Q. My question is for Snoop Dogg. I know you just said that Flavor Flav is over covering water polo. I was curious if you or him would be going over to hang out with the swimmers and if you guys might be getting in the pool. Just curious about that.

SNOOP DOGG: I'm supposed to get a visit from one of my friends, you know him as Aquaman, but some of them call him Michael Phelps. Me and Michael Phelps have a session we may do where I may jump in the pool and learn how to do the 25 meters, something to that effect.

Like I said, I'm an athlete. One thing about me, when I'm around these Olympians, I feel like I'm just as good as them or might give it a chance. So I'll be trying it.

MOLLY SOLOMON: As you know, the USA-Australia rivalry is one of the fiercest of the Games. We can't wait to see what happens night one of swimming, and I wouldn't be surprised if we saw Snoop out there.

SNOOP DOGG: And me and Russell Crowe got a little wager. USA all day, baby.

Q. This is for Mike. Snoop's going to jump in the pool, he's been playing some 3-on-3. Any chance you're getting out there and showing your skills with some of the Olympic sports?

SNOOP DOGG: Come on, Mike.

MIKE TIRICO: I'm inspired by a lot of things Snoop does. At 57, I'm not inspired by trying to be an athlete again. Better leave that all to Snoop.

In all seriousness, spending time around Snoop at the track and field trials and in the buildup to this, it's so genuine and so real, which is what he is, and I think viewers are going to see just a different side of the



athletes, the sports, and the places he goes to.

If you think about bringing the world together, that's what the Olympics are about, the opportunity to see things through a different light, through a different set of glasses.

Snoop brings dedication and passion to everything he does and world-class execution, and I think you're going to see that through this process. I can't tell you how excited all of us are and how energized we have been from having Snoop around our group as we've prepared and then arrived here in Paris.

It's going to be a great time, and we are just happy to have him. I'm going to leave everything athletic to him.

Q. Just wondering, Mike, relative to the U.S. men's basketball, they beat South Sudan by a point. They struggled also against Germany. Are we going to see more attention brought to that team? I think the idea was that they're going to cruise, just as the women may. So expectations for higher viewing on basketball given the results of the exhibition tour?

MIKE TIRICO: Well, I think you start with the name value of the players, and I would gather that you're probably never going to see in a significant tournament setting LeBron, Steph, Kevin Durant, Tatum, et cetera, on the same team. So I think just the presence, especially of those veteran guys, heighten the awareness coming into this Olympic cycle.

Those exhibition games opened everyone's eyes to what the basketball world knows and has been saying for years, that the gap between the U.S. and the rest of the world is smaller, from Doncic not here, but Jokic, Shai Gilgeous-Alexander. International stars are some of the best players in the NBA. It's no surprise now that those teams have gotten deeper and better.

Maybe South Sudan was a wake-up call to this group, which has happened in prior exhibition runs up to Olympic Games, but it also might be eye opening to the rest of the world that the USA is not this undefeated behemoth that it was from the Dream Team days.

SNOOP DOGG: Remember when the Dream Team was formed, in those days of the Olympics, there was probably two players from across the water that was in the NBA. Now there's 40-something players in the NBA as we speak. So what that means is there's more competition coming from over the water, there's more players that are All-Stars that are from different countries. When you get three or four of them on one team, then you can have the access of actually knocking off an American team because you've got

All-Stars on your team.

So the surface has changed as far as global approach with NBA basketball. There's so many superstars that aren't from America that, when you put them against America, it's sort of kind of even because there's talent everywhere now.

MIKE TIRICO: You're right, and we're lucky in America because the best league in a lot of those major sports is in our backyard, and the aspirational part -- that's why the Dream Team is one of the great teams in the history of any sport because not only were they terrific and dominant, they also helped open the door for the globalization of the NBA.

And the late commissioner David Stern and current commissioner Adam Silver have helped follow those international ties. Like Snoop said, every team has an international player on their roster. Most of them are significant contributors. You look at the Canadian roster, they're very good.

To your point, I'm sure basketball will tell its own story in terms of ratings and everyone watching, but no guaranteed big victory part of this is something that will keep everyone watching when Team USA plays in men's basketball.

SNOOP DOGG: One thing about a gold medal, you've got to earn it. They don't give you those. I tried to get one, they wouldn't give it to me.

Q. This question is for Snoop. I want to ask you, I might be asking something that might have been asked already, but I was wondering, I spoke with you a few months ago before your junket for Underdog, and I remember I asked you about representation for the Olympics. I'm wondering, with you being the torch bearer, what does that mean for you when it comes to representation, and what does it mean for you to really -- to be out there in the forefront for the United States and being the face for it?

SNOOP DOGG: First of all, what's crackalackin'? It says a whole lot about America, man, about as far as where we're at in this world, like what do we want to present? And then at the same time, it says a lot about France as far as connecting the dots and allowing me to do it.

So I look at this as a prestigious honor and something that I truly respect. I would have never dreamed of nothing like this. I'm going to be on my best behavior. I'm going to be on my best athleticism. I'll be able to breathe slow to walk fast and hold the torch with a smile on my face because I realize how prestigious this event is.

I was thinking about Muhammad Ali, when Muhammad Ali was holding it, that was just -- it was emotional for all of us to see that, to see the champ holding that torch and walking it up there. That's what this feels like to me, you know, my own version of it.

I don't want to get too emotional, but I know that this is special, and I really appreciate it. I'm going to show you why they made me the man to do it. I'm going to put all of the resources and all of the energy around it with love, peace, and harmony because that's what the Olympics is about. I feel like that's why they chose me because that's what I represent: Peace, love, and unity.

Thank you, brother. I'll have to pay you later for calling in. I appreciate it.

(Laughter.)

Q. This question is also for Snoop. I'm curious about your approach in engaging with Gen-Z audiences for the Olympics. Specifically, I wonder if you have any plans to collab with some of the influencers that NBC is sending over to Paris.

SNOOP DOGG: Yeah, but remember I've got kids that are Gen-Z. Remember me, I've got a house full of them, and then I've got a football league of Gen-Zs and grandkids. This is my world. I love speaking their language and getting on the same page with them.

I'm an old dog that can learn new tricks. Whenever I'm with that generation, I let them give me too legit information, and I take it and make it work. So I'm looking forward to working with whoever NBC puts me in front of. It doesn't matter if it's athletes, Gen-X, I'm here to do whatever I've got to do. Follow the Dogg, baby.

Q. This one's for Mike. As the prime-time host, you are essentially the chief storyteller in this thing. As Molly mentioned, the best Olympics are ones where the host city is a supporting character, and obviously Paris is a beautiful one. After two Olympic Games that was maybe harder to explore through the cities for various reasons, how different, if at all, do you expect your job to be this time around?

MIKE TIRICO: Well, I can go walk for a cup of coffee. I couldn't do that in Beijing. So we'll start there.

It is so different. I can't tell you how different it is. And it's a shame because I think Tokyo could have been an incredible Olympic experience, and Beijing was, the prior time with the Summer Games. It's unfortunate that it

wasn't with the Winter Games for a variety of reasons.

Paris is one of two things. You've either been here and can't wait to come back, or you've never been here, and you're dying to get here. As someone who's in the category of having been here a few times, especially in the lead-up, there's nothing like walking around Paris, and because they've made the choice to put the venues right next to some of the iconic spots.

Things you'll probably see in the Opening Ceremony on Friday, Paris is just a massive co-star in these Games. Nothing is bigger than the athletes and the competition, but Paris is pretty darn close second to that, I'll tell you.

It's going to add to it, and I think the athletes will feel it. There will be a lot of American fans here, which hasn't happened the last few games. Remember Rio and the Zika virus. Pyeongchang was hard for folks to get to. You mentioned the last two, Tokyo and Beijing.

So for American athletes, athletes from around the world, they'll feel the energy of the fans, they'll feel the passion of Paris, and I think it will lead us to a Games that may rival London in 2012 for excitement and enthusiasm. People still talk about those Games and how great they were. Everything is in position for that to happen here this time around. I hope it does.

MOLLY SOLOMON: Again, I would just add this opening ceremony is going to showcase the city. We were just in a press briefing, and really there's 12 themes, there's 12 stages. It's all across four miles of the Seine River, and the whole Opening Ceremony is embedded in the heart of the city.

So we're going to kick off with almost a tutorial, a very artistic tutorial on the city, and it promises to be just magnificent.

Q. Molly, are you able to comment on any speculation around Celine Dion taking part in the Olympic Ceremonies of any kind?

MOLLY SOLOMON: We're hearing all the same rumors, and we're so excited to see if they're true. We're all waiting. They've kept all of the details very close to the vest, and we're waiting to find out too. We're reading your publication and everything else, but we're very excited to see what happens.

CHRIS McCLOSKEY: Thank you, everyone, for joining us today.

A reminder our live coverage of the Opening Ceremony

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

begins Friday at noon Eastern on NBC and Peacock, 1:00 p.m. on Telemundo, and prime-time coverage begins at 7:30 p.m. Eastern and Pacific on NBC and Peacock.

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