

NBC Sports Group Media Conference

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Mark Lazarus

Molly Solomon

Rick Cordella

Press Conference



In London, for the first time, we streamed all the competition live, and it was a big step. It was actually a bold step at that time. And we're taking those big, bold steps right now with Peacock as well. The Olympics remain our billion-dollar lab as we push streaming to the next level.

At this point, we've got more than 8 billion streaming minutes and counting with still plenty of time to continue to grow big numbers on that. And speaking of billions, our ad sales has been very strong. I'm sure many of you saw Mark Marshall's note about this being our biggest ad sales total ever. And we're very proud of that. And our marketing partners are being rewarded for their trust and belief in the Olympic Games and in NBCUniversal.

The rest of our companies also benefitting in a very big way, a halo effect -- the "Today Show," "Nightly News," both broadcasting from here in Paris have been ranked number one each day, and they're showing big advantages over their closest competitor.

This doesn't happen without a dedicated team that Rick and Molly lead, nearly 3,000 people from engineering to production to all of our announcers who are incredibly enthused about the game. I'm sure all of you can see that coming through our shows.

And with that, let me turn it over to the president of NBC Sports, Rick Cordella.

RICK CORDELLA: Thanks, Mark. I want to echo what you said before. All of our success we've had thus far wouldn't be possible without the tireless work of our teams both here in Paris and across the Atlantic to Stanford.

Mark also mentioned the success we've had in different day parts. It's great to see in the afternoon, Paris Prime, as we've called it, where we've seen enormous numbers. Our strategy of making everything available live in the afternoon with fully produced prime time quality productions across our widest platforms, the biggest events, it's something we've never done before.

Tuesday's early afternoon U.S. coverage of women gymnastics averaged nearly 13 million viewers across NBC and Peacock, with the majority of that not including the 34

THE MODERATOR: Thanks for joining us for our Paris Olympic call. We're joined by three of our executives, Mark Lazarus, Chairman NBCUniversal Media Group; Rick Cordella, President, NBC Sports -- both are here in Paris; and in Stanford, Molly Solomon, Executive Producer and President of NBC Olympics Production.

MARK LAZARUS: We are off to a great start. I know we've been following the numbers. I hope you have, too, and you've seen the most recent numbers from two nights ago. We'll get last night's numbers in the next few hours.

We're averaging 34 million viewers for our Paris prime time and U.S. prime time coverage, plus all of our platforms. That's up 79 percent from Tokyo through the same point.

Clearly, the Olympics are back, and it reminds me and those of us who were in London in 2012 of the enthusiasm that the crowds have here and what the excitement is at home. And we're seeing that through our streaming, through linear and through social media platforms that has further enhanced the reach of the games here in Paris.

We've had great performances from Team USA, and this has been a spectacular host city. We've benefited from showing everything live -- and Rick will talk more about that in just a minute.

Our marketing and promotion was targeted. It was about the athletes. It was about the city. It was about Team USA and it has become and it is incredibly impactful. Our NBC stations have been delivering big numbers for all the athletic competition, as well as their local news and all of their shoulder programming.

Of course, Peacock and our streaming operation is running at full steam. We're offering an excellent user experience. It's what we anticipated. It's what we were striving to do, and we are back doing that.



million number we issued late last night, happened before the Paris Prime began. That's among our biggest weekday daytime Olympic events ever.

Sunday's U.S. men's basketball game on NBC and Peacock that started at 11:50 a.m. East Coast time averaged 11 million viewers.

So maybe not unsurprising people want to watch live, and they're doing it in big numbers. But they're also still watching live in prime time. Through Tuesday night, the Summer Olympics on NBC only has been the number one show for 141 consecutive summer Olympic nights. That dates back to the 1988 Seoul Olympics.

If you look at it as a whole, approximately two-thirds of our viewership has come at prime time even though all the action happened live during the day. And Peacock has been a huge part of that viewership. We've seen numbers in our releases, you've seen numbers on our releases, on the competition days we're regularly hitting 5 million streaming viewers. And they're coming from everything for everything from live events to live shows, like "Gold Zone" and more.

What's more important to the viewer is what we're seeing across all of our platforms -- high quality, best-in-class production across all day parts from the first event in the a.m. all the way through the late night show.

We've done things a bit differently both programming and on the production side. It seems to be really paying off. With that, I'll turn it over to the leader of that team, executive producer, Molly Solomon.

MOLLY SOLOMON: Thank you, Rick and Mark. Good morning everybody from Stanford, Connecticut, home to the Olympics.

We had a feeling that America was ready for this Olympics. The reaction, the viewership numbers are unbelievable and incredibly gratifying for the 3,000 people working on these Games. We believe in the power of the Olympics and the audience does too.

As Mark noted, we programmed these Olympics to be user friendly. Live all day on NBC, Peacock and additional platforms, you can seamlessly find what you're looking for, thanks to the viewer friendly presentation on Peacock. And if you can't make a decision, it's simple. You've got to head over to "Gold Zone." That's my go-to in the morning.

From the viewership figures, America's captivated, and there's a lack of productivity in a lot of workplaces and we're here ready for it. We set the goal early on to make

sure that America is unproductive all day long.

And we did some research on our viewership, of course, and we've got some fun facts. One in four said their work productivity declines during the Olympics. Two of three people said the Olympics provide an escape. And half said they're changing their daily routine to watch the Olympics. That's success to us.

And as you look ahead, there's so much more to come. We're just five days in. Today, of course, we've got the women's all-around coming up live at 12 noon. USA Swimming's strongest events are still ahead. And of course we've got the start of the star-studded track and field competition tomorrow. The U.S. really has their strongest team in a generation.

Simone Biles and Suni Lee are going to be in event finals this weekend. The basketball medal rounds return to Paris from Lille. And Snoop has a full events ahead and some surprises planned for this weekend. We can't wait to keep this going.

Q. Mark, I think it was about this stage in the London games that NBC started freeing up the inventory that it had held back for ADUs. I was wondering, given the fact that deliveries have been so amazing so far, what's the status of that now? Are you going to start selling that off in scatter?

MARK LAZARUS: We have a little bit of inventory that we're selling. It's still early days. We're obviously thrilled with where we are. But yes, there's some inventory available. We've been writing a little bit of business.

But we're in such great shape with ads that we're looking at varieties and ways to utilize inventory from keep using it for more program time to marketing and promotion for parts of our big portfolio of companies here at NBCUniversal and Comcast.

Q. A lot of strong reactions online anecdotally to Kelly Clarkson and Peyton Manning during the Opening Ceremonies. What's your assessment of their performance?

MOLLY SOLOMON: We were extremely pleased with our presentation of Opening Ceremony. We went into it knowing that this was an unconventional ceremony. It was a boat parade down the Seine. We expected there would be a lot of musical acts.

We had this mixture of Mike Tirico, Kelly Clarkson, Peyton plus Savannah and Hoda was the perfect elixir of announcers to cover all of it. And with Gaga and Celine



and we had a little Beyoncé thrown in -- Kelly was a great teammate to talk to all of that.

I was so impressed by Peyton Manning. The preparation that he put into Opening Ceremony, he must have talked to almost 30 U.S. athletes and really knew them, wanted to talk about them. I think as you watch the prime time presentation of Opening Ceremony, you saw that he could talk about Maggie Steffens. Maggie Steffens actually texted Peyton that morning and told him that a member of her family had passed away and she was going to give a special tribute to it.

So just like the legendary quarterback he is, Payton did his homework and really enhanced what we did that night. So we were extremely pleased, and the rain did not dampen our presentation.

Q. Just a question about prime time. I've been surprised by the numbers coming in, much higher than I was expecting, especially for events and results that everybody knew. On the theory that it's never too early to talk about LA, what are you learning from the prime time that you'll use going forward when the time zones are clearly better for you?

RICK CORDELLA: I think Molly can chime in on the production side, but she and the team have done a fabulous job of taking prime time and doing something different with it this time -- a lot of more pop culture, celebrities and a lot more Snoop than we've had before.

I think it's a case where, historically, the fear has been if results were known people would tune out and go somewhere else. But when you add the entertainment level that we've added to the prime time show, we're seeing people come back and see it in a different light. We added context around big events, so if you saw Simone and the team win the medal on Tuesday, you're still happy to come back in the evening to see it again with the added context that Molly and her team have put into it.

MARK LAZARUS: I was going to say going through, sitting through Molly's team's production meeting the other day on gymnastics and they're building really two shows at once, one they'll follow live and one they're going to create for prime time, it's really a complex piece of work that Molly can talk about.

But we are building shows and we shouldn't discount that Team USA is performing well and people want to see that. They want to see the great product that Molly's team is curating for that prime time window.

MOLLY SOLOMON: And as you know, every time you

have an Olympics, you get a new time zone, a new puzzle, really, to put together. And we've gone back in time to remind ourselves that America, it doesn't matter if they know the results. They want to know the stories of the athletes and how it played out.

And so that's why the prime time shows, I think, are resonating. You can watch live in the afternoon if you're a sports fan and want a quick hit of it. But when you come back in prime time, you get to see how it all happens.

If you've ever watched gymnastics live, it's pretty darn complex and complicated, but we're able to take a few hours to really lay out how it happened and the stories of the athletes.

But we're not going to not be really, really excited about the Pacific time zone and being live in LA. So we'll see how the sports schedules work out. But we take advantage of every time zone that the Olympics are in and figure out how can we make it resonate with the American people. And I think we found a perfect recipe for the European time zone, and we can't wait to apply this to Milano Cortina in 2026.

RICK CORDELLA: One more point. On Sunday, for instance, there were 280 individual live streams on Peacock with 65 happening concurrently. So while you may be watching in afternoon, watching one of those feeds, prime time is the culmination and aggregation of all that content.

You may not have seen the women's rugby team have a dramatic victory or may not have seen the men's gymnasts win a bronze medal in that exhilarating fashion, but the prime time puts it all together into a show which is, as Molly said, different from the competition we covered (indiscernible).

Q. I'm seeing a lot of talk about the Olympics all over social media. I'm wondering if you can give us an update on just the conversations that you're seeing, how it compares to Tokyo and a bit about the work that you're doing with creators.

RICK CORDELLA: I'll start off. I think social media in the past, we've taken a look. It hasn't been maybe the most positive sentiment, but it's changed 180. And a lot of it has to do with the enhancements of Peacock, the original shows like "Gold Zone" that are out there that are getting a lot of publicity. Alex Cooper and "Watch With." You mentioned the creators we have from YouTube and other social platforms that are here.

We've really taken a different path at how to approach this.

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And I think as Mark Lazarus said in the past, we promised the Olympics in Tokyo maybe didn't deliver on it fully; we've taken that to heart and really took a step back and said how can we make this amount, 7,000 hours, really sing. And the team collectively, 3,000-plus employees plus Peacock plus Xfinity, the power of the whole company really took (indiscernible). It's really great to see the positive sentiment on social media.

MOLLY SOLOMON: I think we've very much leaned into the fact that if things are happening on social and you have unique content on social, it all flows through to promoting the Olympics and what's happening. And we really tried to integrate social into our broadcast as well because that's how we all experience media.

And so, for example, last night, when Leon Marchand did his double, we were able to use social, our creators, to cull all of the reactions across Paris. And that wasn't possible without doubling down on creators and access to what's happening in France on social media, partnerships with broadcasters around the world. So I think it's really paid off in our broadcast presentation as well.

MARK LAZARUS: I agree with that. I think you distill it down, social media and streaming is amplifying broadcast and broadcast is amplifying them, in the fact that these are working together and that as a company we have all of these assets and platforms and that we're working with them seamlessly and pushing people back and forth is with leading to this great set of viewership and numbers across all dayparts and platforms. We're not ignoring one for the other. They're working in concert together.

Q. Molly, you answered an earlier question, you talk about sort of an emphasis on pop culture, celebrity, and that's certainly the case when it comes to these Olympics. I wonder if this template is specific to Paris or if you can say that this is now a programming and philosophical shift when we head forward to future Olympics?

MOLLY SOLOMON: Richard, we're five days into the Olympics. We're going to finish this one. What I think that's important is pop culture orientation, integration, whatever you want to call it, is to step back and think that the Olympics is bigger than a sporting event. It's a global event.

As we're seeing now, so many celebrities are attending. Sports figures are coming, and we've integrated that into our presentation. So we're going to keep experiencing this kind of Olympics, but it's the fact that everyone wants to be there, and that's reflected in what we're doing. I can't wait to see who is going to show up today at the women's

All-Around Final. LeBron James and Kevin Durant said they wanted to be there.

When you talk about pop culture and celebrities, we're also in our broadcast reflecting what's actually going on. So in terms of is it a strategic point going forward, right now we're living in these games, and if it's organically going to happen, it will be a part of it.

But I do very much appreciate how Snoop has resonated and bringing in some new voices to tell athletes' stories has actually excited the athletes. It's also, as Mark talked about, ignited social media, which, again, always leads itself back to engaging more deeply with the Olympics. And I think in that way, this has been a success.

Q. Following on that question, you tried so many different experiments. From "Gold Zone" to the heart rate monitors. Is anything gaining traction, geez, this applies to other sports events, we can try these things? Obviously early days. Anything you think, hey, this works?

MOLLY SOLOMON: I think more than anything -- I'd be curious if Laz and Rick want to weigh in -- it's just been a reminder how important through all these stories of friends and family and their reaction in connecting them to this. We've always done that in sports presentations, but like heart rate monitor is showing us how excited everybody is and also the stress and pressure of not only on the athletes but the families.

And I think we've really leaned into it because we've been missing it for two Olympics, and the athletes have said, in particular Simone said, without our families, that's what made all of this so much harder.

So we've definitely we leaned into it. Lessons that we're going to apply, I think we're still in it before we can push it forward. But that's always been part of, I think, the rich legacy of storytelling of NBC Sports is that you see this across our presentation.

MARK LAZARUS: As I mentioned in opening remarks, the Olympics are our billion-dollar lab. It fits in a couple of fronts. It's how we approach production, how we utilize technology.

Some of these things we've tried in other sports and they haven't been as effective or resonated because not everything universally works against every type of telecast. In some cases it's certain rights that we have or don't have. So we have to be cognizant of all that.

But this, I think, is going to be an excellent set of data to

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use that we will certainly deploy against not only other sports properties but look at other live events that NBCUniversal has on our calendar. We are a company that's rich in big live events certainly around the holidays, with Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade and Christmas at Rockefeller Center. Some of these, not all, like the heart monitors, some of these technologies can be deployed against other live events and we'll continue to experiment.

RICK CORDELLA: There's a point in here, multiuse is an easy one. We released it just at the start of these games. Likely to see it in our complete coverage on Saturday mornings one. That's one we invested in (inaudible) back out to other properties. I think adding entertainment, making shows fun. I think what Molly and team have done in prime time, we're looking to do that a lot more in other concepts throughout the year.

Q. Do you have any figures that show how many people watched events live during the day and then came back and watched the same thing in prime time in the evening?

RICK CORDELLA: I think we're calculating those figures. We'll take a look and come back to you on that.

MARK LAZARUS: It's a matrix to put together. So I think that's work that we are going to do, and those are things we want to know, too, over the body of work. But I think Rick's right, we need to make sure it's accurate and come back to you on that.

RICK CORDELLA: We just don't have it totally done yet.

Q. In general, do you think people have changed the way they watch the Olympics that's going to resonate further? And is there one part of you, with the live showing and emphasis that is not saying, yeah, I wish we didn't do this earlier, or, gee, I wish we did do this earlier?

RICK CORDELLA: The one surprise, I think where we're pleasantly surprised that daytime viewership has been high as it has been particularly on the weekdays. It's a point of work from home or summer. But that's something that I don't think has really happened in the past. That was certainly a pleasant surprise overall.

MARK LAZARUS: I think the last time we really -- that that was part of the dialogue was in London, and it was only available through streaming.

We heard from people that servers were crashing in certain offices in certain cities, i.e., Los Angeles, and that's because people were clamoring to see it. And those

games we held back the live television coverage. We only did it on streaming. That was a conscious decision that we made is to make that available through linear now and certainly if we want to hold back the coverage today, I think we would get certainly maligned by you guys and by fans, and that the times have changed and I think we are showing forward-thinking and being progressive in our case on how to produce and exhibit the games.

RICK CORDELLA: It's a different media environment, 2012-2016 than 2024. Streaming, you go back to 2012, I don't know if there was an emphasis on streaming at that point. One streaming company. And now we've developed, content is available, people do it like a natural reaction to look on TV. We're going to change the times. Look at 2024, look at 2028, moving forward to 2032, we'll change along with it. We may have the same conversation in 2032, why did you do what you did back in 2024.

Q. You've taken some pretty big swings on Peacock this year. You mentioned "Gold Zone." Obviously Kevin Hart, Kenan Thompson show, Alex Cooper. Now that you've had a few days to kind of see some of the data, I'm assuming -- you shared some streaming numbers earlier -- can you give any sense of what seems to be resonating with viewers on Peacock and why you think it's working?

RICK CORDELLA: I think we mentioned "Gold Zone," we were able to hire Scott Hanson who is synonymous with the "RedZone," the NFL Network, (indiscernible) also synonymous with DIRECTV "RedZone." I think people understood quickly what they were going to get when they came there. That's resonated really well with us.

I think the big innovation is how to find all the content. It's a spoil of riches that we have 7,000 hours of content but really curating it and getting the right content in front of the right people at the right time is a herculean effort. And kudos to the Peacock product team that's done that. I think it's the biggest version of what it was back in Beijing and Tokyo.

MARK LAZARUS: And then creating the AI Michaels A.I. product that has allowed people to customize recaps and get the best content, the content that's interesting to them in a recap form has been a new innovation that we're very proud of and partnership with AI has worked well and resonated with a lot of our Peacock subscribers.

Q. Question Snoop-related, he seems to be the face or unlikely face of these Olympic Games. Could you tell me what the genesis was of (indiscernible) with him to become -- have a more expanded role in these games, and so far sort of stunned with how much he's

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resonated as far as every country at these Olympics so far.

MOLLY SOLOMON: This all dates back to Tokyo in 2021. Kevin Hart and Snoop Dogg were co-host of a comedy highlight show on Peacock called "Olympic Highlights," and there were several clips that went viral, but also what stood out to me was Snoop's passion for the Olympics and also in his own unique way his reverence for the athletes and their stories.

Over the last year and a half, we got together with Snoop and really brainstormed what this role could be, and yesterday I called him an Ambassador of Happiness.

If you watch his content, everybody wants to meet Snoop, take a selfie with Snoop and just be around Snoop.

We've been pleasantly surprised by his popularity, but you never ever underestimate Snoop Dogg. He's this wonderful mix of swagger and positivity and just the charisma and vibes are so positive. And he's got this curiosity about the Olympics that is undeniable.

Yesterday he was at four different venues. And we weren't even filming. But he wanted to go see beach volleyball and check in with who he calls his "Snoopians." He has a list of athletes that he met before the Olympics that he wanted to keep track of.

He was at skateboarding. He got on the train with the U.S. basketball team went to Paris to Lille to hang out with LeBron, KD and Steph and the crew. You can't keep the man down. I talked to him a little bit this morning. I was a little worried about his energy because he's doing so much, but we've got a lot of fun stuff planned, and you can't stop Snoop.

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