

VARIETY

NBCU's Olympics Coverage To Rely Heavily on Digital



December 19, 2013 | 12:56PM PT

More than 1000 hours of coverage to be streamed online - far more than will be made available across NBC, USA, NBCSN and other TV networks

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1,539-plus hours of coverage from the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics starting in February – more than it offered from similar events in Vancouver and Torino – in a testament to how much the media company *intends to rely on digital distribution of the event.*

For the first time, NBCU will not follow a previously-established tradition of airing the most popular events during primetime on the company's flagship broadcast network, even if the contests took place hours beforehand. Instead, the Comcast-controlled conglomerate has vowed to show competition across all 15 sports - including each medal-winning performance in all 98 events – via live stream on either NBCOlympics.com or its NBC Sports Live Extra app. In all, NBCU intends to stream more than 1,000 hours of Olympics coverage through digital means.

NBCU intends to reserve the vast majority of its digital coverage for people who subscribe to cable, satellite or telco distributors, who will have to provide a proof of their customer status in order to watch the events. And the company will also make available. The site will also feature exclusive content, real-time results, medal standings, event highlights and analysis, athlete interviews and profiles, and “rewinds” of all event coverage.

The decision is likely to be watched closely. Comcast in 2011 agreed to pay \$4.3 billion to keep the Olympics at NBCU through 2020, and Comcast CEO Brian Roberts has vowed to make the broadcasts profitable (they have not been in recent outings). Will making winning moments and dynamic athletic performances available online and via mobile affect the viewership for

primetime, or will the digital coverage and associated social-media chatter drive more people to tune in to the TV for the type of communal viewing that pleases advertisers?

The TV coverage will continue to be significant. The company will offer 539 hours of TV – far more than the 436 hours it devoted to the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver.

NBCSN, the company's cable-based sports network, will feature 230 hours of coverage, while flagship NBC will run 185 hours, with Bob Costas hosting in latenight and primetime. Other cable networks will feature smaller amounts: CNBC will run 36 hours, MSNBC 45 hours and USA Network 43 hours.

Over 18 days of coverage of the Sochi Games between February 6 and February 23, NBCU's coverage will average over 85 hours per day. In comparison, ABC in 1976 aired just 43.5 hours of the Winter Olympics from Innsbruck in Austria.

In another first, NBC will start coverage of the Winter Olympics one day in advance of the event's popular opening ceremonies, which won't take place until February 7, the second day of coverage.