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Olympics Roundtable Panelists Share Early Media Impressions

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With media analysts and critics continuing to review NBC's coverage of the Games, THE DAILY asked our own Olympic Roundtable to evaluate the coverage thus far, particularly the balance of coverage, the controversial "live vs. taped" aspect and reviews of NBC's talent.



MAKING WAVES: NBC's impressive ratings are not a surprise to our panelists, who all complemented NBC's extensive efforts to this point. Fantasy Sports Ventures President Chris Russo noted NBC "has benefited from some exciting events and storylines in the first few days," but he added the net "has taken these exciting events and made them even more compelling." Sports & Properties President & CEO Hill Carrow appreciated the net's expansive offerings, noting it is "great to be able to move between NBC's various channels to be able to pick up different sports." Milwaukee Journal Sentinel media writer Bob Wolfley noted there is a "ton of content, but trying to absorb it in some kind of a clean, organized way is somewhat daunting." Wolfley: "Navigating through these thickets

NBC Draws Praise For Its Extensive Coverage Of Olympics Across Family Of Networks

of programming is tough. It's fantastic so much content is airing, but trying to get your arms around it is a challenge." But Russo said the extensive coverage is "extremely positive for viewers," and there is "no downside." Optimum Sports Managing Dir Ray Katz said the "portfolio of their network seems to be very targeted toward the various events," and the "cross-promotion is informative without being overbearing." But Wolfley wonders, "Would it make sense to cross-promote more, for example, to tell viewers what's ahead on CNBC by someone on USA?"

BALANCE BEAM: The panelists also commented on the balance of NBC's coverage. Wolfley said, "Going in, you knew the Michael Phelps story was an important one, but with his early success, it became a dominant story. All Phelps all the time is not a bad strategy for NBC at this point." He noted the "obsession NBC has had for athlete profiles appears to have disappeared." That's good, Wolfley said, as he prefers "to see analysis and commentary about the competition taking place, or about to take place, rather than a feature." Carrow said NBC's features on athletes, political issues and Beijing "have been timely and have benefitted the broadcast," as they are a "great way to get both a sports and history/education fix simultaneously." Carrow added Bob Costas' intro to Saturday's telecast from Tiananmen Square and his interview with President Bush on Sunday "were impressive." Katz said the

coverage “hasn’t been too overwhelming on political issues, which I think is good because we’re watching sports programming.” Katz added NBC has “shown just enough of Beijing to be interesting, in terms of China, but it’s been mostly in the context of the athletes and the athletes touring, so I think that’s been done very well.”

“LIVE” FROM BEIJING: While NBC has taken heat from some critics for misrepresenting some broadcasts as “Live” when they are taped, the respondents were largely sympathetic to NBC’s plight in dealing with a 12-hour time difference. IMG Consulting Senior VP David Abrutyn said “live is always better,” but there is “no silver bullet to satisfy everyone when the Games are taking place all the way around the world.” Carrow noted at “every Olympics where there is a time difference the broadcaster gets chided for their event selection.” Carrow: “I believe NBC has actually addressed these types of comments very well by offering such a wide variety and tremendous volume of Olympic coverage via its broadcast channels and on the Web.” Katz: “By and large, they’re working with a very difficult time differential and, honestly, I think they’re doing the best they can.” Russo: “I don’t believe that most viewers are very concerned about this issue, and the Web does help by providing broader coverage and up-to-the minute results for those interested.” Abrutyn said critics “should not forget that NBC paid for the right to bring special moments to their media platforms, and for the most part people and advertisers today are willing to accept that as part of the business of sports television.” Wolfley said he had to visit NBCOlympics.com on Sunday to determine whether the U.S.-China men’s basketball game was live or taped. Wolfley: “Viewers should not have to work so hard to figure out what’s live.” But he noted NBC on Monday added a “Live” graphic in the corner of the screen that includes Beijing, Eastern and Central time. Wolfley: “That was very viewer friendly and much welcome.”

TALENT: Carrow said NBC’s anchors and commentators “have generally done an excellent job,” though Costas sometimes “seems a little ‘punch drunk.’” Katz could use “a little less of Bob Costas talking, but that’s minor.” Carrow said Jim Lampley “gives the broadcast something of an aura, not too far removed from Jim McKay, and I am glad NBC keeps him as a prominent part of the team.” Katz said NBC has “done a great job selecting announcers who are authentic.” He noted the announcers “aren’t really shilling for the Games and the network, and are telling the truth and criticizing officiating where necessary. Teddy Atlas in the boxing I think is notable.” Katz: “The key is finding the right announcers who combine expertise and audience friendliness, and I think they’ve done a great job with that.”



Lampley Draws Praise For Work As Daytime Host

HOME SWEET HOME: The roundtable generally commended NBC for its coverage. Carrow said NBC’s “extensive broadcast offerings overcome [any] criticisms and help satisfy even the pickiest and most hard-core Olympic viewers.” Katz said the Olympics are “what NBC does great.” Katz: “They’re great at this. They’re a great production network.” Abrutyn: “If the Olympics are the benchmark of sports television in the digital age, NBC has raised the bar with their coverage of the early part of the Games.” But he added the question is whether the net can “maintain momentum as swimming and gymnastics give way to track and field in the second week of the Games.”

See what the roundtable had to say about [NBC’s online offerings](#).

MAKING THE GRADE: THE DAILY ran a non-scientific poll from yesterday morning through presstime today, asking readers what grade they would give NBC's coverage of the Beijing Olympics thus far. Of the 290 respondents, the majority of the answers were positive, with 130 giving NBC an "A".

