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WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

Across the World: Programmers Prep for Women's World Cup

Soccer fans around the globe have been given a big treat these past seven months. The men's FIFA World Cup had its tournament in Qatar back in December, but now it's time for the Women's World Cup to take place down under in Australia and New Zealand.

There's a plethora of storylines heading into the pinnacle of soccer. The U.S. women's national team is gearing up to make a run at a third consecutive World Cup trophy—a feat that's never been accomplished in the men's or women's competition—and the sport has seen a rise in popularity since the last Women's World Cup in 2019. It's a big opportunity for the U.S. programmers who will broadcast the event, but the preparation process this time around is a little different from other past tournaments.

The unusual kickoff times, at least for U.S. viewers, will stick out when fans look at the schedule. The tournament will begin Thursday at 3am ET when New Zealand takes on Norway, then at 6am Australia will face Ireland. For the remainder of the Women's World Cup, kickoff times range from 8pm to 8:30am, and if the U.S. reaches the final, it'll be a 6am start time on August 20.

Fox Sports will anchor English-language coverage in the U.S. with *Carli Lloyd*, *Rob Stone*, *Alexi Lalas*, *Stu Holden* and *Heather O'Reilly* serving as studio analysts. It'll have dual-stage outdoor studios along Campbells Cove in Sydney

(with the Opera House situated in the backdrop). It'll have 35 matches on **FS1** and 29 on **Fox**, which includes the U.S.' three group stage matches. *Daniela Jeffries*, Fox Sports' VP, Programming and Scheduling, told **CFX** that the broadcaster will have "30 to 40" additional hours of coverage compared to the 2019 tournament.

"The challenge for us was really to be a little bit more mindful about how we worked our shoulder programming," she said. "You'll see that we have supersized our USA pre-games. In the past, we've done the standard every game got a one-hour pregame, schedule permitting. Going into this edition, we said, 'Should we really be looking at those pre-games at 2 or 3 in the morning? Is that really where we're putting our best foot forward there? And should we kind of rethink it all?' And so that was part of the incentive of expanding those USA pregames."

Jeffries added that the additional shoulder programming gives Fox Sports flexibility to present the stories surrounding the other teams at the tournament. The timing of the tournament also means the primetime window is more open than what it was during the men's World Cup, so Fox Sports can re-air matches and continue to direct traffic to its live tournament coverage.

Telemundo will handle Spanish-language broadcast duties. It'll air 33 matches on Telemundo, which is the most ever for the Women's World Cup on a broadcast network in U.S. TV history, and 31 on **Universo**. All matches will also be streamed

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live on **Peacock**. *Ana Jurka, Miguel Gurwitz, Carlota Vizmanos* and *Carlos Tustis* will be the primary studio hosts, and the network is rolling out a commentary team featuring the most women ever in Spanish-language U.S. media history.

Telemundo EVP, Sports *Eli Velazquez* said the network is taking a similar approach as Fox Sports when it comes to storytelling. “One of the things that was very important for us as a group was let’s tell more stories, let’s go out and do more interviews, let’s create more stickiness in and around the live windows for people to be compelled to want to watch these featured players or coaches live during their actual run at their dream, if you will,” he told CFX.

Velazquez thinks the growth of women’s soccer will also help alleviate the time-zone intricacies for U.S. viewers. While there will be plenty of fans who record games and watch on tape delay, they’ll be subject to having a match result spoiled for them.

“I think especially now with the growth of the women’s game and how far it has come and how it’s expanded—a larger tournament, more teams—just demonstrates that there’s more fans that want to connect with the content,” Velazquez said. Because you don’t want to hear about [notable events] on a tape delay, especially if something magnificent happens that want to be able to say, ‘I woke up. I was there at that time, I saw that line or I saw that happening.’”

MLB ‘READY’ TO TAKE DIAMONDBACKS GAMES

Monday is the deadline for **Bally Sports** and the Arizona Diamondbacks to reach an agreement before a bankruptcy hearing takes place, but court filings indicate that a deal may not be on the cards. On Thursday, both the **MLB** and **DirectTV** filed statements with the Houston bankruptcy court that indicate **Diamond Sports Group** is seeking to get rid of its broadcast rights deal for the Diamondbacks. “MLB does not object to the Debtors’ proposed rejection of the Diamondbacks telecast rights agreement,” the league said in its filing. “MLB’s submits this statement solely to address ancillary issues that arise out of the rejection and the potential impact on the continued broadcast of Diamondbacks games, and relatedly, the ability of the Diamondbacks to continue monetizing such broadcasts after the rejection of their telecast rights agreement.” Similar to what it did when Bally dropped the Padres, MLB said it “stands ready” to step in and broadcast Diamondbacks games, but that hinges on the rejection of the rights agreement or having the rights be transferred to MLB. Otherwise, it’d put distributors like DirectTV in a spot where they would need to pay two parties

for the same content, which the MVPD calls “a nonsensical and inequitable result.” “DirectTV is hopeful that it can resolve this issue consensually with the Debtors, but if the parties cannot reach an acceptable arrangement, DIRECTV may seek this Court’s assistance with resolving this dispute,” it said. The next hearing is set for 2pm CT on Monday.

PHOENIX SUNS, MERCURY MOVE ON GRAY TV DEAL

The Phoenix Suns and Mercury are sticking with their deal with **Gray Television** to broadcast games for free on KTVK and KPHE. The agreement was [originally announced](#) in late April, but it was quickly met with a roadblock when **Diamond Sports Group**—which held the local rights prior—filed a lawsuit alleging the Suns/Mercury [breached their existing deals](#). A U.S. bankruptcy judge ruled the teams violated the rights of DSG under U.S. bankruptcy code, and that the teams needed to complete negotiations with DSG before moving forward with other parties. According to *Sportico*, which cites multiple people familiar with the process, Diamond had [until midnight Thursday](#) to match the financial terms of the franchise’s deal with Gray. That deadline passed with no offer, and the teams’ deal with Gray subsequently became official Friday.

ACTORS’ STRIKE BEGINS

Hollywood is at a standstill. First it was the **Writers Guild of America** [going on strike](#) in May, and now the actors are joining as the **Screen Actors Guild-American Federation of Television and Radio Artists** began striking at midnight Thursday after failing to reach a new labor agreement with the **Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers**. It’s the first time that both the actors and writers are striking since 1960, and so far the solidarity is clear as seen when the cast of “Oppenheimer” walked out of the film’s London premiere Thursday once the strike became official. Another event that’s in flux is the 75th Emmy Awards, which is currently set to take place Sept. 18 but could be postponed if the strike lasts until then. **Disney** CEO *Bob Iger* was critical of the actors’ strike during his appearance on **CNBC’s** “Squawk Box,” saying the actors aren’t being realistic and calling it “very disturbing.” “We managed as an industry to negotiate a very good deal with the Directors Guild that reflects the value that the directors contribute to this great business. We wanted to do the same thing with the writers and we’d like to do the same thing with the actors,” Iger said. “There’s a level of expectation that they have that is just not realistic and they are adding to a set of challenges that this business is

already facing that is quite frankly very disruptive and dangerous.”

CRUISE WITH HALLMARK

If you need a Christmas getaway, **Hallmark Channel** has you covered. The network is setting sail for its Hallmark Channel Christmas Cruise from Nov. 5-9, 2024, departing Miami and heading for Nassau, Bahamas. It’s partnering with Sixthman to bring an immersive Hallmark experience to fans. The cruise will feature Hallmark stars, yuletide experiences, Christmas crafts and other interactive activities like an ugly sweater contest or tree lighting. Pre-sale signups are available now and will stay open until July 19 at 11:59pm. Cabins will go on sale to the general public July 21 at 2pm.

RATINGS

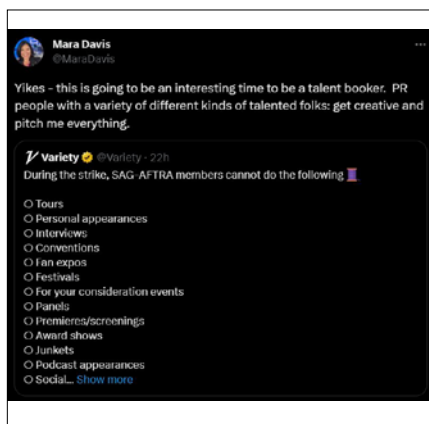
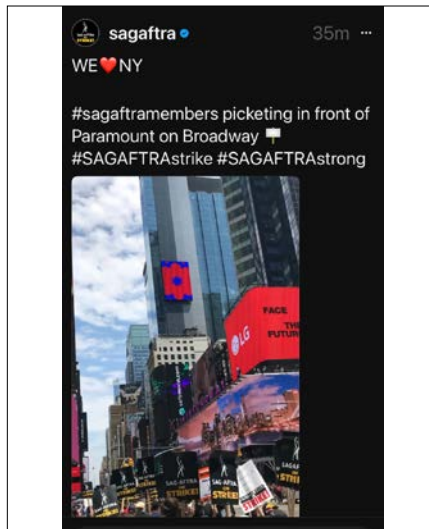
The debut season of **TLC’s** “Match Me Abroad” averaged 1.7 million viewers P2+ across all platforms. It was the top non-sports cable program in its time frame with P25-54, W25-54 and W18-49.

PROGRAMMING

Sling TV is bringing back its “Summer of Freeviews,” and it’s kicking it off by letting viewers watch free **discovery+** content through the weekend. All subscribers can access the content—which is automatically added to the home screen and channel guide—and includes shows like “Serving the Hamptons,” “90 Day Fiance” and “Ghost Adventures.” -- “The Walking Dead: Daryl Dixon” is set to premiere Sept. 10 at 9pm on **AMC** and **AMC+**. -- *Jon Champion* is joining **NBC Sports** as a Premier League commentator. He’ll be the lead for Sunday 11:30am matches, while *Peter Drury* will continue calling the Saturday 12:30pm games. -- **FOX Nation** will have a new docuseries “The Fall of the House of Murdaugh” premiering Sept. 12. It’ll be a three-part limited series that features an interview with *Buster Murdaugh*, the son of disgraced South Carolina attorney Alex Murdaugh who was convicted of murder earlier this year. -- The next episode of **HBO’s** “Real Sports with Bryant Gumbel” will drop Tuesday at 10pm, available to stream on **Max**.

CABLEFAX DASHBOARD

Social Media Hits



Research

(Source: [Bankrate Financial Freedom consumer survey](#))

- > Americans surveyed said they feel they’d need to earn approximately \$233,000 a year on average to be secure or comfortable with their finances.
- > Respondents said they’d need to make roughly \$483,000 on average to feel rich and achieve financial freedom.
- > 19% of Gen X said they felt financially secure compared to 32% of Boomers, 28% of Millennials and 25% of Gen Z.

Up Ahead

JULY 20-23: [Comic-Con International](#), San Diego

JULY 30-AUGUST 2: [The Independent Show 2023](#); Minneapolis, MN

AUGUST 7-8: [C2HRCOn](#), Brooklyn

AUGUST 20-23: [Fiber Connect 2023](#); Orlando

SEPT 18-19: [The WICT Network Leadership Conference](#); NYC

SEPT 19-20: [NAMIC 37th Annual Conference](#); NYC

Quotable

“We stand in solidarity, in unprecedented unity. Our union and our sister unions and the unions around the world are standing by us, as well as other labor unions, because at some point the jig is up. You cannot keep being dwindled and marginalized and disrespected and dishonored. The entire business model has been changed by streaming, digital, AI. This is a moment of history that is a moment of truth. If we don’t stand tall right now, we are all going to be in trouble.”



- SAG-AFTRA President Fran Drescher announcing actors strike