

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

QUOTABLE

“Are data centers in space realistic? The answer is yes. The timeline is harder to answer. Some of the timelines you hear are very short. They’re probably not right... Exactly how long it will take, I don’t think anyone knows, but it is real. It will happen.” - Amazon Founder Jeff Bezos during CNBC’s “Squawk Box” about the timeline of putting data centers in space

FOX SPORTS’ PLAN FOR WORLD CUP GLORY

There’s never been a **World Cup** quite like the one **Fox Sports** will broadcast, starting June 11. It’s the biggest edition of the world’s most watched sports tournament ever—48 nations playing 104 matches across 38 days through July 19—and much of the action will take place on American soil. The U.S., Mexico and Canada are hosting, which means there’s extra pressure for Fox Sports to get the coverage right, not just for the home team and its avid fans but also as America prepares to celebrate its 250th birthday.

During a press event in NYC on Thursday, Fox Sports previewed the programming and tech muscle it’s putting behind the international sports event of the year. In total, **Fox** will air 340 hours of live programming, including 70 matches on network television, more than double the matches vs Qatar 2022. (That’ll be welcome news for those worried about live sports’ migration to SVODs.) The other 34 will air on **FS1**, with the opening ceremony and two matches featuring the U.S. and Mexico also being simulcast on AVOD **Tubi**. All programming will be available to **Fox One** customers, including bumper and analysis shows. **Telemundo** and **Peacock** will air all matches in Spanish.

Tech innovations seem to go hand in hand with massive sports events. Like **NBCUniversal** with this year’s Winter Olympics, Fox is bringing the World Cup to viewers at home in HDR. “The way that the tournament is going to look and feel at home is going to be quite different,” Fox Sports VP, Production **Zac Kenworthy** said during a press briefing. “It’s going to be rich, not oversaturated [and] it’s going to feel real.”

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The network will leverage special cameras and a 360-degree LED volume wall to emulate the on-the-ground stadium atmosphere via augmented reality on a set it's calling Stage B. "We don't ever want to come back into the studio in L.A., and to have you at home feeling like, 'Oh wow, I've just left an incredible atmosphere,'" Kenworthy said, explaining that the goal is to make the switch between onsite and studio feel seamless.

"It's just making sure that we're always in that space, feeling very connected to what's happening on site," Kenworthy told **CFX** following the presentation. "What it allows us to do is fully integrate our talent [and] to storytell a bit more with elements and graphics, stats and the way we break down games."

The World Cup will also serve as the next testing ground for AI-powered live sports features on Fox One. Fox DTC CEO *Pete Distad* said at a conference in March that new AI tools will serve users insights about matches and enhance the ad-targeting experience. AI-generated push notifications are also in the cards. Fox Sports is harnessing GenAI for creative elements, although Kenworthy acknowledged the importance of not overdoing it.

"It's a tool that we have to be very smart in how we use it," Kenworthy said. "You'll see sprinklings in there throughout. It's not something that we're massively focused on for the linear side of things, but I do expect that across digital platforms you'll see it."

The multi-platform approach is underscored by Fox Sports' "very unique" partnership with Tubi, which will not only serve as a simulcast destination but also a home for select VOD. The free streamer has launched a World Cup hub to house all of its tournament content. "There's going to be so much content that's coming both from the linear side, our digital side and also with our relationship with **FIFA** and [official tournament broadcaster] **HBS**. As part of our rights package, there's a lot of stuff that hits the cutting room floor, and that can live in VOD on Tubi as well," Kenworthy explained.

That said, it's no secret that the live sports ecosystem has a content discovery problem, with consumers finding it more difficult to find games across broadcast, pay TV and streaming. With so many Fox platforms in play, the programmer is paying close attention to how and when it's pointing viewers to the right content.

"It's something we've had this very specific conversation about over the last few months," Kenworthy said. "There are going to be tools every day, both digitally and across our social media channels, on exactly what that daily menu looks like, and where you can gather that content." That includes World Cup content created by partnered influencers. "There are going to be opportunities for those stories to come to life, and that will live not just across our social media channels, but you'll see it on our linear side as well."

The other crucial part of the plan is the cultural storytelling, including the "melting pot" experience of living in America. Notably, Fox Sports will air two Round of 16 matches on July 4, featuring a fireworks spectacular to celebrate America 250. Fox is also covering soccer fandom across our local communities.

"With America 250 and how diverse our country is, we're trying to do it through the fandom, and not just the fans that are coming in, but what are these hotbeds, and what are these pockets?" Kenworthy said. "I think about the massive

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Bosnian community outside of St. Louis, the Croatian community in southern California. We're going to find these moments. When are these organic watch parties happening? We can bring that to the viewer."

INDUSTRY: BROADBAND MARKET WORKING, VIDEO IS NOT

Broadband competition is thriving—so don't regulate us more. That was the key message in **NCTA** and **USTelecom**'s comments to the **FCC** for its 2026 Communications Marketplace Report. Per congressional mandate, the FCC must publish a report every other year assessing the state of communications competition. Initial comments were due today, and are still coming in at press time. NCTA used the opportunity to stress that **Comcast**, **Charter** and **Optimum** combined are the fourth-largest mobile provider with 21 million lines, with continued growth depending on a balanced spectrum policy framework. Basically: preserve unlicensed 6 GHz spectrum and don't change CBRS rules in ways that hurt cable. USTelecom called for permitting reform, saying it's especially urgent as we move into the AI era. It wants the FCC to open a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking to preempt state and local permitting barriers and establish "clear, national standards" for reasonable permitting timelines and cost-based, transparent and nondiscriminatory fees. **ACA Connects** agrees that there's work to be done on permitting and pole attachments—but don't forget about the video marketplace. It asked the FCC not to impose new ATSC 3.0 compliance obligations on MVPDs, with one provider estimating the cost of transmitting 3.0 signals would cost \$150,000-\$300,000 per DMA in cap ex plus \$25,000-\$60,000 in annual operating expenses "merely to demodulate, decrypt, transcode and integrate emergency alerting for ATSC 3.0 signals." Any ATSC 3.0 transition should be voluntary, and at minimum, the FCC should require any broadcaster that transmits exclusively in 3.0 format to continue delivering its signals to MVPDs at its own expense in 1.0 or in a format compatible with the MVPD's system, ACAC said. Of course, it also made a plea for retransmission consent reform, citing a 7,233% increase in retrans fee rev received by stations from 2006 to 2025. They are at \$15.4 billion annually today, despite a decline in pay TV subs.

BULK BILLING BACKERS MOVE TO SHAPE FCC RECORD

There doesn't seem to be any real danger that the **FCC** might try to step in right now and ban broadband bulk billing arrangements, but the Bulk Billing Alliance isn't taking any chances. One of *Brendan Carr's* first actions as FCC Chair was to remove an item his predecessor had placed on circulation regarding alleged harms arising from bulk-billing arrangements between ISPs and MDUs. While Carr praised such programs for enabling families living in apartments and other multi-tenant environments to pay lower prices for internet, **ACA Connects** SVP, Legal and Regulatory Affairs *Brian Hurley* noted that there wasn't any actual marketplace analysis attached to the FCC action. "That's not a criticism or a complaint... It wasn't necessary at the time, just given that the proposal hadn't advanced very far under the previous administration," he said. So, to supplement the record and attempt to sway any future policy decisions, the Bulk Billing Alliance, whose members include ACAC, EducationSuperHighway, and the National Apartment Association, released a study Thursday that, no surprise, finds that bulk billing is great. Among the **Cartesian** study's findings: MDU residents save more than 50% on broadband relative to comparable retail plans under bulk billing arrangements. That claim is based on pricing data submitted by four bulk providers as of April 2024 compared to retail prices reported are an unweighted average across **Comcast**, **Charter**, **AT&T**, and **Verizon's** 1 Gbps packages. The group shared the report with the FCC on Thursday.

FTC FINES COX MEDIA GROUP

Cox Media Group, which owns broadcast and radio stations, got a fine from the **FTC** for its marketing and advertising agency. The FTC levied a \$880,000 penalty to settle allegations it deceived customers by falsely claiming to offer an AI-powered service that could target localized ads based on conversations captured from consumers' smart devices and that consumers had opted into such targeting. The FTC alleged CMG worked with **MindSift** and 1010 Digital Works to offer "Active Listening." "According to the complaints, this service did not, in fact, listen in on consumers' conversations or use voice data at all—nor did the service accurately place ads in customers' desired locations. Instead, the service the companies provided consisted of reselling—at a significant markup—email lists obtained from other data brokers," the FTC said. It fined MindSift and 1010 Digital \$25,000 each.

SPECTRUM NEWS' CALIFORNIA EXPANSION

Spectrum News is expanding yet again with launches of networks in Sacramento and San Francisco, in addition to a new California statewide network. They join the existing L.A.-based network. Spectrum News is now available on all **Charter** Spectrum TV and **Comcast** Xfinity TV lineups across the state. Award-winning journalist and producer *Lisa Ling* has joined the team after most recently serving as a **CBS News** contributor.

CALIX ROLLS OUT AGENTIC AI ACROSS ISP BASE

Calix began rolling out production-ready agents this month across its full base of 1,200+ service providers on the third-generation, AI-native Calix One platform. It's real agentic AI, reading real-time context on network conditions, subscriber behavior, service history and making decisions. Calix One is now processing over a petabyte of data daily and executing more than 4.3 billion workflows and operations annually.

CARRIAGE

DirecTV added **The Cowboy Channel** to its MySports Extra mini-pack that customers can add on to the MySports skinny bundle for an extra \$12.99/month. The channel airs 24/7 Western sports and lifestyle programming, including plenty of rodeo content. MySports Extra also includes **NFL RedZone**, **MLB Strike Zone** and **Willow TV**.

SPORTS RATINGS

Welcome back to the **NBA** Playoffs, **NBC**. Monday night's dramatic Game 1 of the Spurs-Thunder Western Conference Finals posted a total audience delivery of 9.2 million viewers across NBC and **Peacock**. That's good for the most-watched Western Conference Finals Game 1 ever and is a 71% jump from last season's comparable game between the Thunder and Timberwolves. Viewership peaked at 12 million from 11:30-45pm when the second overtime began. TV-only viewers came in at 6.9 million viewers, while Peacock's average minute audience of 2.3 million was the streamer's most-viewed NBA game ever. -- Off the hardwood and on the ice, **ESPN** aired its most-viewed **NHL** Playoff second round of its current rights deal, which began in 2021. All 11 games (nine on ESPN, two on **ABC**) averaged 2.2 million viewers, up 76% YOY. Game 7 of the Canadiens-Sabres led the way with 3 million viewers, the second-most-viewed second-round game ever on cable. That, along with Game 6 of their series (2.7 million), are the top two most-viewed telecasts so far this postseason.

ESPN'S 2Q DIGITAL BOOST

ESPN's digital and social operation reeled in 499 million monthly global users in 2Q26, according to **Comscore** data. That's a 30% YOY uptick across web, app, **YouTube** and social platforms. The win also showed how ESPN has expanded its international reach, with 58% of ESPN's 2Q audience—or about 288 million monthly users—coming from outside the U.S. In March alone, ESPN reached 489 million users globally across digital and social, a boost of 24% YOY. The quarter represented ESPN's second-largest average audience since Comscore began including non-U.S. social reach in 2024. 1Q26 was the brand's best performance to date with 517 million monthly global users.

HONORS

NCTA's short film "[After the Storm](#)" Is a Bronze Telly Winner in the Film & Shorts – Documentary category. It's "[Every Last Mile: The Untold Story of Connecting Rural America](#)" picked up a Silver win in the Telly Awards category.

BASIC CABLE P2+ PRIME RANKINGS*		
(05/11/26-05/17/26)		
MON-SUN	MC US AA%	MC US AA (000)
FNC	0.753	2423
ESPN	0.525	1691
MS NOW	0.294	948
HGTV	0.214	689
CNN	0.210	674
TNT	0.203	652
HIST	0.144	464
HALL	0.143	460
FOOD	0.137	442
TLC	0.135	434
USA	0.132	425
DISC	0.124	400
TBS	0.121	391
INSP	0.115	371
TV LAND	0.106	341
GSN	0.105	336
NAN	0.092	297
A&E	0.090	289
ID	0.085	275
HALLMYS	0.081	260
OXY	0.079	256
BRAVO	0.077	249
LIFE	0.075	241
SYFY	0.073	236
FRFM	0.073	235
FX	0.070	227
WETV	0.070	225
TRUTV	0.065	208
COM	0.064	206
REELZ	0.064	205
NWSMX	0.056	182
AMC	0.055	176
BET	0.051	165
ADSM	0.048	155
NWSNTN	0.047	151
MLB	0.046	147
FETV	0.045	144
NATGEO	0.044	143
E!	0.044	141
IFC TV	0.044	141
FXX	0.043	138
LMN	0.041	133
PRMNT	0.041	130
HLN	0.040	130
TRAVEL	0.040	129
BBCA	0.040	129

*P2+ L+SD rankers are based on national Nielsen numbers, not coverage.