



## With Live Sports Sidelined, Marketers Turn to Talent for Content

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The coronavirus pandemic has prompted an indefinite hiatus for live sports, forcing sports marketers to get creative with their strategies with no new content to market.

It's a challenge they're slowly adapting to and, in fact, may have a long-term effect on how sports are marketed in the future, Bill Bergofin, senior vice president, sports brand and content development at NBCUniversal-owned Telemundo Deportes, said Thursday during Promax's live webinar, "How Do You Market Sports When Sports Aren't Being Played?"

"We're constantly challenging the team to break the mold at the end of the day, I think we're gonna have a lot of learnings coming out of this," he said.

"This is the moment to try new things and think creatively," Bill Battin, Fox Sports' senior vice president, on-air promotions, added.

When the NBA and NHL abruptly suspended their seasons earlier this month, marketing teams brainstormed new ways to repurpose archival and stock footage with the added challenge of working from home. Part of that adjustment was realizing that highly produced content was less practical.

"There's a scrappiness going on, which in some ways feels old school and fun and all hands on deck," said Carrie Brzezinski-Hsu, vice president, ESPN multimedia sponsorship integration and ESPN CreativeWorks. Brzezinski-Hsu also moderated the panel. "That's driven some new innovation that is not that innovative in what it is, but the fact that we brought it back to light is interesting."

"We're seeing people coming up with ways to pass time and kill the boredom—we're all trying to figure out what that is. How can we make that kind of content that serves our fans as well? We miss the fans as much as they miss us, so what's that content that speaks to everyone and keeps them engaged?" Battin said.

For starters, networks have resurrected old games, matches and specials to engage sports fans during the hiatus. On what would have been MLB's Opening Day, for example, MLB Network broadcast classic Opening Day games throughout the day, while ESPN2 aired an eight-hour Home Run Derby marathon.

For Fox Sports, the answer came as its talent and athletes, such as sports commentator Joe Buck, approached the network to put a spin on its already popular content.

On Twitter, Buck has been providing play-by-plays on the daily quarantine activities of those who submit their videos. He's also asking those who have been selected to donate any amount to a charity.

As marketers continue to navigate the new landscape of sports marketing, they're keeping the long-term in mind as well. Due to the "pent-up demand" from fans itching for sports' return, networks are hoping to take advantage when the time comes.

"In the short term, there's definitely demand in giving them editorial and entertainment content that they want today—we but we [also] have events coming up this summer and campaigns that we're lining up," Bergofin said.

He's also interested and excited to see how sports' current content will play out when things "return to normal," including the expanded potential for marketing materials.

"Now we're looking at what else we can do that's not just typical promo spots. We're creating all of the seeds of great pieces of content and the situation has created the ability to bring it toward linear television."

Promax will host its next webinar, "How to Keep Your Team Connected in Times of Adversity," with Scott Edwards, executive vice president, Fox creative advertising, on Tuesday, March 31 at 12 p.m. PT. Sign up [here](#).

[Videos courtesy of @JoeBuck on Twitter]