

5 Reasons NHL Playoff TV Ratings are Up

Written by Matthew Coller
Thursday, 22 April 2010 04:28



Who says the NHL needs a new TV deal? Through the first five days of playoff hockey, Versus has scored its highest playoff ratings since 2002. The network averaged a 0.6 household rating (up 50 percent) and 543,000 viewers (up 21 percent), according to Nielsen data. The 2009 postseason numbers were 0.4 and 447,000 respectively. Versus saw a boost in key demographics including 6 percent in 18 to 34 males and 18 percent with men 25 to 54.

The last time the NHL saw numbers this high, the league could be seen on ESPN2.

Some highlights from regional sports networks included a 12.2 overnight ratings for the Buffalo Sabres vs. Boston Bruins Game 1 on MSG Network and a 21.6 rating for Game 3 of the Pittsburgh Penguins vs. Ottawa Senators.

So why the boost? Here's five reasons why the NHL's ratings are up:

Olympics

USA vs. Canada introduced us to a few things: How great hockey can be when something is on the line and the Olympics introduced casual fans to the league's top American players.

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Fourteen players from the USA men's hockey team are currently playing in the NHL playoffs.

Close games

This one's pretty self explanatory, if games are close, people will want to watch them. Here's the score through those first five days: 18 of the first 20 games were separated by two goals or less.

Ovechkin and Crosby

These guys are the faces of the league, they are clearly the most recognizable and most exciting players in the league. Plus, they benefit from having contrasting images; you're either a Crosby person or Ovechkin person, you can't like both. When these two are in it, casual fans will watch. It's kind of like having two Tiger Woods' without the....nevermind.

Scoring

Casual fans like goals. Heck, fanatics like goals. There has been an average of 5.75 goals per game, which is up 46 percent from 2004, the last year of clutching and grabbing.

NHL.com

The league's website is one of the best among sports leagues. It's accessible, it's easy to navigate and the site is very easy to navigate. And, it's very easy to find where to find the goods. The SHOP.NHL.COM link is right at the top above all the team names along with pictures of merchandise (orders are up 37 percent).

In a press release by Versus, the network listed growth of unique visitors to NHL.com through

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the first five weeks of the playoffs:

- Phoenix (+121 percent)
- Buffalo (+100 percent)
- Nashville (+ 85 percent)
- Denver (+74 percent)
- Boston (+63 percent)
- Chicago (+42 percent)
- *Dallas-Ft. Worth (+41 percent)
- Ottawa (+41 percent)
- Montreal (+34 percent)
- Los Angeles (+34 percent)
- Philadelphia (+22 percent)
- Washington D.C. (+21 percent)
- Vancouver (+17 percent)
- Tampa-St. Pete (+13 percent)
- Pittsburgh (+11 percent)
- *Toronto (+10 percent)
- *Atlanta (+6 percent)
- *Edmonton (+6 percent)

*team did not make playoffs

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