

Versus Sets Viewership Record With Flyers-Pens

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Game Two of the Eastern Conference Finals between the Philadelphia Flyers and Pittsburgh Penguins was the most watched telecast ever on Versus. 2.375 million viewers tuned in, shattering the previous mark of 1.725 million viewers that tuned in for the final stage of Lance Armstrong's final Tour de France on July 24, 2005.

The game earned a 1.8 coverage area rating, second best to the 2.1 received by that Tour de France. Eastern Conference Semifinal Game Four, a New York Rangers win over Pittsburgh, ranks as the fourth most watched broadcast on Versus, drawing 1.2 million viewers.

Versus subscriber base has expanded to 75 million homes, significantly higher than 2005, explaining how more people watched the hockey game though it received a lower coverage rating than the tour. The wider distribution also accounts for this seasons hockey games ranking among the most watched on the net.

Regular season hockey ratings grew 20% over last season on Versus. The quarterfinals jumped 23%, and the conference semifinals, which Versus has an exclusive agreement preventing local broadcast competition, were up 40%. Despite the strong ratings, Versus still lags behind the pre-strike numbers posted on ESPN and ESPN2 in 2003-2004. ESPN and ESPN2 averaged .50 and .40 coverage ratings in the first round respectively, and .79 and .49 in the Conference Semifinals, compared to the .37 and .59 posted by Versus this season.

Source: Sports Business Daily, Sports Business Journal