

COLUMNS

## London Olympics' "live" NBC coverage: Dead on arrival

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By **Jeff Hasen**

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Pointing to the large number of viewers via television, PCs and mobile devices, NBC considers Olympics critics the loud minority.

Count me in the unhappy camp.

By the way, it is not the first nor will it be the last time that I've been called a loudmouth.

My beef?

Broken promises, the biggest one being that all events but the ceremonies would be shown live.

It is what it isn't

The Olympics are nothing if not memories.

In my previous professional lives, I was a sportswriter for the 1984 Los Angeles Games, and was project director of the "look and feel" program for the 2002 Olympics in Salt Lake City, UT. I was all over the Atlanta competitions in 1996 and on the stadium floor in Nagano, Japan, in 1998.

Every one of them fits in the unbelievable experience category.

Which takes me to my biggest takeaway from NBC's London coverage.

I will tell you what live is not – seeing on Twitter the result of Usain Bolt's 9.63-second 100-meter win before what NBC presented to us as a live stream was sent to U.S. viewers on computers or, in my case, an iPad.

Former president Bill Clinton famously said, "It depends upon what the meaning of the word 'is' is."

In so many words, NBC said, "It depends on what the meaning of the word 'live' is."

Why is this such a big deal? Why cannot I be content with 5,500 hours from London, unprecedented as far as Olympics are concerned?

Because we live in real time. Even a delay of 9.63 seconds matters. An estimated 2 billion people saw the race before NBC gave us the "live" look.

If you think I am wrong, imagine the uproar if the results of the Academy Awards were shown somewhere 10 seconds before the announcements were made on the telecast.

In my house, if I shouted out the winners 10 seconds early, my wife would kick me out in Olympic record fashion. And she would be right.

Live is live. It is 2012.

Coasting – for now

The ceremonies were delayed first to the East Coast of the United States, then three more hours before those of us on the left coast got a look.

I saw live coverage via tweets and blogs, then another round of commentary from East Coasters long before I settled in for the NBC airing.

Easy, you say. Turn everything off. Stay away from the news.

It is not happening. It is not how we choose to live.

I have one word for those who are hoping that the International Olympic Committee will intervene and prevent future disappointments – please.

IOC spokesman Mark Adams said, "It's certainly not for us to tell them how to reach their audience."

Of course it is not. That is the job of the loud minority.

NBC, have you ever considered the fact that we may be right?

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