

A fresh start for NBC Olympics: No more “plausibly live” for Paris Games this summer

By David Bauder
The Associated Press

NEW YORK — The days of “plausibly live” Olympics coverage on NBC are coming to an end.

The network displayed some of the new features it has planned for coverage of the Summer Olympics in Paris starting on July 26 — including personalized highlights packages generated by artificial intelligence with the voice of Al Michaels and a star turn by Steven Spielberg — but none could match the sea change in attitude toward how the games are presented.

For years, NBC has zealously guarded its primetime Olympics telecasts no matter the time zone, aggravating fans blocked from seeing key events if they happen earlier in the day live. Attempts to essentially pretend that the events were being seen live added to frustration.

This year, NBC said that Mike Tirico will host two daily Olympics shows, one that coincides with primetime in Paris (2:00pm to 5:00pm Eastern in the United States) and featuring live competition in marquee sports like swimming, gymnastics, and track & field. The other, during primetime hours in the United States while Paris sleeps, will be a curated view of the day’s best action.

Meanwhile, the network promised that its affiliated Peacock streaming service would show every Olympic competition live.

“We’ve given the audience choice, which I think the consumer wants,” said Molly Solomon, NBC Olympics executive producer. “We know how popular live sports

Detroit’s Kenta Maeda says he’s OK despite taking line drive off glove and stomach

ANAHEIM, Calif. (AP) — Detroit Tigers pitcher Kenta Maeda should be on schedule to make his next start despite being hit by a liner during the sixth inning of a recent Friday game against the Los Angeles Angels.

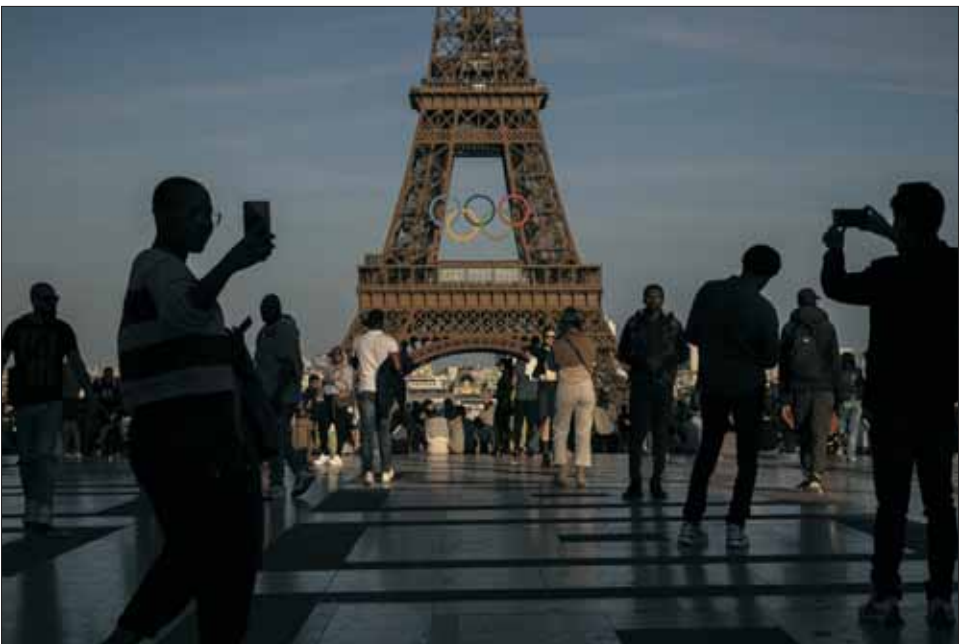
Taylor Ward’s line drive up the middle appeared to hit Maeda on his right hip, but it first went off his glove hand and then his stomach as the ball deflected toward first base. Maeda tried running to the bag as Mark Canha fielded the ball, but he grimaced and dropped to his knee in pain before getting to first base.

The 36-year old Japanese right-hander, who came in with a 2-4 record, walked back to the mound and then to the dugout on his own after talking to manager A.J. Hinch and trainers.

Hinch said he took Maeda out because he was at 87 pitches and Kevin Pillar was the next batter.

“I was surprised,” Maeda said through an interpreter about the comebacker. “It would have been nice if I could have made the play.”

Maeda allowed two runs and six hits and struck out four in 5 1/3 innings. He left with the score tied 2-2.



OLYMPIC VIEWING. People are seen taking photos of the Olympic rings that are displayed on the Eiffel Tower in Paris. The 2024 Paris Olympic Games begin July 26, 2024 and end August 11, 2024. Broadcaster NBC is planning new features for its coverage of the 2024 Summer Olympics. (AP Photo/Aurelien Morissard)

Moving away from the past on Peacock

Lazarus also acknowledged that NBC did a poor job with its Olympics offerings on Peacock four years ago, essentially overpromising and underdelivering, and consumers reacted with “the big digital middle finger.”

He promised dramatic improvement for Peacock this summer.

The streamer is also using AI to allow fans to create personalized highlights packages, by picking in advance some favorite sports and the type of action they would like to see. AI will then deliver those specific highlights, narrated by an AI-generated model of Michaels’ voice — eerily realistic during a demonstration last week.

NBC estimates it will create some 7 million variations of highlight packages through the new service.

Besides Snoop Dogg, NBC is bringing in celebrities like Kelly Clarkson, Peyton Manning, and Jimmy Fallon for its coverage. It announced that “Saturday Night Live” actor Colin Hanks will help cover surfing from Tahiti. And to emphasize storytelling — NBC is billing the Olympics as a reality show, comedy, and drama all in one — Spielberg will narrate *Land of Stories*, a short film that will run before the Olympics opening ceremonies.

is, so to hold something back doesn’t make any sense in this new media landscape.”

What does the decision mean?

That means reconfiguring how NBC structures its telecast for primetime in the United States, always the biggest draw for viewers. NBC won’t just show competitions, but will use the extra time to tell viewers more about why things played out the way they did, and give a backstage view, she said.

Producers are aware that many viewers come to those delayed broadcasts already knowing who won some of the events, while others won’t and will want to be surprised.

“We never want to ruin the suspense,” Solomon said. “But it is a tightrope act.”

More heavily than in the past, NBC will lean into personality profiles of athletes

and feature celebrities in the coverage; Snoop Dogg, for example, is coming to Paris on NBC’s dime. Solomon said she might make use of features that are being planned for Peacock, such as a highlights package narrated by Kevin Hart and Kenan Thompson.

“It’s going to look very different from the primetime shows that you’ve seen in the past,” she said.

That will also require some business adjustments, with NBC selling advertising packages that include inventory in both “primetime” broadcasts, said Mark Lazarus, chairman of the NBC Universal Media Group. The network is also preparing to emphasize viewership counts across all of its platform, in a way that deflects attention from likely ratings decreases in the evening compared to past

A few midwives seek to uphold Native Hawaiian birth traditions. Would a state law jeopardize them?

By Jennifer Sinco Kelleher and Gene Johnson
The Associated Press

HONOLULU — Ki’ianiokalani Kaho’ohanohano longed for a deeper connection to her Native Hawaiian ancestors and culture as she prepared to give birth to her first child at home on the north shore of Maui in 2003.

But generations of colonialist suppression had eroded many Hawaiian traditions, and it was hard to find information on how the islands’ Indigenous people honored pregnancy or childbirth. Nor could she find a Native Hawaiian midwife.

That experience led Kaho’ohanohano — now a mother of five — to become a Native Hawaiian midwife herself, a role in which she spent years helping to deliver as many as three babies a month, receiving them in a traditional cloth made of woven bark and uttering sacred, tremorous chants as she welcomed them into the world.

Her quest to preserve tradition also led her into a downtown Honolulu courtroom in June, where she and others are seeking to block a state law that they say endangers their ability to continue serving pregnant women who hope for such customary Native Hawaiian births.

“To be able to have our babies in the places and in the ways of our kupuna, our ancestors, is very vital,” she

testified. “To me, the point of what we do is to be able to return birth home to these places.”

Lawmakers enacted a midwife licensure law in 2019, finding that the “improper practice of midwifery poses a significant risk of harm to the mother or newborn, and may result in death.” Violations are punishable by up to a year in jail, plus thousands of dollars in criminal and civil fines.

The measure requires anyone who provides “assessment, monitoring, and care” during pregnancy, labor, childbirth, and during the postpartum period to be licensed. The women’s lawsuit says that would include a wide range of people, including midwives, doulas, lactation consultants, and even family and friends of the new mother.

Until last summer, the law provided an exception for “birth attendants,” which allowed Kaho’ohanohano to continue practicing Native Hawaiian birth customs. With that exception now expired, however, she and others face the licensing requirements — which, they say, include costly programs only available out of state or online that don’t align with Hawaiian culture and beliefs.

In 2022, the average cost of an accredited midwifery program was \$6,200 to \$6,900 a year, according to court documents filed by the state.

Attorneys for the state argued in a court filing that the law “undoubtedly serves a compelling interest in protecting pregnant persons from receiving ill-advice from untrained individuals.”

State deputy attorney general Isaac Ickes told judge Shirley Kawamura that the law doesn’t outlaw Native Hawaiian midwifery or homebirths, but that requiring a license reduces the risks of harm or death.

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India asks for the return of its citizens who were recruited by the Russian army

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missing in action.

The South Asian island nation said its citizens were duped into travelling to Russia with promises of good salaries and perks including Russian citizenship. Nepal in January asked Russia to send back hundreds of Nepali nationals who were recruited to fight against Ukraine.

At least 14 Nepali nationals have died in Ukraine.

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