

# ESPN pulling videos from YouTube due to rights issues

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In this Aug. 2, 2011 file photo, satellite dishes dot the campus of ESPN in Bristol, Conn. ESPN has begun removing its videos from YouTube due to rights and legal issues surrounding next week's launch of YouTube's ad-free subscription service, Red. (AP Photo/Jessica Hill, File)

ESPN has begun removing its videos from YouTube due to rights issues surrounding next week's launch of YouTube's ad-free subscription service, Red.

Fans can go to ESPN's own websites for its videos, the sports network said Friday.

The \$10-per-month Red service launching Wednesday combines ad-free viewing with unlimited on-demand music. YouTube has said that creators have to participate in Red to have their videos show on YouTube in the U.S., even on the free ad-supported side. It has said creators behind 99 percent of all content watched on the site have signed on, including ESPN's parent, The Walt Disney Co.

Spokeswomen for both ESPN and YouTube on Friday declined to say what legal issues might impede its participation.

Media analyst Laura Martin of Needham & Co. said it is likely that ESPN's pre-existing contracts with cable and satellite companies like Comcast Corp. prevent it from participating in YouTube's subscription plan.

"It has to leave YouTube so it doesn't get sued by its pre-existing partners," she said.

ESPN's contracts with pay TV distributors are multi-year deals. Comcast's can't be renegotiated before expiring around eight years from now, Martin said. "I think YouTube will have to cave if they want ESPN back."

On ESPN's main YouTube channel, the most recent videos are now 4 years old, but some specific channels like ESPN First Take have videos that are new as of Friday.

YouTube began sending out new contracts to its creators six months ago to sign new terms that would allow them to participate in new revenue from Red subscriptions. Those that don't participate would have their

videos turned to private in the U.S., effectively turning them off for all but the uploader.

YouTube is part of Google, a division of the newly created holding company Alphabet Inc.

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