

Amazon will stream AVP beach volleyball tour next 3 summers

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In this July 16, 2015 file photo, Carol Welcher, right, tries to get the ball over the net in front of Jennifer Henderson during an Association of Volleyball Professionals qualifying tournament, with a view of the Manhattan skyline, in the Brooklyn borough of New York. Amazon has an agreement with the AVP tour to livestream almost every match from every tournament for the next three summers. The deal announced Thursday, Dec. 14, 2017, could provide a boost for a sport that emerges as an Olympic favorite for American TV audiences every four years but has struggled to sustain viewership. (AP Photo/Seth Wenig, File)

Amazon is going shopping for TV content, and it's putting some beach volleyball in its cart.

The internet retail giant has an agreement with the AVP tour to livestream almost every match from every tournament for the next three summers. The domestic beach circuit joins NFL Thursday night games and some men's tennis on Amazon Prime Video, which sends shows to TVs, phones, tablets, game consoles and other connected screens around the world.

"When Amazon has interest in anything you do, you pick up the phone," AVP managing partner Donald Sun told The Associated Press. "The fact that they've made the decision, it's definitely a positive for the AVP in terms of being on that train."

The deal announced Thursday could provide a boost for a sport that emerges as an Olympic favorite for American TV audiences every four years but has struggled to sustain viewership. Next year's AVP tour is scheduled to make eight stops, from the sport's longtime venues in California to Seattle, Chicago, New York and Austin, Texas.

Sun said numbers from the tour's broadcasts on NBC and its own livestream were "pretty robust." But the opportunity offered by an Amazon partnership "was quite the no-brainer," he said.

"They clearly have shown their technological know-how," Sun said. "Everything that they've sought out to be, whether it is buying grocery chains to producing movies now, they clearly have the bandwidth and knowledge."

Jim DeLorenzo, the head of sports for Amazon Video, said the NFL

streaming has been a success so far. It also will offer 37 ATP tennis events live and on demand in Britain and Ireland.

The AVP tournaments will be available in nearly every country in the world and on more than 600 devices, Amazon said, from TVs to mobile devices and game consoles. In the U.S., one match per event—the men's or women's final—will be broadcast exclusively by NBC or its sports network.

DeLorenzo declined to comment on Amazon's future plans for live sports streaming.

"It's too soon to say," he said. "We're in the early, early stages of this."

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