

Amazon looks to build on 1st season of NFL streaming

January 11 2018, by Josh Dubow

Amazon had a mostly successful debut into live streaming of major sports events, with increased audience and an improved viewing experience in its first season showing NFL games.

The question looking ahead is how aggressively will Amazon be in the sports streaming landscape?

"It's too soon to say," said Jim DeLorenzo, the head of Amazon Sports. "We're just in the early stages here. We were definitely pleased with the way things played out. It was great to partner with the NFL on this and we were really happy with how our customers reacted to it. But it's too soon to say this impacts our strategy going forward."

Amazon.com Inc. already had smaller deals with the ATP Tour to air last year's Next Gen ATP Finals and the rights to show some men's tennis tournaments to customers in the United Kingdom and Ireland, as well as an upcoming deal to show beach volleyball events.

But the NFL is the biggest endeavor Amazon has made so far after paying \$50 million for the rights to stream 10 Thursday night games and an additional one on Christmas.

Amazon built on the [audience](#) Twitter had in 2016 in the first year of streaming on Thursday nights, with the averaging per-minute audience for the 11 games hitting 310,000, a 17 percent increase from Twitter's numbers.

On a per capita basis, the biggest audience was in the District of Columbia, followed by Washington, Colorado, Oregon and Utah. Prime members in Montana, Wyoming, South Dakota, North Dakota and North Carolina watched for the longest amount of time.

Viewers who already are used to watching movies and scripted shows on Amazon's various platforms stayed longer on the NFL, with the average viewer watching for 63 minutes.

The feed was usually much cleaner than on Twitter or some other streaming services and was delivered even faster than some cable systems, as opposed to the usual delay for online streaming.

"This was really our first step into distributing live sporting events at scale on a global basis," DeLorenzo said. "Of course there was learning. Because we're so early on in that process of distributing this kind of content to our customers, there are a number of things we can look at along the way."

Even though television audiences for the NFL dropped for the second straight year as people cut the cord and drop cable or satellite service, the streaming audience on Amazon was still a small fraction compared with the more than 10 million viewers who watched on average the Thursday night games on NBC, CBS or the NFL Network. CBS and NBC pay about \$45 million per [game](#) for the rights to their Thursday night broadcasts.

The NFL will decide soon its plans for Thursday night games next season, but it is expected to once again split the package between a broadcast and streaming partner.

Amazon offered alternate language feeds for the broadcast to cater to some of the fans from more 220 countries who tuned into the games,

with feeds in Spanish, Portuguese and "U.K. English," for those less familiar with the American version of football.

"That was a fun component of what we were doing and we were glad to see customers reacted well to that as well," DeLorenzo said.

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