

ESPN STAR Sports announces launch of 'STAR Cricket', a dedicated 24x7 cricket channel

The new channel, christened STAR Cricket, will commence transmission in the month of June 2007. STAR Cricket will be the 15th network launched by ESPN STAR Sports in the Asia Pacific region.

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ESPN STAR Sports, Asia's premier sports broadcaster, announced the launch of a dedicated Cricket Channel especially for audiences in the Indian subcontinent. The new channel, christened STAR Cricket, will commence transmission in the month of June 2007. STAR Cricket will be the 15th network launched by ESPN STAR Sports in the Asia Pacific region.

Speaking on the occasion, R C Venkateish, Managing Director, ESPN Software India Pvt Ltd, said, "ESPN STAR Sports has recently acquired the rights to many major sports properties including the biggest cricket property in the world, the ICC global telecast rights. The two channels that we have are already brimming with high quality content. Going forward, we intend to further strengthen our content line up both in cricket and other sports, which we will showcase on our networks. The launch of STAR Cricket is part of our long term strategy to further strengthen our offering to the sports fans in the country.

STAR Cricket will showcase live India and non India cricket for the passionate Indian cricket fan. We plan to add quality first class cricket coverage from around the globe as well. The channel will also showcase feature programming on cricket including reality shows, archival programming and magazine shows."

Describing the need for a dedicated cricket channel, Venkateish said, "With lots of cricket and other sporting properties with us, we decided to give the Indian fans the unmatched joy of enjoying their cricket with the depth they would like to see. While ESPN and STAR Sports will also continue to broadcast LIVE cricket as well as other key properties, STAR Cricket will be the one stop destination of all the cricket action, history, updates, views and reviews."

Ravi Shastri, ESPN STAR Sports expert commentator and the recently appointed manager of the Indian cricket team for the upcoming tour of Bangladesh said, "Cricket is a religion in India -- the interest, passion and emotion this game evokes will remain unmatched for all times to come. With Cricket being an integral part of our lives, a dedicated cricket channel with the right mix of live, non-live and feature programming was always needed and I am delighted STAR Cricket would fill this existing gap. There is a huge interest for live, quality, first class cricketing action from the top test playing nations as well as content meticulously customised for the Indian audiences, which is what STAR Cricket would strive to provide its viewers. I personally believe STAR Cricket is the best thing ever to have happened to the Indian cricket fan."

Harsha Bhogle, renowned cricket commentator and fellow member of the "Few Good Men" on ESPN STAR Sports, said, "I believe STAR Cricket will be everything a cricket channel should be with a combination of live cricket and specially produced programming. I hope a real cricket lover will feel he is at home with STAR Cricket for he will get to see more than international cricket. When I was young, we could hardly follow games unless the newspaper published the scorecards; then the internet arrived but this will give people an opportunity to see and form their own opinion. I would like

to believe we will present cricket with a conscience."

With the ICC telecast rights for the next eight years and rights from Test-playing nations like England and Australia, the ESPN STAR Sports network is looking at a total of 24 Test matches and 42 One Day internationals in 2007 alone. In addition, ESPN STAR Sports will also showcase the ICC Twenty20 World Cup later this year featuring 27 matches.

In addition, ESPN and STAR Sports have an exciting array of non cricket properties like F1 and A1 in Motor Sports, Euro 2008 in soccer, the hugely popular English Premier League and Spanish La Liga, Grand Slam Tennis action from the Australian Open, French Open and Wimbledon, the Premier Hockey League and best of action from the world of Golf and Wrestling.

With STAR Cricket coming on air in June cricket fans will be able to watch the India tour of England where they will play four tests and seven One Day Internationals.

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About ESPN STAR Sports

ESPN STAR Sports is a 50:50 joint venture between two of the world's leading cable and satellite broadcasters. As Asia's definitive and complete sports broadcaster and content provider, ESPN STAR Sports combines the strengths and resources of its ultimate parent companies - Walt Disney (ESPN, Inc.) and News Corporation Limited (STAR) - to deliver a diverse array of international and regional sports to viewers via its encrypted pay and free-to-air services.

ESPN STAR Sports showcases an unparalleled variety of premier live sports from around the globe 24 hours a day to a cumulative reach of more than 276 million viewers in Asia. ESPN STAR Sports has 14 (and now 15) networks covering 24 countries, each localized to deliver differentiated world-class premier sports programming to Asian viewers. This includes ESPN Asia, ESPN China, ESPN India, ESPN Taiwan, ESPN Singapore, ESPN Philippines, MBC-ESPN (Korea), ESPN Hong Kong, STAR Sports Hong Kong, STAR Sports Asia, STAR Sports India, STAR Sports Taiwan, STAR Sports Southeast Asia and STAR Sports Singapore.

On the ground, the ESPN STAR Sports Event Management Group manages and promotes premier sporting events around Asia. The multi-lingual, online platforms, espnstar.com, espnstar.com.cn and espnstar.com.tw and footballcrazy.tv interact with millions of users providing them with in-depth sports news, results and competitions.

mobileESPN enables sports fans to follow their favourite sports more closely than ever with content specially delivered via their mobile phones. mobileESPN is the first of a regional suite of services to be offered across seven markets in Asia Pacific - Airtel (India), Hutch (India), Idea (India), BSNL (India), BPL Mobile (India), CSL (Hong Kong), Globe Telecom (Philippines) Maxis (Malaysia), SingTel (Singapore), Taiwan Mobile (Taiwan), Telkomsel (Indonesia), StarHub (Singapore), MobileOne (Singapore), PCCW (Hong Kong), Sunday (Hong Kong) and Astro (Malaysia). Our other multi-media platforms include fully-managed wireless services ranging from SMS/MMS to WAP.

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