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Let the Games begin, online

STORY HIGHLIGHTS

- IOC has licensed separate rights to Games to online sites for first time
- Crack-down on illegally uploaded video aimed at major web sites not personal blogs
- New technology can quickly identify illicit content, like biometrics for broadcasting

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By Kevin Voigt
For CNN

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(CNN) -- The Beijing Games have officially become the first "YouTube" Olympics.



Eyes down for a record: More people will watch the Beijing Games online than any other Olympics.

Earlier this week the IOC reached an agreement with Google, owner of YouTube, to allow highlights to be broadcast in 77 territories around the world where digital rights to the Games haven't been sold.

And in countries where digital rights have been sold the pressure to prevent illegal piracy is being stepped up.

As **Beijing** clears the streets in sweeps for pirated DVDs, the Chinese government's National Copyright Administration announced stiff new laws prohibiting the uploading of videos of Olympic events to unauthorized Web sites or face fines up \$15,000.

With the profusion of social networking and peer-to-peer file sharing Web sites, does this mean spectators will be shaken down for every video camera and digital phone held aloft during Olympic events?

No, says Stephane Kanah, head of digital media for the International Olympic Committee (IOC). So far as the IOC is concerned, the message to individuals who want to share personal videos online from **Olympic events** is this: Go for it.

"For a spectator to take pictures or video and put it on a blog, usually we tend to tolerate this," Kanah says.

"They are not really competing with the broadcasters?it's more of a, 'Look, I was there! Look at me!' kind of quality."

In fact, the **IOC** is investigating ways to incorporate more user-generated content at future Games.

"We would like to be able to capture some of that ... how can we invite users who have content to share that? What kind of platform can be used? How can we create something through social networking platforms?" Kanah says. "We encourage [licensed rights holders] to do the same."

NBC Universal, the U.S. broadcast rights holder, has ambitious plans to stream online 3500 hours of footage of the Beijing Games, and it isn't worried about the "lone cameraman" purloining broadcast rights.

Unlike pirating movies, live sports events require dozens of cameras from multiple angles and a great deal of coordination.

"With sports programming, it's so complicated to produce, so difficult to get the data out there in a way that [viewers] can understand what they are seeing," says Perkins Miller, senior vice president of digital media for NBC Sports and Olympics.

Even if NBC wanted to harness user-generated content to complement its broadcast, the sheer amount of video makes the task daunting.

"There's really a tremendous amount of volume being produced already, which requires users to be able to find it easily and to be able to navigate the site," says Miller.

Targeting peer-to-peer sites

The real target of the online piracy crackdown are peer-to-peer Web sites where unauthorized video produced by the IOC or Olympics rights holders are captured and uploaded online.

The IOC, CCTV.com and NBC Universal have contracted **Vobile Inc**, a Californian company, to use its "VideoDNA" technology to help stop piracy.

"Two or three years ago, to examine [online video for piracy] you had to have people comparing footage frame by frame," says Yangbin Wang, CEO of Vobile.

VideoDNA software works like "biometrics for security purposes?scanning the image of the iris or a fingerprint" to identify copied video online in real time.

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Wang claims that scanning the Internet for illegal uploads in Olympic markets is "less daunting than Google, which scans Web page by Web page ... in our case, most of the violations happen on a few sites.

"For example, in the U.S. YouTube accounts for 70 percent of the video online, so if you cover YouTube, then you're covering 70 percent of the

market," he says.



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"If you take the top 100 or 200 [video sharing Web sites] in a market, then you've got pretty comprehensive coverage."

Even before the Games begin, the threat of policing pirated videos has already earned dividends for CCTV.com, which holds digital rights for the Beijing Games?the first games that have separately awarded broadcast and online rights in several Asian markets.

So far, CCTV.com has awarded nine official sublicenses to popular video sharing Web sites such as Youku.com, pps.tv and UUSee.com.

"These companies are paying a minimum of \$1.5 million, so that's already a nice profit and it shows this sort of (anti-piracy) effort can be successful in China," says Wang. [E-mail to a friend](#) [Mixx it](#) [Share](#)

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Online Video an Olympic Feat for NBC

While we've talked a lot about the 2,200 hours of video that will be available on NBCOlympics.com, it's worth noting that providing all that video will be an Olympic event in and of itself. I recently spoke with Brick Eksten, president of Digital Rapids, the company that will be compressing the video for the games, to find out what will go on...

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