The whole is greater than the sum of its sports ...

Editorial by SporTVision's Jay Stuart

At SportAccord in Madrid in May, Dick Ebersol, chairman of NBC Sports of the USA, called the Olympic Games an *"island of health"* in the troubled world of television sports.

Shortly thereafter he showed just how healthy the Games are by agreeing to pay over $2 billion for the rights to the 2010 winter and 2012 summer editions. But the NBC Sports honcho also repeated an important truth about Olympic sports and television. Taken individually, none of the sports on the summer and winter programs, with a single exception, would achieve a high enough rating to earn a slot on one of the major American networks.

That's right. None of the world championships of the Olympic sports would get on the air without having to pay for the time. Ebersol wasn't just talking about shooting or luge. The same 'no' applies to the big guns of the Olympic Movement - the likes of athletics, swimming and skiing. The networks don't want them. The one exception is figure skating. And that s largely because it rates well among female audiences.

Now, at first glance, this may not look like terribly good news for sports that are smaller than those on the Olympic program. If athletics can't get on the air, what hope is there for roller sports? The networks won't even take swimming, much less fin swimming. If the Olympic sports aren't strong enough, where does that leave the rest?

Where it leaves them is in The World Games, whose potential appears large indeed!

Think of this way! Take 28 summer sports that one by one are supposedly too weak to be on network television. Put them together in one place at one time under a strong brand - the Olympic Games - and suddenly you have the biggest property in world television.

That is an exciting example for The World Games to emulate. Coming together in one place at one time under a strong brand, the whole of The World Games can be worth so much more than the sum of the sports. Obviously, a very great deal needs to be done to make the leap to success. But one key ingredient may be a question of self-perception as much as anything else.

Ebersol stressed something about the Olympics that The World Games would do well to take note of. The reason the Olympics work on television, he said, is that they enable television to *"tell stories"*, which is what it does best. The Olympics are about people, and people - viewers are people too - are interested in other people.

The World Games might want to start thinking that way too - as being not only about a bunch of sports, but about people too. People who are passionate about their sports, who fight, suffer, rejoice, love and do all those things that television likes to show. Television likes people, and even pays for them ... sometimes.

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