

# Network ratings for Winter Games fizzle

The XX Olympic Winter Games (8 p.m., NBC) continue. Scheduled events include the figure-skating champions gala, alpine skiing (the women's giant slalom gold medal final), four-man bobsled and the men's 10,000-meter gold medal speed-skating event.



Kevin McDonough

Over the course of the games, much has been made of the fact that the Games have failed to capture a dominant TV audience. "American Idol" and, to a lesser extent, "Dancing with the Stars" received far higher ratings than the Turin games.

Earlier this week, NBC Sports Chairman Dick Ebersol attempted to put these perceptions into some context.

He acknowledged that the Winter Olympic ratings were down between 20 percent and 25 percent from the 1998 Nagano Winter Games, the last time they were conducted in a foreign venue in a different time zone. But ratings for nearly all sporting events and TV spectacles have declined since 1998.

According to Ebersol, ratings for NBA basketball have declined 56 percent since 1998 and the World Series and "Monday Night Football" have dipped 21 percent and 22 percent, respectively.

He noted that the increasingly crowded and competitive entertainment marketplace has taken its toll on the Oscars (down 27 percent) and Grammys (down 32 percent).

In this case, I'm with Ebersol. I'm not surprised that the Games' ratings are declining. I'm surprised they are as strong as they are. We're talking about night after night of luge and ice dancing. In his comments, Ebersol didn't even mention NHL hockey, a winter sport most comparable to the Winter Games.

Once carried by ABC, NHL games failed to find a national audience. Even the Stanley Cup Finals had woeful ratings. NHL games can now be found on the Outdoor Life Network and pay-per-view.

Ratings aside, the Olympics have suffered more than their share of setbacks, some self-inflicted. As noted here earlier, NBC has turned the Games into a commercial for high-definition television, and that has been a glaring experience for the vast majority of us without new-fangled sets.

NBC clearly invested too much in the stories of Bode Miller and Michelle Kwan. But, as a sports fan, you have to love it when games fail to follow a predictable script.

That's what makes sports, and the Olympics in particular, the best reality television of all. And the broadcast's dependence on

American "stars" was simply not in the spirit of the Games.

In the past, Olympic broadcasts have made household stars of the most interesting, accomplished and colorful athletes, regardless of nationality.

In 1972, viewers put the Cold War on hold and made Olga Korbut the darling of the Munich Games.

I wonder what great stories we've missed as NBC focused so much attention on the shenanigans in Miller's mobile home?

## Tonight's other highlights

- Even the dead find their birth mothers on "Ghost Whisperer," (8 p.m., CBS, TV-PG).
- The first lady asserts herself during a two-hour "24" (8 p.m., Fox, TV-14, V).
- Jodie Foster and Anthony Hopkins star in the 1991 horror film "The Silence of the Lambs" (8 p.m., AMC, TV-14, V), directed by Jonathan Demme.
- Darwyn advises a youngster to stay away from suspected terrorists on a repeat of "Sleeper Cell" (9 p.m., Showtime).

• An Olympic hopeful battles bulimia as she hides her pregnancy in "Dying to Be Perfect: The Ellen Hart Pena Story" (7 p.m., Lifetime).

• Tom Bergeron hosts a two-hour helping of "America's Funniest Home Videos" (8 p.m., ABC, TV-PG) ... Wrestling on "WWE SmackDown!" (8 p.m., UPN) ... Love's hiatus on "What I Like About You" (8 p.m., WB, TV-PG, D) ... Nick Lachey guest stars on "Twins" (9:30 p.m., WB, TV-14, D).

• Hugh Laurie appears on "Late Show With David Letterman" (11:35 p.m., CBS) ... Jay Leno hosts Dana Carvey and Tyler Perry on "The Tonight Show" (12:05 p.m., NBC) ... Paul Walker, Bow Wow and Travis Barker appear on "Jimmy Kimmel Live" (12:05 a.m., ABC).

Kevin McDonough is a TV columnist for United Features Syndicate.

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## FRIDAY EVENING

## FEBRUARY 24, 2006

	7 PM	7:30	8 PM	8:30	9 PM	9:30	10 PM	10:30	11 PM	11:30
WTTV	Friends (CC)	Every-Raymond	What I Like	Living With Fran	Reba (N) (CC)	Twins "Himbo"	Sex and the City	Will & Grace	Sex and the City	Will & Grace
WRTV	The Insider (N)	Be a Millionaire	America's Funniest Home Videos (N) (CC)				20/20 (N) (CC)		News (CC)	Nightline (11:35)
WISH	Inside Edition	Ent. Tonight	Ghost Whisperer "Homecoming"	Close to Home "Double Life Wife"			NUMB3RS "Soft Target" (CC)		News (CC)	Late Show
WTHR	Jeopardy! (N)	Olympic Zone	XX Olympic Winter Games (CC)							
WFYI	Business Rpt.	Religion-Ethics	Indiana Week	McLaughlin	Wash. Week	NOW (N) (CC)	Inside Indiana Business		Lawmakers	Fools-Horses
WNDY	That '70s Show	That '70s Show	WWE Friday Night SmackDown!	(N) (CC)			News	Access H'wood	South Park	South Park
WTIU	The NewsHour With Jim Lehrer		Wash. Week	NOW (N) (CC)	Sci. Frontiers	Foreign Exchng	Weekly Special	Lawmakers	Tavis Smiley	Charlie Rose (N)
WHMB	The 700 Club (CC)		Harvest		High School Basketball				High School Basketball	Bruebuf at Carmel.
WCLJ	ACLJ	Primary Focus	Behind Scenes	Great Souls	Joel Osteen	Frederick Price	Praise the Lord (CC)			
WXIN	The Simpsons	Seinfeld (CC)	24 "Day 5: 2:00PM-3:00PM/Day 5: 3:00PM-4:00PM" (CC)				News (CC)	Geraldo Large	Seinfeld (11:05)	Drew Carey
WIPX	Balderdash	Family Feud	Another Pretty Face (PG) '02	Mel Harris, Sally Kirkland. Drama.			It's a Miracle		Time Life Music	Paid Program
WTBU	Bill Purvis	John Hagee	Rod Parsley	Joni Lamb	Celebration		Van Impe Pres	Balanced Living	This Is Your Day	Believer's Voice
A&E	American Justice "Serial Wife"		Biography "Gene Simmons" (CC)		Biography "Ozzy Osbourne" (CC)		Playboy's Celebrity Centerfolds (CC)			
AMC	Hustle Chance for Danny. (CC)		The Silence of the Lambs (R) '91	**** Jodie Foster, Scott Glenn.	Suspense.		Tales From the Crypt Presents Demon Knight **			
AP	The Most Extreme (CC)		The Planet's Funniest Animals		Animal Report	Animal Rescue	Miami Animal Police (CC)		The Planet's Funniest Animals	
BET	106 & Park:	BET.com Count	The Walk (NR) '05	Eva Pigford, Regina Belle, Teck Holmes. Drama.			Comicview		In Living Color	In Living Color
BRAVO	Inside the Actors Studio (CC)		Traffic (R) '00	*** Michael Douglas. The war on drugs brings many casualties and few victories.					Traffic (R) '00	*** Crime Drama.
CNBC	XX Olympic Winter Games (5)		On the Money		Mad Money		The Big Idea With Donny Deutsch		On the Money	
CMT	Dukes of Hazzard		Trick My Truck	Trick My Truck	Trick My Truck	American Revolutions: Southern Rock			Evening Shade	Evening Shade
CNN	The Situation Room		Paula Zahn Now (CC)		Larry King Live (CC)		Anderson Cooper 360 (CC)			
COM	Com.-Presents	Reno 911! (CC)	Daily Show	Colbert Report	Com.-Presents	Com.-Presents	Richard Pryor: I Ain't Dead Yet...		South Park	Drawn Together
DISC	The FBI Files "Deadly Payout"		The FBI Files "The Initiation"		The FBI Files Seven escapes.		A Haunting (CC)		The FBI Files "Deadly Payout"	
EI	EI News	EI News	Number 1 Single/Number 1 Single	Worst Red Carpet Moments			The Soup (N)		Girl Next Door	Saturday Night Live (CC)
ESPN	SportsCenter (6)	NBA	NBA Basketball	New Jersey Nets at New York Knicks. (CC)					NBA Basketball:	Lakers at Clippers
ESPN2	Boxing	Fishing 2006	CITGO Bassmaster Classic. (CC)		Boxing Friday Night Fights -- Oscar Diaz vs. Kendall Holt. (CC)				Quite Frankly With Smith	
FAM	Smallville "Facade" (CC)		Home Alone 2: Lost in New York (PG) '92	** Macaulay Culkin, Joe Pesci. Comedy. (CC)			Whose Line?		The 700 Club (CC)	
FNC	Fox Report With Shepard Smith		The O'Reilly Factor (CC)		Hannity & Colmes (CC)		On the Record-Van Susteren		The O'Reilly Factor	
FOOD	Good Eats	Unwrapped	Emeril Live Moroccan specialties.		\$40-a-Day	Tasty Travels	Roker on Road		Foodnation	Iron Chef "Sakai Spotlight" Sakai.
FOXMV	Dirty Mary, Crazy Larry (6) ***		Alien Nation (R) '88	** James Caan, Terence Stamp. Science Fiction.			Less Than Zero (R) '87	** Andrew McCarthy, Jami Gertz. Drama.		
FOXSM	NBA Basketball Atlanta Hawks at Indiana Pacers.				Pacers		Arena Football		Mizzou Basket.	Sports Report
FX	That '70s Show	That '70s Show	That '70s Show	That '70s Show	That '70s Show	That '70s Show	That '70s Show	That '70s Show	The Shield "Man Inside" (CC)	
HALL	Walker, Texas Ranger (CC)		Walker, Texas Ranger (CC)		Sarah, Plain and Tall: Winter's End	'99	** Glenn Close. Drama. (CC)		M*A*S*H (CC)	M*A*S*H (CC)
HGTV	Curb Appeal	House Hunters	Get Color	Design Remix	Double Take (N)	FreeStyle (N)	House Hunters	House Hunters	Debbie Travis' Facelift	
HIST	Modern Marvels	Avanche. (CC)	Little Ice Age: Big Chill	Sudden cold snaps. (CC)			Heroes Under Fire	Hostages.	Digging for the Truth (CC)	
LIFE	Dying to Be Perfect: The Ellen Hart Pena Story (96)	Crystal Bernard.	A Face to Kill For (PG-13) '99	** Doug Savant. Drama. (CC)			Will & Grace		Will & Grace	
MSNBC	Hardball (CC)		Countdown With Keith Olbermann		Lockup: Inside Folsom		MSNBC Investigates		MSNBC Special	Child abuse.
MTV	Growing Up	MTV's The Shop	Wild & Out	R. Wrlld Chal.	R. Wrlld Chal.	Casting Couch	Trick It Out	Trick It Out (N)	Trick It Out	Trick It Out
NICK	SpongeBob	Catscratch	Avatar-Last Air	The X's (N)	Danny Phantom	Danny Phantom	Full House (CC)	Fresh Prince	Fresh Prince	Cosby Show
OXY	Oprah After	Oprah After	Thorn Birds				Thorn Birds			
SCIFI	John Doe "Low Art" (CC)		Stargate SG-1 "Arthur's Mantle"		Stargate Atlantis "Michael" (N)		Battlestar Galactica (N) (CC)		Stargate SG-1 "Arthur's Mantle"	
SPIKE	CSI: Crime Scene Investigation		CSI: Crime Scene Investigation		CSI: Crime Scene Investigation		Austin Powers: International Man of Mystery (PG-13) '97	** Comedy.		
TBS	Every-Body!	Every-Raymond	Friends (CC)	Friends (CC)	Austin Powers: The Spy Who Shagged Me (PG-13) '99	*** Comedy.	Galaxy Quest (11:10) '99	***		
TCM	The Stratton Story (6) '49	***	The Karate Kid (PG) '84	** Ralph Macchio, Elisabeth Shue. Action.			Same Time, Next Year (10:15) (PG) '78	*** Ellen Burstyn. (CC)		
TLC	Wild Weddings (CC)		What Not to Wear "Belinda T."		What Not to Wear "Dara" (N)		What Not to Wear: \$50,000		What Not to Wear "Belinda T."	
TNT	Law & Order "C.O.D."		Twister (PG-13) '96	*** Helen Hunt, Cary Elwes. Drama. (CC)			Twister (PG-13) '96	*** Helen Hunt, Cary Elwes. Drama. (CC)		
TOON	Foster's Home	Grim Advent.	Camp Lazlo	Ben 10	My Gym Partner	My Gym Partner	AmiYumi	My Gym Partner	My Gym Partner	Camp Lazlo
TVL	Good Times	Good Times	Little House on the Prairie (CC)		Andy Griffith	Sanford & Son	Good Times	Good Times	Good Times	Gyping!
USA	Law & Order: Special Victims Unit		Law & Order: Criminal Intent (CC)		Law & Order: Special Victims Unit		Monk (CC)		PGA Golf: Chrysler Clisc.	
VH1	Top 20 Countdown (6) (N)		Fabulous Life Of... "Weddings"		The Wedding Singer (PG-13) '98	*** Adam Sandler, Christine Taylor.			Best Week Ever	Web Junk 20 (N)
WE	Dharma & Greg	Dharma & Greg	Twins (PG) '88	*** Arnold Schwarzenegger, Danny DeVito, Kelly Preston. Comedy. (CC)			Style-Hunter		Style-Hunter	Little Man Tate
WGN	America's Funniest Home Videos		The Devil's Advocate (R) '97	** Keanu Reeves. An attorney goes to work at a law firm run by Satan. (CC)			Sex and the City		Becker (CC)	
DISN	Phil of the Future	That's So Raven "Pin Pals" (N)	The Proud Family '05	Voices of Kyla Pratt, Paula Jai Parker. Fantasy. Animated. A mad scientist unleashes evil clones of a family. (CC)			Phi of the Future	Sister, Sister "Graduation"	The Suite Life of Zack & Cody	That's So Raven "Pin Pals"
ENC	Confessions of a Teenage Drama Queen (6:30) (PG) '04	** (CC)	The Fugitive (PG-13) '93	*** Harrison Ford, Sela Ward. Suspense. An innocent man must evade the law as he pursues a killer. (CC)			Bad Girls (10:15) (R) '94	** Madeleine Stowe, Andie MacDowell. Western. Circumstances force four women to become outlaws. (CC)		
HBO	Scooby-Doo 2: Monsters Unleashed (6:45) (PG) '04	** Freddie Prinze Jr. Comedy. (CC)	Independence Day (PG-13) '96	*** Will Smith, Bill Pullman, Jeff Goldblum. Science Fiction. Survivors band together to repel an alien invasion. (CC)			Real Time Actor Danny Glover. (CC)			
SHOW	A Few Good Men (6:45) (R) '92	*** Tom Cruise, Demi Moore. Drama. A Navy lawyer defends two Marines in a comrade's death. (CC)	Sleeper Cell	Darwyn tries to steer a young boy away from terrorism.			Saw (R) '04	** Cary Elwes. Horror. A doctor must kill his cellmate or his family will die. (CC)		SHO Me 1st (11:45) "Saw II."
MAX	Why Do Fools Fall in Love (6:30) (R) '98	** Halle Berry, Vivica A. Fox, Lela Rochon. Biography. (CC)	Eurotrip (NR) '04	** Scott Mechlowicz. A teen and his friends have misadventures in Europe. (CC)			The Chronicles of Riddick (PG-13) '04	** Vin Diesel, Thandie Newton. Science Fiction. A fugitive fights an invading ruler and his army. (CC)		
TMC	Twisted (6:20) (R) '04	** Ashley Judd, Andy Garcia. Suspense. (CC)	Timeline (PG-13) '03	** Paul Walker, Frances O'Connor, Gerard Butler. Adventure. Adventurers travel back to 1300s wartime France. (CC)			Strangeland (R) '98	** Dee Snider. Horror. A psychopath preys on teenage girls via the Internet. (CC)		Troll (PG-13) '86
STARZ	Shall We Dance? (5:30) '04		Cellular (7:20) (PG-13) '04	** Kim Basinger. A kidnapped teacher calls a stranger on a cell phone. (CC)			Friday Night Lights (PG-13) '04	*** Billy Bob Thornton, Jay Hernandez. Drama. A football coach leads high-school players in Texas. (CC)		Guess Who (11:05) (PG-13) '05

## ACCENT ON PEOPLE

The Associated Press

TORONTO

### Veteran bonded to actor by role speaks out

It took an old Bond to come to the rescue of the new Bond.

Roger Moore, who played Agent 007 in seven of the James Bond movies, said critics of the film franchise's new star, Daniel Craig, should give him a chance.



MOORE

"He's a helluva good actor," said Moore, 78, noting that critics haven't even seen Craig in the role yet. "So why attack him?" The fair-haired Craig, whose recent screen credits include "Munich" and "The Jacket," was tapped last October to play the secret-agent icon in "Casino Royale."

A group of Bond fans have launched a Web site (www.craignotbond.com) to protest the hiring of Craig and boycott the upcoming movie.

Moore, whose Bond films include "A View to Kill," "Moonraker" and "Live and Let Die," suggested the group was merely trying to attract people to their Web site.

He also dismissed suggestions that Bond is obsolete in a post-Cold War, post-9/11 world. "Bond is fantasy, there's no real substance to it," he said. "It's a figment of imagination. ... (It's) sort of crazy, you know, a spy who is recognized wherever he goes. Spies ain't like that."

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