

Roku launches NBA FAST channel as streaming services look to bolster their sports bona fides

Article

The news: Roku teaming up with the NBA to offer a free ad-supported streaming TV (FAST) channel and NBA Zone content hub shows how streaming services are expanding their

sports footprint to pull in more customers.

- The inaugural NBA-branded sports channel will feature game highlights and replays, interviews, and other content.
- It will exclusively stream on **The Roku Channel** for a limited period and eventually be available on other platforms such as **Pluto TV** and **Tubi**.
- As part of the deal, Roku will also be exclusively distributing live **NBA G League** games.

Why it matters: Sports leagues are seeking new ways to engage their fans as media usage changes. Exclusive access to popular sporting events puts streaming companies in front of a large, engaged audience and, in turn, lets advertisers reach target groups.

- **Amazon Prime Video** just signed a multiyear extension of its rights deal with the **WNBA** under which it will exclusively stream 21 games for the 2024 and 2025 seasons.
- **NBCUniversal's Peacock** will broadcast another exclusive NFL game in September that will feature the Philadelphia Eagles and take place in Sao Paulo, Brazil.

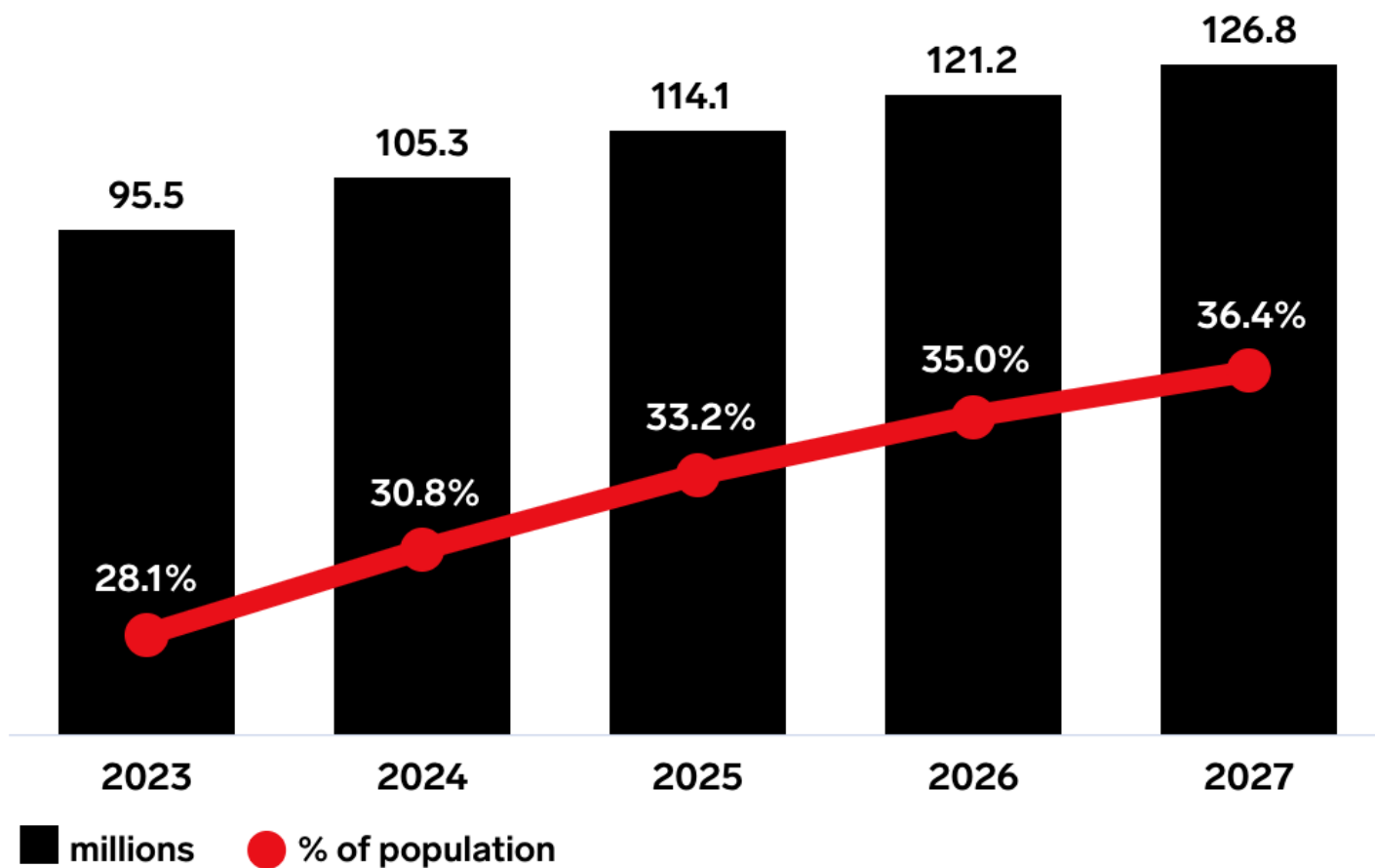
Peacock streamed an NFL Wild Card playoff game in January and is banking on high-profile events to bolster its sports-streaming clout. This summer, it's out to make a splash with its Olympic Games coverage, planning to offer more than 5,000 hours of live action.

The opportunity in sports streaming: Sports helps streamers gain new customers. Peacock's previous exclusive NFL event drew 3 million sign-ups, per Antenna data, with 71% still subscribed by the end of February.

- The gains Prime Video has made from broadcasting NFL Thursday Night Football (it also won exclusive rights to a playoff game for the upcoming season) and **YouTube's** strength with NFL **Sunday Ticket** show that streaming services can become formidable competitors in the sports market.
- This fall's expected launch of a streaming joint venture from **Fox, Warner Bros. Discovery,** and **Disney** will create another distribution outlet for sports programming just as the NBA looks to renew its media rights, which expire after the 2024-25 season.

Digital Live Sports Viewers

US, 2023-2027



Note: individuals of any age who watch live sports content at least once per month over the course of the season of at least one sport on digital platforms such as OTT, TV Everywhere and vMVPDs; excludes highlight viewing and viewing of nonlive content; excludes esports; excludes Olympics content

Source: EMARKETER Forecast, March 2023