The NFL flexes its streaming power, but its game plan has lots of caveats

The news: The National Football League is launching its own streaming service called NFL+, but its many deals with other streamers make it a complicated sell.
Customers can choose between a **$4.99 monthly** (or **$39.99 yearly**) subscription or a **$9.99 a month** ($79.99/year) premium tier with ad-free replays of matches across devices.

**Creating a wedge:** NFL+ is launching in a very crowded streaming market, but its large audience and cheap price could give it an edge.

- NFL broadcasts are some of the most popular in TV, and a focal point for ad spending even as the industry starts to move money away from linear TV. NFL viewership rose 10% last year, and major events like the **Super Bowl** continue to be a **reliable mecca** for ad spending.

- US digital live sports viewers **will increase 23.2% this year to 78.4 million and reach 131.7 million by 2026**, putting digital sports viewing almost on par with standard live sports viewership.

- A streaming service will give the NFL a chance to capitalize on consumers’ and advertisers' rapidly growing interest in live, digital sports. NFL+ will be more affordable than established streamers that have been hiking prices.
But there’s a catch: Because of the NFL’s many streaming rights deals, the perks of NFL+ aren’t too clear. So what exactly do NFL+ subscribers get, you ask? Let’s take a deep breath:

- Viewers will be able to watch all out-of-market preseason games (matches between teams that are outside your area) and access the NFL’s ad-free library of documentaries and specials.
- The subscription also includes access to regular season and post-season games—but only those that air in their market. That means out-of-market games aren’t included, though it
seems live game audio may be available.

- But wait—there's another but. Those regular and post-season games will only be viewable on phones and tablets, which means NFL+ subscribers can't watch on their TVs, laptops, or other devices.

- To top it off, NFL+ won't include any exclusive live broadcasts, at least not at first. Paying NFL+ subscribers will still have to tune in to live TV, Amazon's Thursday Night Football, and whoever the NFL chooses as its new Sunday Ticket partner (a service that included all out-of-market Sunday matches for $300 a year) to watch certain live broadcasts or watch on a non-mobile device.

For those counting, for the cheapest possible full access to all NFL broadcasts, viewers have to pay at least $519 per year for Sunday Ticket, a year of Amazon Prime, and a year of NFL+ — and that's not including whatever they pay for cable. Suddenly, that $4.99 pricing doesn't look so cheap.

**The big takeaway:** Even though its viewership will be heavily fractured by its unique terms and existing streaming deals, NFL+ will attract advertiser attention thanks to the league's proven track record on TV and the growing digital sports audience.

- Its mobile focus may seem unusual, but it could also open the door to NFL ventures in the lucrative sports betting industry, which is primarily making waves on mobile devices.