

Roku in talks to stream Major League Baseball games amid intensifying sports streaming competition

Article

The news: Major League Baseball (MLB) is in the final stages of negotiations with Roku to potentially make it the exclusive platform for Sunday morning baseball games during the upcoming season, The Athletic reports.

- These games, formerly broadcast on NBC's **Peacock** service under a \$30 million deal known as "MLB Sunday Leadoff," may find a new home on Roku as NBC steps back from renewing the contract.

Zoom out: Roku's [partnership with the NBA](#) to launch a free streaming sports channel and content hub, alongside deals like Amazon's **WNBA** broadcasts and Peacock's exclusive **NFL** game in Brazil, underscores the aggressive expansion of streaming services into sports to attract viewers and advertisers.

- Sensing an opportunity, **Fox**, **Warner Bros. Discovery**, and **Disney** announced a sports streaming joint venture—something that has [raised antitrust concerns](#) in Congress and [a lawsuit from Fubo](#), a sports-first streamer.
- Even Netflix, which has been a laggard when it comes to live sports, is venturing into live sports programming with its [Jake Paul vs. Mike Tyson boxing event](#).

MLB impact: Moving the Sunday morning games to Roku could change how and where fans access them, potentially affecting MLB's overall viewership numbers.

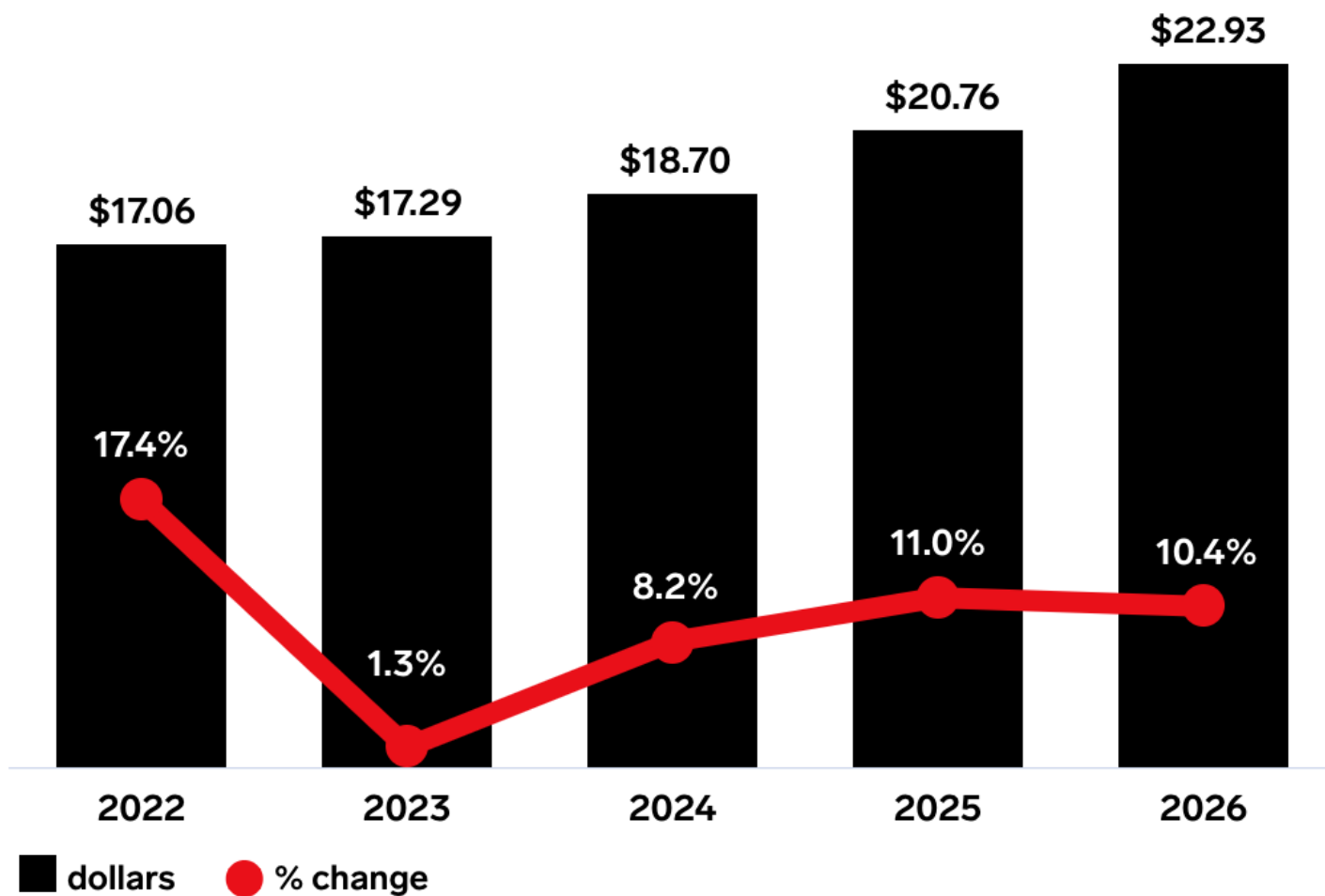
- With NBC out of the picture, the production responsibilities are likely to shift to MLB Network, as Roku lacks the infrastructure for game production.
- This potential shift comes at a critical time for MLB, which faces several challenges in its TV and streaming strategy. These include ongoing negotiations with **Comcast** to broadcast games for 12 teams through Diamond Sports and the looming decision by ESPN on whether to continue its \$550 million annual contract for key MLB broadcasts.
- This move could help MLB stabilize its viewership by aligning with a growing platform that offers wide accessibility, potentially offsetting the uncertainties in its current broadcasting arrangements.

What it means for Roku: For Roku, which already hosts events like **Formula E** racing and [leads all FAST providers](#) in viewership, securing MLB games would mark a significant expansion into live sports, potentially boosting its profile and attracting more subscribers.

- Roku sells smart TVs and operates an ad-supported channel but faces more competition as rival streamers like **Amazon** and **Netflix** have added ad tiers.
- Should Roku score a deal with MLB, it would represent a strategic pivot in response to the evolving media landscape that has streaming platforms increasingly going head-to-head with traditional broadcasters.

Roku Ad Revenues, per Roku Viewer

US, 2022-2026



Note: among individuals of any age who use their Roku device at least once per month; includes advertising that appears on desktop and laptop computers as well as mobile phones, tablets, and other internet-connected devices, and includes all the various formats of advertising on those platforms; figures represent net ad revenues

Source: EMARKETER Forecast, March 2024