

## **The growth of curling on U.S. television**

The 2002 Olympic Winter Games proved to be a watershed event for curling in the United States, most importantly because of the widespread exposure during the Games on NBC and its cable partners in the United States, which has led to unprecedented broadcast exposure in the non-Olympic years.

USA Curling partnered with the World Curling Federation and NBC to broadcast several hours of championship curling nationally in 2003, 2004 and 2005. NBC's continued interest led directly to increased interest from other high-profile networks, including ESPN. Along with the sport-specific programs, USA Curling has partnered with USA Luge and the U.S. Bobsled & Skeleton Federation for a multi-sport program on NBC, called "Verizon ICE."

### **Ratings information:**

- Verizon ICE 2003 (NBC) – 1.75 cumulative rating, including a 2.0 for Sunday's program. A "statistical tie" with Sunday's lead-in figure skating program, and in the "Males 18+" category, ICE outdrew figure skating 1.3 to 0.9.
- Verizon ICE 2004 (NBC) – 1.4 cumulative rating. Both days' programs gained 30 to 40-percent in viewership over their duration.
- 2003 U.S. Nationals (NBC) – 1.4 rating (4.5 to 6 million viewers)
- 2003 Worlds (NBC) – 1.2 rating (3.8 to 5 million viewers). Ranked No. 8 in Top 10 U.S. Network Sports Telecasts for the week.
- 2004 U.S. Nationals, NBC – 1.1 rating/4 share (3 to 4.5 million viewers), and 96 percent national clearance on NBC affiliates.
- 2004 Worlds (ESPN) – This program was organized at the last minute, and received no advance publicity. The 11 a.m. to noon broadcast drew 220,000 viewers, while a rebroadcast from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. attracted over 500,000 viewers. Notable was that the audience grew over each quarter hour, even during the evening broadcast, when the last half of the program was competing against ESPN's SportsCenter.
- 2005 Women's Worlds (ESPN) – .4 rating (1.2 to 1.6 million viewers). A strong showing. The overall ESPN rating for the day was .57.
- 2005 Men's Worlds (ESPN) – .52 rating (1.6 to 2.2 million viewers). Another strong showing, especially given that the featured gold medal game was between Canada and Scotland.