



TELSTRA 

Case study

Perform Group and WTA Media

Delivering live tennis action via Telstra's global media network

Who are they?

Perform Group is the digital leader in global sports media and touches every aspect of the way fans engage with sport. It partners with rights holders in sport to commercialise and grow their sport across the world, through media, content, and broadcast.

WTA Media is a joint venture between Perform Group and the Women's Tennis Association (WTA), which delivers game footage across various mediums such as television, mobile, and OTT.

The challenge

Support WTA Media in bringing the WTA tour to more viewers

In 2014, Perform Group and the WTA came together to create a landmark 10-year partnership worth over half a billion dollars, which was defined as one of the most significant investments in women's sport at the time. Since then, WTA Media has been responsible for the production and distribution of content and broadcast footage for the WTA's annual global tour.

"The relationship between Perform and the WTA combines the commercial media rights for 55 WTA tournaments now held under one umbrella with WTA Media," said Sam Sandeman-Allen, Senior Vice President, Commercial Distribution at Perform Group.

Under the agreement, Perform Group has committed to broadcast multiple feeds from various WTA events in locations as diverse as Europe, China and Uzbekistan. Several tournaments take place in parallel throughout the year, challenging Perform Group to deliver simultaneous broadcasts of overlapping events.

The scale was substantially greater than the previous years' operations, as John Learning, Managing Director of WTA Media and Executive Vice President of production partnerships at Perform Group, explained: "We went from producing about 700 matches a year to more than 2,500 matches in a single season. So, we needed to partner with someone who understood how to contribute and distribute all of this content via the myriad platforms that broadcasters are using in the 21st century."

Perform Group wanted to move towards a fibre network to improve the quality and reliability of the broadcast output and viewer experience. It had been looking at an IP media network delivery model for several years, and wanted a network designed for the high stakes of live video.

In addition to tackling the sheer scale of the content delivery requirement and overcoming the logistical challenges of operating in so many different locations, Perform Group also wanted to centralise and simplify its relationships with suppliers of media contribution services.

"We needed a singular partner who was expert in every system there was. We needed someone on a global scale. That immediately narrows your opportunities, your partners to a very select few and so it was really apparent to WTA Media that Telstra was the right partner," John said.

The solution

Leveraging its global infrastructure, Telstra designed a unique global media network solution that could deliver video from the WTA Tour's 47-plus locations across the globe. This included "dual and diverse" fibre connections designed for the stringent requirements of live video, with built-in redundancy and two geographically diverse paths to Perform Group's location for scalability and resiliency.

"We needed someone who's invested with us 24/7 all year round, with boots on the ground, ready to tackle an issue as it comes up. What Telstra understands is that this is a 'live' environment and they have to have live solutions all the time," John said.

Telstra deployed its full suite of professional media solutions for WTA Media, with four key elements: a global broadcast operation, global field operations, a global broadcast sales team and a global media network based on fibre with additional satellite options.

"The main benefit of fibre over satellite is scalability," Sam explained. "If you have multiple tennis venues where matches are taking place simultaneously, you can end up with many different video signals being pushed out all at the same time and it's that sheer scale that favours fibre over satellite for this specific project."

Telstra also integrated its unique NetCam camera to provide unique angles for enhanced fan viewing experiences, without distracting or disrupting the players during a competitive match.

John described how Telstra's NetCam camera brought the audience closer to the action: "They get to be right in centre court, at the net. They get to see the speed of the game and the athleticism of the players. NetCam brings the viewer into the rectangle and allows them to experience the sport more than they ever have before."

The benefits

More coverage, in better quality

Perform Group is now able to offer more live content to broadcasters, with every match and every tournament delivered live in high quality. Using transmissions of multiple feeds from every WTA event and by covering multiple WTA events in parallel, WTA Media has increased the amount of content produced for the WTA Tour per year by approximately 2,600 hours.

Telstra's high bandwidth and low latency network has improved the consistency and quality of the content distribution, along with increased service levels and network availability, to deliver a better viewing experience.

Working with Telstra, WTA Media has moved from a complex scenario – where they used multiple video and data networks from various providers with different standards and conversion requirements – to one partner providing a single content network for all media from all courts at WTA events around the world.

As for the future, Perform Group and WTA Media will be looking at how they can build on the winning foundation in place to deliver more innovative and engaging experiences to bring sport fans closer to every aspect of the game.

"I think the tennis fan, or indeed, the sports fan is expecting new things, new innovations and new experiences from their broadcasters. We're looking to help them on that journey by providing technological advances from our side and innovation where we see it's possible," John concluded.

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 +61 2 8258 7900

 telstrabroadcastbookings@team.telstra.com

 telstra.com/broadcastservices

International

 Asia +852 2983 3388 **Americas** +1 877 835 7872 **EMEA** +44 20 7965 0000