



Is social media the biggest Olympic sport?



BY DAHLIA KURTZ ,QMI AGENCY

FIRST POSTED: MONDAY, AUGUST 20, 2012 02:00 AM EDT

Now that we're done with watching and talking about sports that we only watch and talk about every four years, it's time to reflect upon what we've learned from the XXX Olympiad – and that's not just referring to the escapades in the athletes' village, with a reported 150,000 condoms handed out.

We've learned through viral news that contrary to what his mother told the world, American multi-medallist swimmer Ryan Lochte doesn't have one-night stands; he has first dates.

We've learned Canadian athletes are incredible specimens, despite underfunding.

And we've learned that it's not just the competitors that were faster, higher, stronger; it was the technology too.

Social media landed atop every podium, every defeat, and every moment in between. Its usage has grown so much that it should be tested for steroids.

Josh Greenberg is an associate professor at Carleton University's School of Journalism and Communication. He says the online support Canucks showed athletes, such as Paula Findlay, provided new fodder for news reporting.

"In a pre-Facebook/Twitter era, reporters would have been required to speculate about how Canadians may be reacting to disappointing athlete performances. Today that reaction is highly visible and a source of coverage in and of itself."

Twitter and Facebook have instantly united the world and given us – and the mainstream media – a constant behind-the-scenes view of Olympians, spoilers and all.

Months before the Games, in an interview with Feedbook.org, the International Olympic Committee's head of social media, Alex Huot, dubbed London 2012 "the first social media Olympics."

Though some may argue that Vancouver earned the title first, these numbers have earned first place: According to Twitter, during Beijing 2008 there were 300,000 tweets a day, 50 million during Vancouver 2010, and 400 million today.

The might of social networks challenged and sometimes undermined the rights of TV networks.

While CTV judiciously presented the Games with live 'round the clock action, re-airing events in prime-time, American broadcaster NBC decided to package high-profile content for prime-time only.

But with 400 million tweets a day and 900 million active Facebook users, clicks couldn't be contained until prime-time. Smartphones went off in Olympic Stadium faster than announcers could declare winners. Spoilers were everywhere online, spoiling NBC's image.

Although NBC partnered with Twitter and Facebook, its lack of respect for social media divided its audience. Rather than managing the trends, it became one of the biggest trending hashtags of all: #NBCFail.

Still, the network says it garnered better ratings than ever.

Greenberg notes its numbers reflect the fact that audiences still enjoy a media spectacle even if it's not in real-time.

He says, "I can only speculate, but it may also be the case that although social media is breaking news of American Olympic achievements, these results may in fact be driving up audience ratings as people choose to tune in when they can

to see it in high-definition on television.”

But whether you're Ryan Seacrest or a pretty personality, you can't just recite tweets on TV – not even HD gives them better definition. Still, broadcasters, in a bid to incorporate Twitter, read tweets and made it sound like the phonebook.

Imagine if Seacrest were to deliver an actual tweet from Samuel L. Jackson to gold medallist Rosie MacLennan: “BTW, a Big Shout Out to the MUTHACANUKIN Gold Medal Trampoliners!!”

Seacrest off.

Social media has been a Games-changer for everyone, including the competitors.

Athletes aren't just competing for medals anymore; they're competing for @ttention and followers.

While the IOC encouraged them to engage online, it disallowed engagement for commercial or advertising purposes. A paradox, since athletes are brands unto themselves, and every tweet builds their brand.

Getting a tweet from President Obama is better than a call. You can't retweet a phone call – more than 17,000 times.

So just wait until Sochi 2014: Faster, higher, stronger, clickier.

I Stopped My Hair Loss
I spent thousands on hair growth then I found this \$39 solution...
naturalwellbeing.com/hair-grc AdChoices ▶

POLL

Did you follow the London Olympics on Twitter?

6%
You bet
19
votes

5%
Here and there
17
votes

88%
Nope
272
votes

SPONSORED LINKS

Credit & Debt Solutions

10 Locations in Ontario
We Speak Over 15
Languages Call 310-7700
SEE www.gtacredit.com
NOW



**STOP
COLLECTION**

CALLS!

Get Debt Free Now!
Rusinek & Associates
www.rusinek.ca



**Dr. Flea's Flea
Market**

Toronto's Largest Indoor
Flea Market
www.drflreas.com
Click now for free Flea \$

[See All Sponsored Links](#)