

## Neo Sports shifts focus from cricket to other sports

Neo Sports, over the years, has focused on games other than cricket. With the telecast of new sports events, the channel has seen the entry of new advertisers.

While sports in India is almost synonymous with the game of cricket, Neo Sports decided to break convention by telecasting sports events in golf, soccer, badminton and tennis. Interestingly, the strategy worked. Today, Neo Sports has a series of new advertisers on board.

Prasana Krishnan, COO, Neo Sports Broadcast, says, "Over the years, we have identified, four-to-five different kinds of sports which are as much watched and discussed amongst audiences. This is a healthy trend. For instance, the states of West Bengal and Kerala have a definite fan following in football. Over the years, with players such as Leander Paes, Mahesh Bhupathi, Sania Mirza, and now Somdev, tennis has always had a certain set of the audience watching the game. Golf, too, has a premium set of audience like the corporate and management heads. Thus, keeping the interest of viewers in mind, we have been showing many tournaments."

In football, the channel telecasts the German league Bundesliga, and the Italian league Serie A. While in golf, Neo Sports telecasts the PGA Tour, the Nascar Sprint Cup Series and Moto GP are there in motor sports. While the channel telecasts BWF (Badminton World Federation) tournaments in badminton, in tennis it has acquired the rights for telecasting the Davis Cup, Fed Cup and Sony Ericsson WTA Tour.

Interestingly, the channel's idea to show non-cricketing events has brought new advertisers on board. Small players as well as premium brands can all be seen on Neo Sports.

According to Krishnan, cricket is a different matter altogether for marketers as it requires much expenditure. Therefore, many small players who have a tight pocket cannot participate. Says he, "In the case of sports like badminton and tennis, even small players can afford to cough up a few extras. However, sporting events like golf, which is meant for a different set of audience, has seen the entry of premium brands like Mercedes, BMW and Rolex. Another reason behind the presence of these premium brands is international partnerships."

Currently, the channel telecasts 50 per cent non-cricketing events and 50 per cent cricket tournaments. It intends to acquire the rights for the telecast of new sports events, which are non-cricket.

Says Krishnan, "While Neo Cricket is a channel meant only for cricketing events, we telecast only cricket-based tournaments throughout the year. Neo Sports airs non-cricket events. Currently, the ratio between cricket and non-cricket events is 50:50. And, we do plan to increase the ratio as and when we get the opportunity to acquire the rights for non-cricket sports events."

Krishnan is positive that with an increase in awareness for other sports, the audience acceptance will also grow with time.