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SEOUL, South Korea (AP) _ NBC not only covered controversy at the Olympics, it created some.

The network's coverage of the Summer Games became a hot topic in Seoul and the United States, where viewers were barraged with more than 180 hours of programs featuring everything from boxing to pingpong.

In the United States, NBC was criticized for showing too many commercials and taped features, shifting too frequently from event to event, and underhyping the biggest TV extravaganza of the year.

In South Korea, the network was accused of anti-Korean reporting and insensitivity to the local culture.

Some of the criticism was legitimate, some wasn't.

Although NBC claimed it didn't show any more prime-time commercials than ABC did at the Winter Olympics, there is no question that the constant ads made the shows hard to watch.

Yes, NBC had a right to sell as many ads as possible to cover its \$440 million Olympic tab. But the network appeared to reach the saturation point in Seoul, and that may have contributed to the disappointing ratings that forced NBC to compensate sponsors with free commercials.

Michael Weisman, executive producer of NBC Sports, conceded that the commercial load on Olympic telecasts may have become too heavy.

'Whatever network gets the rights to the next Games will have to consider it,' he said. 'You have to pay the bills, but you also have to be concerned if you're turning viewers off.'

The gripe over features touches on another issue. While many of the taped pieces were informative and entertaining, the main reason they were shown was to fill programming gaps.

There were 23 official sports and 237 medal events at the Seoul Olympics, but many were of little or no interest to a U.S. television audience. So NBC had to find other ways to fill 11 hours a day.

The network that televises the next Summer Games might cut back on its coverage. It would mean fewer commercials and less revenue, but it also would sharpen the focus of TV viewers and probably lead to higher ratings.

And what about the matter of style? Were NBC announcers, particularly prime-time host Bryant Gumbel, too low-key?

Many television critics thought so. They said NBC's coverage failed to appeal to a general prime-time audience because it stressed sports over human drama. But many of the same critics were critical of ABC's Winter Olympic announcers for cheerleading and trying to turn the event into a soap opera.

As tough as the criticism was at home, it was even tougher in Korea.

Many Koreans were upset by NBC's coverage of the infamous boxing brawl, where two Korean coaches attacked a referee after one of their fighters lost an unpopular decision.

The network also came under fire for a T-shirt design made by a group of NBC workers. The design contained the slang expression 'We're Bad' and a drawing of two boxers in the middle of a South Korean flag, both of which were interpreted as slights against the Korean people.

In both cases, NBC was the victim of a cultural misunderstanding.

Koreans thought the network's coverage of the boxing brawl, particularly reporter Wallace Matthews' hard-nosed interview with a Korean worker who participated in the attack, was designed to make the country look bad.

In reality, NBC was simply covering a major story. Matthews may have gone overboard, but the network would have been criticized just as much by U.S. journalists if it had tried to downplay the story.

If there is any consolation for NBC, it's the bottom line.

Although prime-time ratings were more than three points _ or about 3 million households per night _ lower than projected, the network will still make a healthy profit because it sold \$550 million worth of ads.

Estimates of the profit vary widely. An NBC source said it could be as high as \$80 million. Network officials won't give a figure, but they claim it will be much lower than \$80 million.

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