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**ESPN to Deliver First-Ever coverage of Special Olympics World Winter Games 2017 in Austria**

* **Coverage March 18-25 of World Winter Games 2017 in Graz, Schladming-Rohrmoos and Ramsau**
* **Opening Ceremony to feature Pageantry, Performances, Special Guests**
* **Nightly program will bring viewers stories, competition showcase, interviews and more**
* **ESPN coverage to reach at least 190 nations and territories around the world**

In what is expected to be the largest Special Olympics World Winter Games in history, more than 2,600 Special Olympics athletes and coaches from 106 nations will compete in Austria and ESPN’s global television networks and digital media will bring extensive coverage to sports fans and supporters of the Special Olympics movement around the world. ESPN’s coverage, from March 18-25, marks the first-ever global coverage for a World Winter Games event.

As an official broadcaster of the Special Olympics World Winter Games, ESPN’s coverage will be carried across its networks and media platforms in the U.S. and at least 190 countries and territories around the world, including across Spanish-speaking Latin America, Brazil, Europe, the Middle East, Africa, the Caribbean, Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific Islands.  ESPN and Special Olympics International are also working together to find additional local television distribution in dozens of countries and territories globally where ESPN does not have television networks.

The inspiration, pageantry, performances and special guests of the World Winter Games Opening Ceremony will air on March 18, followed by Games coverage the next day, a program each weeknight from March 20-24and a wrap up program following the Games, recapping the competitions and Closing Ceremony. ESPN’s nightly coverage will include interviews with athletes and special guests, a daily competition showcase featuring highlights from the day’s action, profiles and feature stories and on-site reporting. The World Winter Games will also be featured in *SportsCenter* and other ESPN programming over the course of the week.

A special series of original vignettes will also be produced as a part of ESPN’s coverage and will begin appearing on ESPN television and digital media in the buildup to the beginning of ESPN’s coverage of the World Winter Games. The vignettes will provide powerful snapshots of Special Olympics athletes, coaches and teams from around the world, as well as other notable people, places and historical stories relating to Special Olympics.

“The Special Olympics World Winter Games in Austria are going to be a remarkable showcase of the power of sports to have a positive impact on people’s lives” said Russell Wolff, executive vice president, ESPN International. “We’re extremely excited about our coverage plans and very proud to again be showcasing the Special Olympics movement across our media, bringing the amazing competition, athleticism, stories and spirit on display in Austria to millions of fans around the world.”

Mary Davis, Special Olympics CEO, said, “Thanks to ESPN, Special Olympics athletes will be showcased to the world for everyone to witness and appreciate their gifts, talents and courage. Our athletes are often forgotten in sports, and in many aspects of life, so the attitude-changing coverage ESPN will provide will help us get that much closer to achieving our vision of creating inclusive communities all over the world.”

ESPN’s coverage of the World Winter World Games Austria 2017 will begin less than 20 months after the ground-breaking coverage of the LA2015 Special Olympics World Summer Games in Los Angeles, and will again showcase to the world the unparalleled displays of skill, courage, spirit, and joy that are hallmarks of Special Olympics events.

**SPECIAL OLYMPICS WORLD WINTER GAMES ON ESPN DIGITAL MEDIA**

ESPN’s global digital platforms – the #1 suite of digital sports properties in the world, including local editions of ESPN.com and the ESPN App, streaming platforms and more – will offer extensive coverage in the build-up to, and throughout, the World Winter Games. With extensive news, long-form feature storytelling, video, exclusive blogs from athletes, coaches and volunteers, photo galleries and more, ESPN will examine the people and topics of the Special Olympics movement.

ESPN’s multiple editorial teams from all over the globe will contribute to the coverage, as well as a team of journalists on the ground in Austria throughout the Games.

**ABOUT SPECIAL OLYMPICS WORLD WINTER GAMES AUSTRIA 2017**

Every two years, Special Olympics holds its flagship event, the World Games, demonstrating sports excellence, which promotes equality, respect and inclusion for people with intellectual disabilities around the world. Transcending the boundaries of geography, nationality, political philosophy, gender, age, culture and religion, the world will come together to celebrate inclusion around the 2017 Special Olympics World Winter Games in Graz, Schladming-Rohrmoos and Ramsau, Austria 14 March – 25 March 2017. More than 2,600 athletes and 1,000 coaches representing 106 countries, along with 10,000 volunteers and thousands more spectators, will participate in and watch exciting sports and community events. This is the second time Austria has hosted the World Winter Games, having also staged the event in 1993. Sports featured are Alpine Skiing, Cross Country Skiing, Figure Skating, Speed Skating, Floor Hockey, Floorball, Snowboarding, Snowshoeing, and Stick Shooting. For more information on the 2017 Special Olympics World Games, including volunteer and sponsorship opportunities, visit [www.austria2017.org](http://www.austria2017.org) and on social on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/events/1641335126126241/), and [Twitter](https://twitter.com/sowwg2017?lang=en).

**ESPN AND SPECIAL OLYMPICS**

ESPN is proud of its relationship with Special Olympics, which spans more than 31 years and over the past three years, ESPN has continued to deepen its relationship with the Special Olympics movement.

Earlier this year, ESPN and Special Olympics committed to continuing their alliance to use the power of sports to promote social inclusion and acceptance by reaching two agreements:  [an extension, and expansion, of ESPN’s Global Presenting Sponsorship of Special Olympics Unified Sports](http://espnmediazone.com/us/press-releases/2016/05/espn-and-special-olympics-reach-new-programming-and-unified-sports-sponsorship-agreements/)[®](http://espnmediazone.com/us/press-releases/2016/05/espn-and-special-olympics-reach-new-programming-and-unified-sports-sponsorship-agreements/) [and a new, three-year global programming agreement.](http://espnmediazone.com/us/press-releases/2016/05/espn-and-special-olympics-reach-new-programming-and-unified-sports-sponsorship-agreements/)

The new $1.5 million grant supports Special Olympics Unified Sports, as well as other initiatives, and extends and expands a role ESPN has held since 2013. Dedicated to promoting social inclusion through shared sports training and competition experiences, Special Olympics Unified Sports joins people with and without intellectual disabilities on the same team. It was inspired by a simple principle: training together and playing together is a quick path to friendship and understanding. With support from ESPN and others, Special Olympics has [grown this innovative and inclusive program to more than 1.2 million participants](http://www.espnfrontrow.com/2016/06/espn-helps-special-olympics-reach-unified-sports-milestone/). As part of the continued support of Unified Sports, ESPN will invest in Special Olympics’ goal to build Unified Sports programming and resources in 10,000 schools by 2020 and ensuring 100,000 coaches receive new/renewed sports certifications by 2020

ESPN’s new global Special Olympics programming agreement means ESPN is not only an Official Broadcaster of the 2017 Special Olympics World Winter Games in Austria, but will also be the Official Broadcaster of the 2018 Special Olympics USA Games in Seattle, and the 2019 Special Olympics World Summer Games. ESPN is also adding more news and feature coverage of other Special Olympics events, athletes and stories over the course of the three-year agreement

ESPN believes that, at its very best, sports uplifts the human spirit. Its corporate citizenship programs use the power of sport to positively address society’s most pressing needs through strategic community investments, cause marketing programs, collaboration with sports organizations and employee volunteerism, while also utilizing its diverse media assets. For more information go to [www.espn.com/citizenship](http://www.espn.com/citizenship). 

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