

## CBS Celebrates Network's No. 1 Rating

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CBS is proud as a peacock that it has fulfilled its prophecy that it would overtake NBC in the ratings this season, thanks to an improving program lineup, costly investments and sports franchises. And the network isn't in a mood to listen to detractors.

"We've gone from third to first and already you're asking how far ahead we should be," CBS Broadcast Group President Howard Stringer good-naturedly chided a press gathering of TV critics in Marina del Rey Monday.

Stringer was rankled when a reporter pointed out that without its high-rated baseball broadcasts earlier this fall, CBS is less than a ratings point ahead of defending champion NBC.

"Can't I have my moment in the sun before it starts raining? You're not going to make me miserable, I'm sorry," Stringer said.

CBS' ratings lead over NBC will undoubtedly surge again when the network broadcasts the Super Bowl on Jan. 26, followed by two weeks of Winter Olympics coverage from Albertville, France, during the February ratings sweeps period.

The cost of CBS' sports pro-

gramming was high; reports are that the network lost an estimated \$400 million as a result of its deals. Stringer said in his defense that when those deals were made, CBS did not see a recession coming.

"If we hadn't had sports, we'd be embarrassingly wealthy now," he cracked. "Sports carried us on golden wings at a period when we couldn't get arrested."

CBS is now focusing on strengthening its series programming for the post-Olympics period. The network already has made multiple-series deals with Diane English, creator of "Murphy Brown," and Linda Bloodworth-Thomason, creator of "Designing Women."

Stringer added that David Kelley, who has been executive producer of NBC's "L.A. Law," will be another contributor to CBS entertainment programming this year.

CBS, which has top-rated "60 Minutes," is focusing more on news series. The network doubled its order to a total of eight episodes for the new series "Street Stories," which debuted successfully this month. The series is a spinoff of another CBS show, "48 Hours."

On Feb. 5, "48 Hours," anchored by Dan Rather, will devote an entire hour to the assassination of

President John F. Kennedy, prompted by Oliver Stone's controversial film "JFK," Stringer said. The program will use CBS news footage and investigations. Rather established himself as a network news star partly through his coverage of the assassination.

With so much news and reality programming on CBS' schedule, Stringer said that his network is not "chasing the elusive teen-ager," the way ABC and Fox appear to be doing.

"'60 Minutes' gets a 40 share and it doesn't matter that there's no delinquents watching," Stringer said.

Instead, CBS has a more affluent audience than the other networks and is No. 1 among viewers 19 to 54, Stringer maintained.

"That fits our image," he said.

Referring to the networks' recent programming of such old series as "Columbo" on ABC and "All in the Family" on CBS, Stringer pointed out that "Columbo" last week scored a solid 20% audience share. He said that broadcast should send to the studios a message that "a well-plotted, carefully thought out, character-driven drama will succeed. I think we'll always draw on the past. . . . It's there for the taking."