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PGA CHAMPIONSHIP SIGNALS END OF AN ERA FOR CBS SPORTS AS IT READIES FOR FULL HD GOLF

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By Ken Kerschbaumer

The 88th PGA Championship at the Medinah Country Club in Medinah, IL, was the end of an era for CBS Sports as the network's telecast was the last HD telecast that will mix in standard definition, wide-screen images.

"Those days are over," says Ken Aagaard CBS Sports SVP, operations and production services. "Starting in January every shot will be in HD."

The network has a few more golf tournaments and events to broadcast between now and then but those events will be strictly SD. And when a new all-HD truck from NMT hits the road for the Buick Invitational in San Diego next January the whole works, hard-wired cameras, blimp shots and even handhelds, will be HD.

There's still some work to be done. Aagaard says NMT's construction of the truck is on schedule and the network will be making a decision on which wireless HD transmission system to rely on next month.

Historically, the reliability of wireless HD systems has prevented golf HD telecasts from going all HD as the typical golf telecast relies heavily on handheld cameras to follow players around the course. It's only been in the past 9-12 months that wireless HD transmission manufacturers have been able to effectively compress HD signals without degrading picture quality.

"The good news is we know we'll be able to figure out wireless HD by next January," says Aagaard. The challenge, he adds, is that the wireless HD signals will be three or four frames behind the hardwired cameras due to compression.

"We'll have to delay the hard camera signals by three or four frames but our engineering guys can pull it off," he says. All delays, however, will be synced up before the signal leaves the truck. Another question is whether to use towers or antennas for transmission.

As for this year's PGA Championship, Aagaard says the two trucks from Corplex and NEP worked flawlessly alongside NMT's HD1 unit. "When you shoot in HD and there's something in the foreground of the shot like leaves or trees it gives a 3D look when you do a slow pan," says Aagaard. [CBS Sports Director] Steve Milton did a great job of being far and wide for the HD shots that really gave that feeling of being there."

The most dramatic shots of the week came off of the crane shots. Aagaard adds that having Tiger Woods leading heading into the final round didn't hurt as he wears a bright red shirt that pops in HD. Also helping out were lush greens and fairways courtesy of a lot of rain.