The Lacrosse Network Uses Wirecast to Stream Lacrosse Games on YouTube Live

"Our viewers count on us to bring them select, live lacrosse games and other lacrosse programming with the production standards they've come to expect from top sports broadcast networks. Despite our tight budgets and lean staff, Wirecast enables us to meet our goal of aggregating and delivering top-notch lacrosse programming to our growing global audience."
-Julien Trimble Berndt, Chief Operating Officer for The Lacrosse Network in Los Angeles, CA.

As a Premium YouTube Channel dedicated to aggregating lacrosse content, The Lacrosse Network (TLN) is a sports broadcast network for the digital age. TLN describes itself as a broadcast aggregator and distributor of lacrosse games that may be viewed live or on demand at http://www.YouTube.com/ thelacrossenetwork. They also deliver lacrosse documentaries, Q&A interview shows with players and fans, a live news show called The Lacrosse News and a news and analysis show called TLN News.

Since lacrosse games featured on TLN take place around the U.S. and Canada, Los-Angeles-based TLN needed to find a cost-effective way to gather video from all the sports venues and broadcast it on YouTube. The pivotal technology enabling this workflow is Telestream's Wirecast live production software, which is used to produce, encode and deliver live Web streams to YouTube Live.

Today, The Lacrosse Network uses Wirecast software to:

- Produce broadcast-quality 720pHD webcasts of lacrosse games being played across the U.S. and Canada
- Enhance single or multi-camera live shows with graphics, computer graphics and text, video effects, high-quality audio, scoreboards and other broadcast quality production elements
- Roll in commercials and other sponsored advertising elements
- Access Wirecast encoders on location–from their Los Angeles studio–to ensure proper set-up and test signal quality
- Stream directly to YouTube Live

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The Background:

While launching a traditional broadcast sports network devoted to lacrosse was cost-prohibitive, The Lacrosse Network found it could reach a global audience affordably by streaming media via the YouTube Live online platform.

Today–under the management of CEO Samir Chaudry, Creative Director Colin Rosenblum and COO Julien Berndt–the network has agreements to Webcast games played by major lacrosse leagues and organizations including:

- National Lacrosse League (NLL)
- Major League Lacrosse (MLL)
- Men's Collegiate Lacrosse Association (MCLA 1 & 2)
- Travelling All-Stars (LXM Pro)
- NCAA College Lacrosse Division I and III

TLN also carries tournaments, special lacrosse events and high school lacrosse matches. The network estimates that its total audience is close to 210,000+ subscribers across their Multi-Channel Network (MCN) of 25 digital channels. Revenue stems from ads and sponsorships sold to advertisers of lacrosse gear, services and other companies interested in reaching this unique sports audience. TLN's facility, including studios, offices and network operations center, is in downtown Los Angeles.

The Challenge:

The biggest challenge for The Lacrosse Network is that the games must be shot on-site and the video back-hauled to TLN's Los Angeles studios. To aggregate this content, TLN takes feeds from producers, leagues and other parties whose video production capabilities vary greatly.

In some cases, such as the MLL, the on-site production team is capable of producing a multi-camera HD show complete with play-by-play/color announcing, graphics, effects, text and other enhancements. MLL's production is done using a TriCaster, which feeds the switched program output to a Blackmagic Design capture card, which feeds the Wirecast system. Wirecast encodes and sends a stream to TLN that's ready to be passed on to YouTube.

But in other cases, like high school lacrosse games, TLN just receives the raw video from the local camera(s).

The set-up

Production elements like graphics and text need to be added with Wirecast's integrated production tools at the Los Angeles studio before pushing it along to YouTube.

On-site production can range from a professional video van or TV truck at a big city stadium to a makeshift camera setup in the stands or basement of a much smaller sports venue. The availability of uninterrupted, high-bandwidth network connections–the lifeblood of live streaming–also varies greatly. Despite these technical disparities, TLN's goal is to maintain the same high production standards and viewer experience across its entire schedule.

The Solution:

Based on a recommendation from YouTube's sports team, The Lacrosse Network realized that Wirecast software combined the broadcast-quality production tools, encoding and streaming capabilities they needed. More importantly, this user-friendly, cross platform software was economical enough to deploy to any local production team that needed it.

TLN uses different versions of Wirecast depending on the local production situation. For example, for on-site producers doing sophisticated, multi-camera shows, TLN deploys Wirecast Pro; and for those delivering a basic video feed, they provide Wirecast for YouTube.

Two hours before a live event, Berndt remotely access-es the on-site Wirecast to monitor video quality, double-check the encoder settings, and perform other tests for quality assurance. Berndt also uses Wirecast at his end to finish the production if necessary and stream it out to YouTube.

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The Set-up:

The Lacrosse Network keeps operating costs down and production values up by relying on the following gear:

- Wirecast software from Telestream (various versions)
- Desktop Presenter, companion software for Wirecast that captures video from Skype calls and other online video calls and chats, also from Telestream
- Apple MacBook Pro or other Macs with Thunderbolt 2 I/O technology
- Windows 7 specialized builds (by Berndt) or Mac Pros, often used to run Wirecast at remote locations
- HD/SD-SDI video capture and playback cards from Blackmagic Design including Decklink Studio PCI-E cards and the UltraStudio mini-recorder. These cards capture video from cameras and other video sources for use within Wirecast
- Panasonic broadcast-quality cameras used to shoot game action and sideline interviews on location

The Results:

"Wirecast software is absolutely pivotal to what we're trying to do as lacrosse content aggregators. Wirecast is the most cost-effective and practical solution to the challenge of gathering live footage of lacrosse games taking place in different locations and time zones. Like any sports network, we have to deliver a high-quality viewing experience without fail. Wirecast is helping us meet this goal and to grow and expand our business - Julien Trimble Berndt

For more information:

Live streaming and on-demand video produced by The Lacrosse Network can be accessed at http://www.youtube.com/TheLacrosseNetwork, http://www.youtube.com/tln, and http://www.thelacrossenetwork.com

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