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Olympic coverage direct from China TV

Online stream provided by major network

Joanne Lee-Young, Vancouver Sun; with a file from The Richmond News

Published: Wednesday, August 06, 2008

METRO VANCOUVER - Ray Xu can't wait to see Friday's opening ceremonies and has already pinpointed his favourite sporting events. But unlike most viewers in Metro Vancouver, he won't be tuning into local media when the Olympic Games start on Friday.

Instead, the Richmond resident, along with many other new immigrants from mainland China who have a keen interest in the Beijing games, plans to plug into various websites to catch live, streaming coverage of the Games direct from China Central Television, the major network of his home country.

Sites such as pplive.com, ppstream.com, and uusee.com are already very popular for watching everything from Chinese drama series to World Cup soccer matches in real time as they are shown on CCTV's channels.

In the next few weeks, they will be humming with millions of overseas Chinese trying to watch the Olympics as they are seen across China.

"I think they will be more familiar with [the flavour of] what is going on [in China]," said Xu, who plans, in particular, to catch the diving and equestrian competitions.

James Wang, a native of Xian who has lived in Vancouver for a decade, is planning to fete the opening ceremonies with a living room event involving all three generations of his family at his Burnaby home.

He will start with CBC television, but will also fire up uusee.com to get live Mandarin-language coverage on the computer for his parents and in-laws, who don't speak English.

His kids, who have grown up here, will likely flit between both, he says.

Wang has other options too. He is a subscriber to Kylin TV, a service that delivers live television broadcasting and on-demand movies from China over the Internet to a set-top box.

He might also tap Phoenix Television, a Mandarin-language broadcaster that is China's version of CNN, which he receives in his Shaw cable package.

Yet another option: Golden Phoenix Restaurant on Nanaimo Street near Broadway in East Vancouver usually opens for dim sum at 9 a.m., but on Friday, the doors will swing open at 5 a.m. so patrons can watch live coverage of the opening ceremonies on the restaurant's 60 inch TV screen.

Those looking to ring in the Games with the irreplaceable buzz of thousands of people crammed in to watch a single giant television screen will head to Aberdeen Centre in Richmond at the crack of dawn Friday.

At 5 a.m., the centre's doors will open for a special party. Eight minutes later, at exactly 8:08 p.m. Beijing time, the opening ceremonies will begin and a 28-by-22-foot screen in the mall's atrium will carry CBC's English-language coverage of the three-hour extravaganza.

All the while, until 10 a.m., there will be a free pancake breakfast, a lucky draw, a fashion show, face-painting and performances including lion dance, music, gymnastics, and tai chi.

"The next games are here so, this is sort of the last opening ceremonies to an Olympics before they're in our home town, so we want to celebrate that and recognize that," said Ed Gavsie, chairman of the Richmond Spirit of B.C. Committee, which is presenting the event along with several community partners.



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The local festivities will highlight Richmond's ties to Qingdao, its Chinese friendship city and the host for the Summer Games sailing events.

Danny Leung, senior vice-president and general manager of Aberdeen Centre, said the 2008 Summer Olympics are special for the Chinese community.

"I think it will be a big, big thing for our community, as well as the whole world, because the venue is Beijing," Leung said. "I think we will feel honoured to host the Games in our country."

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