

Disney teases ESPN's expansive sports streaming future



Disney wants to win the sports streaming war by making ESPN available “however the consumer wants it, wherever the consumer wants it,” Disney CEO Bob Iger said during an earnings call on Wednesday. The entertainment giant aims to give viewers multiple ways to watch ESPN, whether it’s through a standalone app slated to launch this year, ESPN’s linear channels, or inside rival sports streaming bundles.

Iger says the company plans to take advantage of the “skinny” streaming bundles that emerged after ESPN, Fox, and Warner Bros. Discovery announced Venu – the sports streaming venture that shut down before it ever launched. “We plan to take advantage of the emergence of these bundles, because it is a great way to distribute ESPN,” Iger said, adding that the

companies abandoned Venu because it looked “redundant.”

Iger also expanded on plans for a standalone ESPN streaming service, which he said will have “some form of betting and fantasy and a high degree of customization and personalization,” along with a “much bigger offering” than the network’s linear channels.

Once it becomes available in the fall of 2025, Iger said Disney will give viewers the option to bundle it with Disney Plus and Hulu. The company will also make it available within the Disney Plus app, like it already does with ESPN Plus and Hulu.

“It’s pretty clear that young viewers, or young consumers, are leaning more and more into streaming experiences, both fixed televisions on walls and mobile devices,” Iger said. “The more ESPN can be present for a new generation of consumers with a product that serves them really well, the better off ESPN businesses. So flagship [the standalone ESPN app] is not really designed to preserve a business. It’s designed to grow a business in a market that’s evolving or changing right before our eyes.”

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