Forget Tom Brady and Jamie Foxx: Election, Super Bowl and World Cup Were Stars of Fox Upfront

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With everyone comfortably seated and chair references held to a minimum, Fox put its 2023 upfront in the rearview and spent this year's installment focused on the big games and potential wins ahead.

Fox returned to a live upfront last year with an event that left half of its attendees standing while others sat. However, this time, it was a different story.

"As you can see, this year we have spared no expense because remember last year I promised you some fucking chairs?" noted Food Stars host Gordon Ramsay from the stage.

"On behalf of everybody here, thank you for allowing them to sit today," added Fox NFL Sunday host Michael Strahan.

It was back to business from there.

After solidifying plans for its fall lineup during a call

earlier in the day, Fox went into upfront from the Hammerstein Ballroom with much of that lineup making cameos between much bigger pitches for the company's tentpole events. Lego Masters host Will Arnett voiced the intro (with a dig at NBCU's upfront-week opening event—"Live from the city that never sleeps, unless you were just at the NBC upfront"), then appeared in a brief Lego-flute-aided sketch with Grimsburg star Jon Hamm and Animal Control star Joel McHale.

"Look who [Fox Entertainment CEO] Rob Wade bullied into making two appearances tonight," Arnett quipped.

Rob Lowe was on hand to promote both the second season of his game show The Floor and his ongoing drama 9-1-1 Lone Star but turned his attention to the John Well-directed, Hawaii-based drama Rescue: Hi Surf. The series is noteworthy for getting the coveted spot immediately following Fox's broadcast of Super Bowl 59.

Turning to tentpoles

Beyond Molly Parker previewing the new medical procedural Doc, Gordon Ramsey and Lisa Vanderpump promoting Food Stars and Anthony Anderson touting his two-hour The Real Full Monty special in which he, Taye Diggs and James Van Der Beek (among others) strip for cancer awareness, much of Fox's focus was drawn by news, sports and streaming.

Beat Shazam host Jamie Foxx's continued chiding of Wade from the stage served only as an introduction to former New York Yankees teammates and current MLB on Fox personalities Derek Jeter and Alex Rodriguez previewing Fox's upcoming MLB at Rickwood Field tribute to the Negro Leagues in Alabama this season. Strahan and NFL on Fox commentators Curt Menifee and Rob Gronkowski segued a sports discussion into a preview of Fox News presidential election coverage.

Jeff Collins, president of advertising sales, marketing and

brand partnerships for Fox Entertainment, pointed out that the expanded audience network and ad tech, AdRise, it launched last month is now behind the company's OneFox inventory platform—which should make it easier for companies to find better reach and control among all Fox's offerings. He also noted that a collaboration with Amazon Publisher Cloud uses shopping, browsing and streaming insights to let brands measure campaigns across Fox's streaming portfolio.

Fox seems to know where much of that inventory demand will lie within the next year or so.

"This year, more audiences will come than ever before as we host Super Bowl 59 from New Orleans, a presidential election where more consumers will turn to Fox News and, down the road, the first men's World Cup on American soil in 32 years," Collins said in his pitch to media buyers. "Because our audiences are growing, it means we can invest back into fully ad-supported content for you."

Flush with football

In 2023, six of the Top 10 television programs and ten of the Top 20 were Fox NFL broadcasts. With roughly ten months until Fox airs the Super Bowl, its upfront event was unsurprisingly heavy on football.

College football host Gus Johnson brought out Hall of Famer and University of Colorado coach Deion Sanders to talk about Fox's Big Noon pregame show, the upcoming season and the pregame rituals and NFL prospects of Sanders' son—Colorado quarterback Shedeur Sanders.

While Fox touted its Tubi ad-supported streamer's 63% growth, its Stubios fan-driven creative studios and partnership with Issa Rae, its audience of 60% cord-cutters and cord nevers and 90% on-demand viewing—backing it with appearances from The Z Suite star Lauren Graham and The QB Bad Boy and Me leads Noah Beck and Siena Agudong—even it was tied to football coverage.

Model/actress Olivia Culpo will host a “purple carpet” on Tubi as part of Super Bowl 59 pregame coverage. While previewing the special, Culpo asked Fox sideline reporter Erin Andrews for a red-and-gold windbreaker from Andrews’ wear collection and Andrews alluding to Culpo’s fiance—San Francisco 49ers running back Christian McCaffrey.

Finally, Strahan wrapped up the upfront by not only noting that Nielsen will be expanding its out-of-home panel just in time for Super Bowl 59 but by bringing out the newest NFL on Fox commentator and seven-time Super Bowl champion Tom Brady—who just received a 10-year, $375 million commitment from Fox for his services. After a few jokes about Strahan hitting Brady (including during Brady’s loss to Strahan’s New York Giants in Super Bowl 42), Strahan announced that Brady’s first game in the booth would feature the Dallas Cowboys.

“Obviously, having the Cowboys on is a huge draw as America’s Team,” Brady said. “That’s gonna get a little hard for me to say that all the time, understanding they were the competition for a long time.”

He wasn’t finished.

“I know the Cowboys, how important they are to this network. They’ve got great storylines,” Brady said. “Come on, Dak Prescott? Let’s see if he can finally come through.”

After some quips and observations from Gronkowski and the NFL on Fox team about what Brady could expect this season and in New Orleans—where he won his first Super Bowl in 2002—Strahan opened up the bar with help from New Orleans’ own Preservation Hall Jazz Band.

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