



What it takes to televise the Nationals live

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It will take 39 staff, 12 microphones, eight cameras, three replay machines, two satellites and a £1.5million Outside Broadcast (OB) truck to bring the National Championships to Britain's TV screens.

The OB truck will be home to 25 staff from Cloudbass, headed by Technical Director James Wilson, where vision engineers will process the 1.3 gigabit per second stream of signals which arrive via armoured fibre optic cable from the cameras on the field of play.

Graphics are overlaid and the pictures are then passed to two satellite uplink vehicles which beam them from a 1.8m dish to two different satellites in geostationary orbit 22,500 miles above the equator. From there, the signals are transmitted back to ITV's transmission centres in Chiswick and passed around the country via fibre optic cable.

DID YOU KNOW? Live TV programmes generally take around eight seconds to reach viewers at home.

As well as the Cloudbass staff, production company artifexmedia will have a 14-strong team on site, comprising a director, VT producer, production assistants, a floor manager and camera operators.

Heading this team is Steve Saint, an old hand at TV sports coverage.

He explained that of the eight cameras, one will provide the wide shot of the table which viewers will see most of, with another camera on each of the players. The other five will focus on the table from other angles but would almost exclusively be used for replays.

"TV sometimes overcomplicates sports coverage and sometimes simple is best. We want the coverage to be easy to follow," he said.

Being live also provides challenges, not least that the length of the matches is unpredictable, yet the production team are under strict obligation to ITV to provide gaps in the coverage for commercial breaks.

"If a match over or under-runs, our schedule becomes a moving feat," says Steve. "We will have only minutes to decide upon and then inform ITV transmission of the change to our programme and advert schedule. Throughout the broadcast we have a direct telephone hotline into ITV to convey any changes to our programme plan."

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