

CNN to pull plug on Piers Morgan show

WASHINGTON, US: CNN president Jeff Zucker has decided to end television host Piers Morgan's show after its ratings plunged, sources at the network have said.



Piers Morgan - too British for American audiences?
(Image: Extracted from YouTube)

The former British tabloid editor - who irked conservative Americans after launching somewhat of a crusade for greater gun control measures - struggled after stepping into the shoes of popular, down-to-earth host Larry King in the coveted 9:00pm primetime slot.

King, an 80-year-old talk show star who now hosts a show broadcasting on Hulu, Ora TV and Russia's RT television, is known for his ability to connect immediately and easily with ordinary Americans. He hosted "Larry King Live" on CNN from 1985 to 2010, wearing his trademark wide-rimmed glasses, shirt with rolled-up sleeves and suspenders.

Morgan, in contrast, was inherently British and not just in his accent. In particular, he made repeated references to cricket, a sport with little US presence, and professed his ignorance about American football and preference for the round football, soccer.

"CNN confirms that 'Piers Morgan Live' is ending," CNN vice president of communications Barbara Levin told AFP. "The date of the final program is still to be determined."

US media reports said the show could end as early as next month but that Morgan may stay with CNN in another role.

In an interview with The New York Times, Morgan said the show had "run its course," adding that he and Zucker "have been talking for some time about different ways of using me."

He also acknowledged the show was under-performing.

"It's been a painful period and lately we have taken a bath in the ratings," Morgan said, adding that the show suffered especially on slow news days.

"Look, I am a British guy debating American cultural issues, including guns, which has been very polarising, and there is no doubt that there are many in the audience who are tired of me banging on about it," he added.

Morgan, whose contract ends in September, said he was weighing a different role at CNN where he would have fewer, higher-impact appearances, such as through major interviews with "big celebrities and powerful people."

He was editor of the Daily Mirror newspaper from 1995 to 2004 and before that was editor of Rupert Murdoch's News of the World, which closed amid a phone hacking scandal in 2011.

Gun rights activists posted a petition on the White House website in December 2012 calling for Morgan to be deported for allegedly attacking the Second Amendment rights of ordinary Americans after making anti-gun comments. It gathered 109,334 signatures.

The petition was posted after Morgan told gun advocate Larry Pratt on his show: "You're an unbelievably stupid man, aren't you?"

America has suffered an epidemic of gun violence over the last three decades. The vast majority of weapons used have been semi-automatic weapons obtained legally by the killers.

Source: AFP, via I-Net Bridge

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