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Toshiba outlines future after HD DVD

"We have no plans to make Blu-ray players"

by Stuart Miles published on 19 February 2008

Toshiba announced Tuesday morning that it is calling time on HD DVD in the format war against Sony's Blu-ray, but why? Pocket-lint sat down with Olivier VanWynendaele - deputy general manager, HD DVD to find out more.

"To be very honest we have been reviewing the options since the Warner announcements, we are disappointed by their decision, but in that brief time, the industry has become unfavourable and our position was unsustainable", starts VanWYnendaele before moving on to suggesting the Wal-Mart decision on go Blu-ray only Friday as yet another "event that led us to this decision".

The HD DVD format, which lasted 3 years, might have been seen as the better of the two formats in many commentators' eyes but fell due to a lack of backing from the industry.

"It was not the consumers that chose Blu-ray over HD DVD it was the industry", comments VanWynendaele before saying that given the chance they wouldn't do anything different. "We firmly believe that we did it the right way."

Strange coming from a format that has just had the plug pulled on any future development.

As for those rumoured HD DVD player announcements, they never existed and of course never will.

"We never planned to announce any HD DVD players at CES 2008", VanWynendaele told Pocket-lint. "It would have been too early in the development cycle, but clearly following today's announcement, all development plans have been stopped."

Early adopters worried about warranties and firmware updates shouldn't be. Toshiba says that



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the players will be protected on the standard Toshiba warranty and that the company will continue to offer firmware updates when needed.

So what is the future of Toshiba and high definition?

According to VanWynendaele it is certainly not optical. Having told consumers that what they wanted was high-definition movies on disc, Toshiba has quickly changed its tune:

"Optical disks won't be the only way to enjoy HD movies in the future", VanWynendaele says before commenting that even though Sony's Blu-ray disc format was won the HD disc battle it won't be as "popular or as successful as DVD was over VHS".

"We are studying our strategy and looking to development. Things in this industry move fast. The world is changing, and that means consuming movies and content in lots of different ways rather than just on an optical format."

Toshiba instead is looking at storage options such as NAND storage and its miniature hard drive range found in Microsoft's Zune MP3 player to propel it forward rather than admitting complete defeat and start selling Blu-ray players.

"We have no plans to make Blu-ray players", said VanWynendaele.

As for how much the last 3 years has cost the company, VanWynendaele didn't have the figures but suggested reports on the Internet from Japanese broadcaster NHK suggest Toshiba would suffer losses running to tens of billions of yen (hundreds of millions of pounds) to scrap production of HD DVD players and recorders and other steps to withdraw from the business.