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# CableFAX Daily™

Tuesday — March 16, 2010

What the Industry Reads First

Volume 21 / No. 050

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## It's Coming! All Broadband Plan, All the Time

The FCC sends its 350+-page National Broadband Plan to Congress Tues, and the frenzy already has started. One recommendation of particular note to cable is the development of a universal device that would connect to the Internet and multichannel services. Details are sketchy, but cable has been trying to avoid any sort of 1-size-fits all approach. **NCTA** sent the FCC its own recommendations last week for opening up the retail set-top marketplace (**Cfax**, 3/15). On Mon, the cable group commended the FCC's efforts to draft a broadband plan but didn't comment on specifics (which weren't included in an executive summary, but were leaked in the press). "As with any report of this size, variety and complexity, we expect that we will have points of agreement and disagreement on specific issues," said pres/CEO *Kyle McSarrow*. "But the Report makes a significant contribution to the dialogue, and we remain committed to working with all members of the Commission in discussing new ideas and initiatives that will facilitate the ubiquitous availability and use of robust broadband networks." Back-slapping over the plan already was in full force, with many reacting to an executive summary released by the Commission. "This plan will lower and remove barriers to new competition in services, networks, and devices," said Rep *Ed Markey* (D-MA). "And it will enable state-of-the-art, high speed access to educational opportunities, improved health care, increased energy efficiency, and other national priorities." In a blog post, **Comcast's Joe Waz** rejected the idea that there will be massive resistance, but cautioned against some trying to pressure the FCC for heavy regulation. Goals, in addition to the much touted 100mln HHs with 100Mbps in 10 years, include moving adoption rates to more than 90% from 65% and 500Mhz of spectrum for licensed and unlicensed use (with 300Mhz to come in the next 5 years). Some of that spectrum would come from broadcasters—120Mhz of broadcasters' 300Mhz to be exact, with the FCC pushing channel sharing and hoping broadcasters will volunteer (they'll get a cut from spectrum auctions). **NAB** continues to sound doubtful, with spokesman *Dennis Wharton* saying the group is "concerned by reports today that suggest many aspects of the plan may in fact not be as voluntary as originally promised." He noted that broadcasters are beginning the rollout of mobile DTV service. "Any reallocation of TV spectrum that would prevent or limit this service would give a competitive advantage to subscription-based mobile TV services offered by wireless phone providers like **Verizon** and **AT&T**," Wharton said. "Moreover, the mobile DTV service offered by broadcasters will never encounter 'capacity strains' [due] to heavy use." **By the Numbers:** The plans racked up some pretty hefty stats. Information for it was gathered in 36 public workshops, 9 field hearings, and 31 public notices that produced 75K pages of public comments. The debate went online with 131 blogposts that triggered 1,489 comments; 181 ideas on IdeaScale garnering 6,100 votes; 69.5K views on YouTube; and 335K **Twitter** followers. That said, former FCC chmn *Michael Powell* suggests that most Americans are scarcely aware of the effort in his *Forbes* column on why a plan is needed (with heavy private investment, of course).

**Deals:** With signs looking positive earlier this month (**Cfax**, 3/8), **Versus** returned to **DirectTV's** lineup Thurs—in the exact same spot it was in before the DBS provider dropped it at the beginning of Sept. The deal comes just in time for **NHL** play-

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off action. DirecTV said the spat was over a rate hike and the inability to carry Versus in the same way as other providers. No details at press time on terms, with DirecTV saying it was pleased to have worked out a “satisfactory” deal and Versus calling it a “fair agreement.” -- Sounds like part of **Scrrips Nets’** multi-year deal with **Time Warner Cable (Cfax, 1/28)** included moving **GAC** off expanded basic in some systems. “We realize this is unfortunate for GAC fans, but Time Warner Cable has decided to move GAC to Channel 255 to make room for additional services,” *Scott Durand*, GAC vp, marketing, said in a news release informing Milwaukee-area subs that they’ll need to upgrade to digital to continue to see the net.

**Comcast Changes:** *Cathy Avgiris* was promoted to svp, gm of communications and data services for **Comcast Cable**. Former online head *Mitch Bowling* is now svp, gm of new businesses. “Internet and voice products have been very closely tied at the hip since the launch of Comcast Digital Voice,” Avgiris explained. As head of voice since ’05 (and wireless since last year), she oversaw the launch of caller ID on PC and TV and saw Comcast become the 3rd largest provider of residential phone service. She told us in ’08 that the MSO would launch an enhanced cordless phone letting customers read email, surf the Web, etc. Today, she told us, that product is in 2 markets—Fort Myers, FL, and Denver. “I think the opportunity for us is about trying to reinvent why you want to have a home phone in this day and age,” she said. “It’s slow getting started because it’s something different.” One of her 1st big tasks in her new job is Comcast’s launch of 100Mbps service in several markets between now and mid-year. “It’s really up to the creative people to come up with the applications to best leverage it,” Avgiris said, adding that no one really knew what customers would do with 3Mbps and 6Mbps back in the day.

**In the States:** Opening this week in Atlanta, **CNN’s** newest HD studio marks the conversion of all 4 of the net’s domestic prod centers to high-def and, once live broadcasts begin this spring, will complete the net’s US conversion to the format. -- **Rentrak** announced **MTVN** as the 1st major cable group to subscribe to its set-top viewing database. -- The **Screen Actors Guild** agreed to bargain jointly with the **American Federation of TV and Radio Artists** when prime TV/theatrical contract talks commence this fall with the **Alliance of Motion Picture and TV Producers**.

**Online Challenges:** In ’09, cable news nets were more robust than in ’08 regarding nearly all indicators, according to **Pew Research**, whose recent findings on the vagaries of online news coverage nonetheless apply to the group. Perhaps most importantly, Pew cited growing evidence that conventional ads online “will never sustain the industry,” as more than 79% of online news consumers say they rarely if ever click on a Web ad. With its concerted focus on the Web platform amid flagging linear ratings, **CNN** may find the latter point more poignant than primary competitors **Fox News** and **MSNBC**. But Pew’s assertion that consumers no longer seek out news orgs’ full agenda, but rather search news by topic and event while grazing across multiple outlets, likely interests all 3. In short, the state of online news “may best be described as a moving target,” said Pew, adding that 82% of users would go elsewhere for news if their usual news site(s) began charging for access. A bright spot for cable news: Pew data are beginning to show a shift away from interest in local news toward more national and international topics as people gain more access to information.

**Technology:** **Comcast** is partnering with **The Masters** to deliver a live 3D broadcast of portions of the golf tourney for free to its customers with 3DTVs. The MSO will also deliver the feed to **Masters.com**, with **Sony** and **IBM** helping with the overall initiative. -- **Baja Broadband** and **NPG Cable** are among the new partners of **Sprint’s** program allowing SMBs to begin selling post-paid wireless services operating on the Sprint network but with their own private label. Partners are able to customize their wireless offering, including pricing, marketing, sales strategy, and distribution channels.

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# BUSINESS & FINANCE

**Programming:** Just "Who Is Clark Rockefeller?" You may not know because the **Lifetime** movie with this title was interrupted Sat night due to severe weather in the Mid-Atlantic and New England that knocked out power at a transmission station. The East Coast feed was down for about an hour, while the West Coast feed was lost for about 20 mins. Never fear though, Lifetime is re-airing the flick at 9pm, Mon (3/15). -- **Fox Soccer** kicks off its **MLS** coverage this season with a Fri night (8pm ET) preview special. Unfortunately for the net and other league broadcast partners, the '10 season may be truncated or not happen at all. Players have voted to strike if a new collective bargaining agreement with the league isn't reached by Mar 23.

**People:** Children's net **The Hub** tapped *Joshua Meyer* as svp, business and legal affairs; *Jordan Beck* as vp, creative services and on-air promos; *Lou Fazio* as vp, scheduling, acquisitions and planning; *Greg Heanue* as vp, mktg and promos; *Fred Poston* as vp, ops and *Michael Ross* as vp, prod and post-prod. -- **Comcast Spotlight** named *Bill Haase* as vp, finance & admin and *Kevin Smith* as group vp, Spotlight integrated media sales.

**Business/Finance:** NYSE approved **Vonage's** return to full compliance with its listing standards for market cap. It's at \$286mln. -- **Comcast SportsNet Philly** acquired **The700Level.com**, the most heavily trafficked sports blog in the city with 100K unique hits.

## CableFAX Daily Stockwatch

Company	03/15 Close	1-Day Ch	Company	03/15 Close	1-Day Ch
<b>BROADCASTERS/DBS/MMDS</b>					
BRITISH SKY:	35.14	(1.07)	AMPHENOL:	43.89	(0.24)
DIRECTV:	34.73	(0.14)	AOL:	25.23	(0.23)
DISH:	21.66	(0.03)	APPLE:	223.84	(2.76)
DISNEY:	33.72	0.03	ARRIS GROUP:	12.15	(0.1)
GE:	17.29	0.25	AVID TECH:	14.47	0.20
NEWS CORP:	16.40	(0.11)	BIGBAND:	3.28	0.00
<b>MSOS</b>					
CABLEVISION:	24.00	(0.09)	BLNDER TONGUE:	1.10	0.00
COMCAST:	17.53	0.11	BROADCOM:	32.61	(0.02)
COMCAST SPCL:	16.67	0.02	CISCO:	26.08	0.20
GCI:	5.72	(0.17)	CLEARWIRE:	8.18	(0.01)
KNOLGY:	13.87	0.01	COMMSCOPE:	28.72	(0.34)
LIBERTY CAPITAL:	33.58	0.02	CONCURRENT:	5.15	(0.1)
LIBERTY GLOBAL:	28.09	(0.24)	CONVERGYS:	12.91	0.06
LIBERTY INT:	14.27	0.21	CSG SYSTEMS:	21.67	0.23
MEDIACOM:	5.98	0.08	ECHOSTAR:	20.02	(0.08)
RCN:	15.25	(0.07)	GOOGLE:	563.18	(16.36)
SHAW COMM:	20.19	0.00	HARMONIC:	6.51	(0.2)
TIME WARNER CABLE:	48.39	(0.18)	INTEL:	21.17	(0.1)
VIRGIN MEDIA:	17.20	(0.25)	JDSU:	11.32	(0.07)
WASH POST:	445.83	(0.32)	LEVEL 3:	1.57	(0.02)
<b>PROGRAMMING</b>					
CBS:	14.44	(0.16)	MICROSOFT:	29.29	0.02
CROWN:	1.81	(0.04)	MOTOROLA:	7.03	0.02
DISCOVERY:	32.39	(0.05)	OPENTV:	1.54	0.00
GRUPO TELEVISA:	20.37	0.02	PHILIPS:	32.59	(0.64)
HSN:	29.40	(0.13)	RENTRAK:	20.16	1.46
INTERACTIVE CORP:	23.65	(0.11)	SEACHANGE:	7.15	(0.15)
LIBERTY:	37.40	(0.16)	SONY:	37.61	0.27
LIBERTY STARZ:	52.37	(0.13)	SPRINT NEXTEL:	3.59	(0.01)
LIONSGATE:	5.96	0.19	THOMAS & BETTS:	37.94	(0.23)
LODGENET:	6.73	(0.04)	TIVO:	16.52	(0.15)
NEW FRONTIER:	2.17	(0.02)	TOLLGRADE:	6.70	0.23
OUTDOOR:	6.41	0.11	UNIVERSAL ELEC:	22.83	0.53
PLAYBOY:	3.53	0.11	VONAGE:	1.43	0.00
RHI:	0.31	0.00	YAHOO:	16.46	0.14
SCRIPPS INT:	41.57	(0.42)	<b>TELCOS</b>		
TIME WARNER:	30.46	(0.08)	AT&T:	25.78	0.16
VALUEVISION:	3.97	(0.04)	QWEST:	4.87	0.06
VIACOM:	32.99	(0.37)	VERIZON:	29.86	0.13
WWE:	17.35	0.08	<b>MARKET INDICES</b>		
<b>TECHNOLOGY</b>					
3COM:	7.72	(0.02)	DOW:	10642.15	17.46
ADC:	7.28	0.08	NASDAQ:	2362.21	(5.45)
ADVANTAGE:	2.20	0.00			
ALCATEL LUCENT:	3.46	(0.04)			
AMDOCS:	30.82	0.38			



### INDEPENDENT CABLE:

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- Net Neutrality Rules
- Comcast/NBCU Merger
- Retransmission Consent
- Universal Service Fund Reform

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## EYE ON INNOVATION

### On the Go, In the Know

As the explosive recent growth in adoption and uses of smartphones has helped mobility emerge from the Internet's long digital shadow, many cable content owners now consider it quite wise to launch innovative mobile plays in order to super-serve viewers and bolster their brands. And there's perhaps no better place for mobile prudence than in the sports arena, where fans expect and demand immediacy of news and information. As such, more than a few sports properties are bellowing "Play Ball!" in this competitive, surging field.

"Wireless is a growing medium that we think is vital for sports fans due to the power of mobility," said **NFL Media** spokesperson *Dennis Johnson*, noting how the platform leads to incremental content consumption and, importantly, additional value for both fans and affiliates.

The NFL's newly forged mobile deal with **Verizon Wireless** kicks off in Apr with coverage of the league's college draft. Next season it will feature NFL Net 24/7, live streaming of the channel's Thurs night games and for the 1st time, live in-game team scoring opportunities from NFL RedZone.

"The best way to watch sports is in the stadium; the next best way is on television," said Johnson. "However, knowing not everyone can be at those places at the right time given the lives we lead, a mobile device can help fill those gaps."

**Turner Sports** is looking to fill them with the fresh SportsNOW mobile app, its 1st branded consumer product. Available at the **iTunes** store, the app currently offers coverage of NCAA men's basketball, the NBA and the NHL, specifically live scores, stats and game recaps.

The launch was less about highlighting the Turner brand than "finding a place where we thought there was a need," said Turner Sports COO *Lenny Daniels*. "We wanted to create a virtual and portable sports bar-like atmosphere." In Daniels' eyes, SportsNOW encompasses 3 aspects imperative to the success of mobile sports plays: real-time



data, customizable features and a social component. That is what sports fans want, he said, so Turner stepped up to the plate. Look for MLB, golf and World Cup coverage on SportsNOW going forward. Many believe it's the zealotry of fans that will help drive additional adoption of mobile, and not necessarily the featured league or endeavor.

"Mobile apps are really a great opportunity in sports," said **Versus** vp, digital media *Neal Scarbrough*. "You can create targeted content, and they allow fans to feel like they have everything they need."

Part of an overall digital rebrand that includes a meatier Versus.com, the net bowed in Jan an NHL app across various smartphone types offering video, score updates, blogs and game predictions. 12K downloads later, plans call for similar initiatives surrounding the Tour de France, college football and the net's daily sports program debuting in Apr.

"The app route is so sexy right now [because] it offers the ability to customize a broad-based experience so that everyone likes it," said Scarbrough, adding that "interactivity is as important to us as delivering video."

**CBS Sports'** March Madness on Demand mobile app is big on interactivity as well. Through 2 versions this year, including a new free one featuring game highlights, live scores and news but not live game streams, MMOD allows users to interact with tourney brackets and post comments to their **Facebook** and **Twitter** accounts. Want to alert either community of your correct pick of the 15 seed in the West? No problem.

MMOD "has evolved very rapidly into a highly immersive experience," said **CBS Mobile** vp *Rob Gelick*. "It's the viral elements that keep it exciting."

Also of note in the mobile space is **ESPN Mobile TV's** recent launch on **Sprint TV**, through which fans can access more than 100 live events during Mar and Apr, including NBA playoff games and studio shows.

-Chad Heiges

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