

CableFAX Daily™

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What the Industry Reads First

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Moving Out: Time Warner's Dressler To Retire By Year-End

It's not official yet, but **Time Warner Cable's** influential exec vp, programming *Fred Dressler* is expected to call it quits by year-end—a move that could leave a considerable void at the number-2 MSO. The news (first reported Mon in *Sports Business Journal* by CableFAX alum *John Ourand*) wasn't exactly a shock; rumors have swirled about Dressler's eventual retirement for a while. But the timing of his departure amid programming disputes over sports costs and other issues could present big challenges for TWC. The MSO declined to confirm that Dressler is leaving, but sources said his retirement announcement is imminent and could come within weeks. Dressler's exit will close a big chapter. "I would say it's an end of an era," said **Kagan Research** senior vp *Derek Baine*. "He's an industry veteran and was very well respected." Of course, Dressler's hard-nosed style rankled some nets—especially in light of his success implementing sports tiers to defer the rising cost of sports programming. "We wish him the best in retirement and may sports tiers be retired with him," sniffed a rep at **NFL Net**, which has been in a heated carriage dispute with TWC. NFL Net added that Dressler's departure "can't hurt" as parties try to resolve differences. Already, the industry is abuzz with whom might replace Dressler when he rides off into the coaxial sunset. SBJ reported that TWC offered the gig to **Turner** pres, programming *Andy Heller*, who reportedly declined (Heller wasn't available by presstime). One issue that could deter outside candidates is a reorg last year that would have Dressler's replacement reporting to senior exec vp *Robert Marcus* rather than TWC CEO *Glenn Britt*. Internal candidates include Dressler's respected underlings *Melinda Witmer* and *Lynne Costantini*. But recent whispers have TWC simply eliminating Dressler's position and moving Marcus into that role, leaving Witmer and Costantini's positions essentially unchanged. Whatever the ultimate arrangement, insiders say they'll miss Dressler's unique style—especially his Oracle-like stature in evaluating new content ideas. "He was the guy you had to go to, to get into the game," said one senior programming exec. "Fred was always the first stop. He was the Pope, so to speak."

Unnecessary Ban?: The **FCC** got filings Mon from a diverse collection of civic groups opposed to its set-top integration ban scheduled to take effect in July. Separate letters from groups including the **Black Leadership Forum**, **Americans for Tax Reform** and the **National Taxpayers Union** took issue mainly with additional customer costs that could stem from the FCC's ban of set tops with integrated security features. "With gas prices spiraling through the roof and wages stagnant, the federal government should be seeking ways to provide working Americans relief," read the BLF's letter. "Instead, the FCC appears poised to allow a regulation to go into effect which would saddle consumers with added costs and give them nothing tangible in return." The **League of Rural Voters** said that "by reducing the ability of rural Americans to afford digital cable boxes, the FCC will also reduce the incentive for network operators to spread their digital networks far and wide throughout rural America."

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Broadband: Showtime and Yahoo! TV announced an agreement to offer free previews of several net series at tv.yahoo.com. Beginning Fri and lasting through Oct 13, selected eps of shows including "Weeds," "Sleeper Cell," and "The L Word" will be available, as will a sneak peek of "The Tudors," currently in production and slated to debut next year. -- **CBS'** broadband channel **innertube** launched Mon "Hook Me Up," an online reality series that follows 4 singles as they navigate the online dating world. New eps will pos every Mon, Wed and Fri, and viewers can log on to www.cbs.com/hookmeup to vote for desired matches among the show's stars and the suitors they encounter. -- **CSTV** launched at **www.missionsecfootball.com** a 24-hour broadband initiative focused on the passionate fans and culture of the SEC Conference. A 4-person team will travel to conference cities and games, offering streaming video and updated blogs from the road. The Sonic-sponsored site allows fans to post comments, receive mobile alerts and monitor the road trip's progress. -- **The Horror Channel** will partner with **SenoReality Pictures** and **Gunn Park Ent** for original online series "Heartland Horror," slated for a Jan debut.

Programming: Versus' coverage of the **NHL's '06-'07** season begins Wed (7pm ET) with a double header, and includes 54 regular season games (26 in HD). The net increased the number of on-ice mics to enhance the viewing experience, and added new features to its hockey studio show, including in-depth interviews, player vignettes and previews of games not seen on Versus. -- **BBC America** beefed up its programming lineup with 3 co-productions slated for '07 debuts and a set of acquired drama series. Notable are co-prod "After Thomas," a true-life story of a couple's struggle to meet the challenges of their child's autism, and acquisition "Eleventh Hour," centered around a former physics professor (*Patrick Stewart*) who works as a special adviser to the govt. -- Offering a comedic look at a struggling NY businessman who assumes control of the family supermarket, **TBS'** original series "10 Items or Less" will headline the net's new late-night block of original programming. Beginning Nov 27 (11pm), the show will be joined in the block by "Late Night Buffet With Augie and Del," an irreverent talk show from **The Jim Henson Co**; "Off the Road with Andrew Daly," featuring sketch comedian Daly traveling the country; and comedic series "What News?" about a local newscast. TBS has also entered into a development deal with "The Daily Show" assoc prod **Jenny Hunter** for a new sketch comedy series. -- **TLC's** "The Monastery" (Oct 22, 10pm) will feature the embarkation of 5 men on a 40-day spiritual quest led by 30 Benedictine monks.

Ratings: With the recent release of the 3Q06 cable ratings, **Nickelodeon** took the top spot within the total programming day for the 46th consecutive Q. The net also led all kids demos for the Q, according to **Nielsen Media Research**.

Stumping Staggs: Although **ESPN** will incur roughly \$30mIn in costs associated with the shutdown of its failed mobile initiative, it's unlikely that **Disney Mobile** will suffer the same fate, said **Disney sr evp/CFO Tom Staggs** during a Mon conference call. Disney Mobile is "fundamentally different than ESPN Mobile, and we remain excited of its prospects," he said. "The feedback we have received is that it delivers the fundamental needs that parents have, and more and more families will need phones over the coming years." Disney handsets feature GPS so parents can locate their kids. Staggs also said that **ABC** will stream eps of 7 shows this fall at abc.com, adding "Ugly Betty" and others, and that **Disney Channel** will premiere a show next year based on *Winnie the Pooh*.

Competition: Verizon Wireless expanded its wide-area network to Omaha, NE, and Council Bluffs, IA.



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BUSINESS & FINANCE

In the States: Time Warner Cable began offering HSD service from EarthLink to customers in its Erie, PA, service area. Initial pricing is \$29.95/month for the 1st 6 months for speeds up to 5.0 Mbps, and \$44.95/month thereafter. -- **Cox Business Services** inked a 2-year deal – valued at \$25K in monthly rev for Cox – to provide telecom services to regional employees of the **CA State Automobile Assoc.** CBS will link up to 400 AZ homes with its HSD service to allow the CSAA to hire telecommuters as customer service reps.

Marketing: Vonage announced an offer for **HP** and **Compaq** PC customers in the US and Canada in which purchasers of consumer desktop or notebook PCs can get a special offer on Vonage's residential premium unlimited plan.

Public Affairs: WE will be a national media sponsor for the **Women's Sports Foundation**, which seeks to advance the lives of girls and women through sports and physical activity. The partnership is part of the net's "WE Empowers Women" initiative.

People: Janet Dickinson will assume Fri the CAO post at **Adelphia**, replacing **Scott Macdonald**, who announced his resignation last week. Dickinson, formerly the company's vp, external reporting and corporate accounting, will get a \$460K annual salary, according to an **SEC** filing. She is also eligible to receive an aggregate bonus of \$134K.

CableFAX Daily Stockwatch

Company	10/02 Close	1-Day Ch	Company	10/02 Close	1-Day Ch
BROADCASTERS/DBS/MMDS					
BRITISH SKY:	41.16	0.09	AVID TECH:	36.10	(0.32)
DIRECTV:	19.68	0.00	BLNDER TONGUE:	1.22	0.00
DISNEY:	30.53	(0.38)	BROADCOM:	30.85	0.51
ECHOSTAR:	32.09	(0.65)	C-COR:	9.04	0.46
GE:	35.50	0.20	CISCO:	22.98	0.00
HEARST-ARGYLE:	22.93	(0.02)	COMMSCOPE:	32.68	(0.18)
ION MEDIA:	0.80	(0.01)	CONCURRENT:	1.73	(0.04)
NEWS CORP:	20.30	(0.34)	CONVERGYS:	20.47	(0.18)
TRIBUNE:	32.71	(0.01)	CSG SYSTEMS:	26.67	0.24
MSOS					
CABLEVISION:	22.65	(0.06)	GEMSTAR TVG:	3.29	(0.03)
CHARTER:	1.47	(0.05)	GOOGLE:	401.44	(0.46)
COMCAST:	36.29	(0.61)	HARMONIC:	7.36	0.00
COMCAST SPCL:	36.25	(0.56)	JDSU:	2.22	0.03
GCI:	12.35	(0.04)	LEVEL 3:	5.17	(0.22)
KNOLOGY:	10.05	0.13	LUCENT:	2.33	(0.01)
LIBERTY CAPITAL:	83.69	0.12	MICROSOFT:	27.36	0.01
LIBERTY GLOBAL:	25.72	(0.02)	MOTOROLA:	25.00	0.00
LIBERTY INTERACTIVE:	20.19	(0.19)	NDS:	43.14	(0.79)
MEDIACOM:	7.00	(0.12)	NORTEL:	2.28	(0.02)
NTL:	25.93	0.50	OPENTV:	2.76	(0.09)
ROGERS COMM:	54.69	(0.18)	PHILIPS:	34.83	(0.18)
SHAW COMM:	29.99	(0.03)	RENTRAK:	11.38	(0.04)
TIME WARNER:	18.14	(0.09)	SEACHANGE:	8.35	(0.54)
WASH POST:	732.75	(4.25)	SONY:	39.73	(0.63)
PROGRAMMING					
CBS:	28.33	0.16	SPRINT NEXTEL:	16.87	(0.28)
CROWN:	4.30	(0.19)	THOMAS & BETTS:	46.85	(0.86)
DISCOVERY:	14.44	(0.02)	TIVO:	7.53	(0.06)
EW SCRIPPS:	47.80	(0.13)	TOLLGRADE:	8.95	0.00
GRUPO TELEVISA:	21.13	(0.13)	UNIVERSAL ELEC:	18.56	(0.44)
INTERACTIVE CORP:	28.54	(0.22)	VONAGE:	7.02	0.14
LODGENET:	17.63	(1.25)	VYYO:	4.57	(0.2)
NEW FRONTIER:	8.17	(0.08)	WEBB SYS:	0.06	0.00
OUTDOOR:	11.00	0.11	WORLDGATE:	1.42	(0.05)
PLAYBOY:	9.18	(0.23)	YAHOO:	24.88	(0.4)
UNIVISION:	34.26	(0.08)	TELCOS		
VALUEVISION:	11.44	(0.15)	AT&T:	32.23	(0.33)
VIACOM:	37.06	(0.24)	BELLSOUTH:	42.29	(0.46)
WWE:	16.41	(0.02)	QWEST:	8.52	(0.2)
TECHNOLOGY					
3COM:	4.31	(0.1)	VERIZON:	37.14	0.01
ADC:	14.98	(0.03)	MARKET INDICES		
ADDVANTAGE:	4.24	0.04	DOW:	11670.35	(8.72)
AMDOCS:	39.80	0.20	NASDAQ:	2237.60	(20.83)
AMPHENOL:	62.53	0.60			
ARRIS GROUP:	11.33	(0.13)			

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Symonds Says...

I'm not sure if you saw the recent Ryder Cup competition, but I caught a handful of matches and came away with this impression: The United States may no longer have the best golfers in the world, but there is one thing in which we still



Curtis Symonds

dominate. When it comes to seriousness, we are light years ahead of any place on the planet.

Look, I love Tiger Woods, but when he makes a putt

what does he do? His eyes burn, he screams and pumps his fist, then points to the hole as though directing some demon back to hell.

All weekend long, however, after they'd make some magical shot, the Europeans would joyously celebrate. They'd throw their arms skyward and grin from ear to ear, their eyes beaming with excitement. Their reaction was almost childlike, and I'm convinced it was why they once again won the Ryder Cup.

I'm also convinced that the burden of constantly being expected to win had robbed the Americans of what made them great golfers in the first place – the sheer joy they took in playing the game.

And you see that everywhere now from Olympic basketball to DC politics. Even in cable. Being constantly

expected to win – and accepting nothing less – has become one of our biggest liabilities. An obsession with winning does not just strip a person of the joy of competing, it's often one of the reasons that person underperforms.

As this country has increasingly obsessed about producing the best golfers, the best basketball players, the best bankers, lawyers and architects in the world, we've lost one of our most precious abilities – the ability to simply have fun.

I'm also talking about cable.

This industry used to be fun. But I talk to friends and colleagues at some of our biggest companies, and while they're all making more money, and have more toys, bigger houses and better views than ever, they tell me they're just not having as much fun as they used to.

Just like the Ryder Cup team made winning an unhealthy obsession, many companies in our industry now do the same thing with their stock prices. And ironically, many of cable's publicly held companies are so consumed with their stock performances, they're making bad business decisions.

Consider Sumner Redstone's ouster of Tom Freston. Tell me that's a guy with not just one eye on a Wall Street, but both of them.

Let's see, I kicked Tom Cruise off

the lot and stock prices spiked? Hmm, wonder what would happen if I fired my CEO? Forget the fact he was one of a handful of CEOs who actually got it. Forget the fact that he had instilled in Viacom, top to bottom, a clear vision of what the company stood for. And forget the fact he'd been loyal for nearly 30 years. Can him. Who cares what it will do to morale? The analysts might like it.

I know there were mitigating circumstances in that particular story, but I also know this: We have to stop trying so hard to win. We have stop wringing the life out of our corporate teams with our single-minded obsession on inching profits upward. We have to start thinking more about our corporate environments and a little less about our corporate ledgers.

You know why? If we take care of the first thing the second thing will take care of itself. Just like the Ryder Cup proved, any team plays its best when it's focused, when its players care, and when every last person is playing without fear of failure.

Comedy Central should start a new public service campaign promoting humor and levity, targeting all those under the delusion that fun and success run on parallel tracks. And Symonds says its theme should be: Lighten up America. Winning is killing us.

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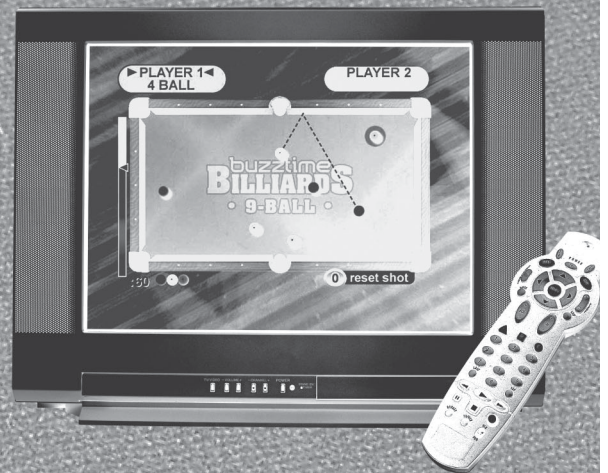
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