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What the Industry Reads First

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Betting on Poker: Poker Central Latest Television Gamble

If you want to launch a poker network, you have to be willing to gamble. After all, past endeavors don't have the best track record, with networks popping up from time to time but never seeming to get off the ground. Last year, **Poker Entertainment Network** made some noise about a launch. It didn't happen, though this week the network's **Twitter** account said the channel "might be" launching this summer "pending the passing of some legislation." Attempts to reach the net's CEO Tues were unsuccessful. Then you have **Players Network**, which sued **Comcast** for \$150mln last year claiming the MSO reneged on plans to launch its Vegas on Demand channel as part of a 2005 partnership between the two. The case is pending in the US District Court for Nevada, with Players filing a 2nd amended complaint in March. Now there's a new ante—**Poker Central**. Led by **Discovery Comm** vet *Clint Stinchcomb*, the net has backers used to high stakes. Two-time World Poker Tour champion *Daniel Negreanu*; *Antonio Esfandiari*, who ranks 2nd in all-time poker winnings behind Negreanu; and 13 World Series of Poker winner *Phil Hellmuth* are among investors (Negreanu serves as chmn). And Stinchcomb assures us this isn't a bluff, with a launch date set for Oct 1 and some carriage with US distributors secured. Poker on TV isn't a new phenomenon. In the early 2000s, **Travel Channel** drew big ratings for its World Poker Tour telecasts (in fact, Poker Central's programming svp *Dan Russell* actually launched the Tour on Travel). Others clamored for television rights to poker tournaments. But several poker shows folded in 2011 after the Dept of Justice cracked down on online poker sites, which had been sponsoring the programming. "That first boom was really built on sand. It was built on the backs of online poker companies," Stinchcomb said. "But what we've today is the 2nd renaissance that's built on rock. You have mainstream brands that have come into the space... PepsiCo, Anheuser-Busch, Unilever. That's real significant change. You also have a digital world that didn't really exist at that point." He believes poker has never been more mainstream, with colleges using it to teach economics and strategic thinking, to charities using the game to fundraise. Its audience will skew male, 18-34, but programming head Russell warns that it's not just for hardcore poker players. "Of course the 1% of the world who are pro players are going to love this channel, but the real meat is the people who are avid poker fans and avid life-long learners in the game," he said, adding that the net also is going after recreational players and millennials. "Then there's the sports fans that latch on to all of the elements they love—you've got passion, high stakes, winning and losing.

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Those are the elements that set poker on fire early on, and it was incredibly attractive to a broad audience.” Poker Central’s programming fits into 5 categories: tournaments, instructional, news & highlights, biographies and films. Over 2K hours of programming is planned at launch with half of that being originals, Stinchcomb said. A taste of Poker Central’s originals will be on display in July when **NBCSN** airs “Super High Roller Bowl,” a poker tournament created by the net that’s expected to have a \$25mln prize pool and a \$500K buy-in. No details on who will carry Poker Central at launch (and negotiations, of course, continue), but launches are also planned outside the US. So, how does the MVPD consolidation bode for indie nets launching now? “It is what it is. It’s not going back,” said Stinchcomb, who served ad evp, emerging nets at Discovery. “The cable and DBS business have been driven by big players for a long time. What it comes down to is designing a proposition that they find significantly compelling in order for them to do business with you, and we think we’ve got that.”

May Ratings: **TNT** ruled the month of May, averaging 2.56mln viewers in prime, higher than any other cable network. While **NBA** playoff action boosted **TNT** and runner-up **ESPN** (2.16mln viewers) last month, it was **HBO’s** “Game of Thrones” that netted the most viewers for the month, with 2 eps averaging more than 9mln viewers. Of course, that factors in L+7 ratings, which are only available for programs that aired before May 18. The most-watched NBA game was this past Sun on **ESPN**, averaging 8.89mln. Other winners for the month included **ESPN’s** coverage of the **NFL** draft (7.1mln viewers) and a May 17 ep of **E!’s** “Keeping Up with the Kardashians,” in which *Bruce Jenner* opened up about his transition to a woman (4.5mln viewers). In total day, Disney had a slight edge over Nick—1.12mln viewers vs 1.1mln. Helped by the Season 2 premiere of “Girls Meets World,” Disney won tweens 9-14 for the month, along with 2-11 and 6-11.

Watching the Weather (and Verizon): **Verizon** may not like **Weather Channel** enough to carry it for FiOS viewers, but **Verizon Wireless** seems to be OK with it. In a news release about storm preparedness, Verizon Wireless cited Weather Channel’s prediction of 9 named storms this hurricane season. Verizon dropped the net from its FiOS TV lineup on March 9, replacing it with **AccuWeather’s** new 24/7 channel. While there aren’t any signs of negotiating progress between these two, Weather has had better luck with other distributors, signing a renewal in April with **DISH**.

Lifeline Hearing: While Republican members of the **Senate Communications** subcmte remain concerned about potential cost increase as a result of the **FCC’s** revamp of the Lifeline program, Democrats generally support expanding the initiative to cover broadband, according to comments at a Lifeline hearing Tues. “Before again expanding the program, we need to consider what problems remain and how we can address them, since consumers are bearing the cost of funding the program with increasing phone bills,” said subcmte chmn *Roger Wicker* (R-MS). Other Republicans, including *Deb Fischer* (R-NB), urged capping the program’s budget and requiring participants to contribute a co-pay. The GOPers also want the FCC to tackle waste, fraud and abuse, before expanding the program. While the program needs to be modified to prevent abuse, extending the program to cover broadband is the right thing to do, *Richard Blumenthal* (D-CT) said.

Effective Competition: **Consumers Union**, the policy and advocacy arm of **Consumer Reports**, voiced its opposition to the **FCC’s** proposal on video competition. The agency proposed changing its assumption to there being effective video competition in all markets unless proven otherwise. Such move would “put even more power in the hands of large cable operators,” the group said in a letter to all FCC commissioners Tues. In addition, “a default finding of effective competition could make it more difficult for local government to negotiate important consumer protections,” threatening the availability of PEG programming and eliminating consumer protection rules, the group said. In addition, local franchising regulations may also be needed to ensure that low-income areas are not excluded from any competitive alternatives in the video marketplace. A change in the presumption could also make it more difficult for local governments to require service to the entire area, potentially resulting in companies only investing in and building out in the most profitable areas, the group said. June 2 is the deadline for action under the satellite reauthorization bill.

Consumer Satisfaction Report: The American Customer Satisfaction Index score for pay-TV, Internet, wireless and fixed telephone and computer software saw its lowest level in 7 years, dropping to 68.8 out of 0 to 100, according to the latest ACSI report. Pay-TV tied with ISPs at 63, making it the lowest score of the 43 industries evaluated. The report looked at 14,176 customer surveys during 1Q. See full story at www.cablefax.com

Programming: **Spike TV** tapped film screenwriter *Kurt Wimmer* to develop scripted series “When The Levee Breaks,” which features culturally relevant issues like race and law enforcement. -- **FYI** booked 6 hour-long eps of the new original

Cablefax TV Innovation Summit

October 1, 2015 | The Yale Club, NYC

Cablefax's intensive one-day summit will examine how rapid changes in the TV ecosystem are dramatically shifting the landscape for content distributors, programmers, technology innovators and other industry players. The industry is at a historic crossroads—and fortunes could be made and lost based on the decisions executives make this year as they plan budgets for 2016.

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Agenda:

- | | |
|--------------------|---|
| 10:00 – 11:00 a.m. | Registration and Networking |
| 11:00 – 11:05 a.m. | Welcome |
| 11:05 – 11:20 a.m. | Opening Keynote Market Consolidation: Nirvana or Armageddon? |
| 11:20 – 12:00 p.m. | OTT, TVE and Skinny Bundles: Can We All Just Get Along? |
| 12:00 – 12:40 p.m. | Down Periscope? How Live Streaming Just Changed Everything... Again |
| 12:40 – 1:15 p.m. | Lunch |
| 1:15 – 1:45 p.m. | We Do (Content) Windows: What's Working, What's Not and What's the Future? |
| 1:45 – 2:15 p.m. | Programmatic Static: Advertising, Marketing and Monetization in a Digital World |
| 2:15 – 2:30 p.m. | Networking Break |
| 2:30 – 3:15 p.m. | Dealmaking Demystified: Getting to Yes Through the Negotiating Gauntlet*  |
| 3:15 – 4:00 p.m. | Brave New World: Will the New TV Ecosystem Respect You in the Morning? |
| 4:00 p.m. | Closing Remarks and Cocktail Reception |

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View Complete Agenda and Register at: www.cablefaxtvsummit.com

BUSINESS & FINANCE

series "He Shed, She Shed." The series follows the trend of turning backyard sheds into creative outdoor living spaces. -- **Adult Swim** ordered a 7th season of live-action comedy "Childrens Hospital." -- **Ovation TV** booked a new original series "Art Breakers," which features the world of art collecting. The series is set to premiere Oct 4. -- **The Weather Channel** airs "Fat Guys in the Woods" on Sun at 9pm. -- **WEtv** expanded its original series slate by greenlighting 2 unscripted series: "Ladies of Law" (wt) and "Sisters in Law."

People: Cablevision Media Sales named *Dave Widmer* to regional vp, local advertising, for the Long Island region, effective immediately. He will report to svp *Michael Bartoli*. -- *Chris Satchell* will join **Comcast** as evp and chief product officer of **Comcast Cable**. Satchell, most recently consumer technology officer at **Nike**, succeeds *Charlie Herrin*, who is now evp of consumer experience. Satchell will lead Comcast's product team in Philly, Denver and Silicon Valley to develop consumer products. -- **Turner** upped *Sandy Padula* to svp of research for **TBS** and **TNT**, overseeing research strategy and data analysis for the net's programming, digital & cross platform, marketing and ad sales groups. She reports to *Howard Shimmel*, chief research officer, while closely aligning with *Kevin Reilly*, pres of TBS and TNT and chief creative officer for **Turner Entertainment Networks**.

Cablefax Daily Stockwatch

| Company | 06/02 Close | 1-Day Ch | Company | 06/02 Close | 1-Day Ch |
|------------------------------|--------------|----------|---------------------------------------|---------------|----------|
| BROADCASTERS/DBS/MMDS | | | COMMSCOPE:26.33.....UNCH | | |
| DIRECTV:..... | 90.86..... | (0.09) | CONCURRENT:..... | 6.15..... | 0.10 |
| DISH:..... | 71.70..... | (0.37) | CONVERGYS:..... | 24.96..... | (0.02) |
| ENTRAVISION:..... | 6.85..... | (0.01) | CSG SYSTEMS:..... | 31.92..... | (0.16) |
| GRAY TELEVISION:..... | 16.38..... | 0.02 | ECHOSTAR:..... | 51.01..... | UNCH |
| MEDIA GENERAL:..... | 17.07..... | 0.06 | GOOGLE:..... | 539.18..... | 5.19 |
| NEXSTAR:..... | 57.77..... | (0.37) | HARMONIC:..... | 6.88..... | 0.10 |
| SINCLAIR:..... | 30.20..... | (0.2) | INTEL:..... | 33.27..... | (0.63) |
| MSOS | | | INTERACTIVE CORP:..... | 76.32..... | (0.6) |
| CABLEVISION:..... | 24.30..... | (0.34) | JDSU:..... | 12.91..... | 0.02 |
| CHARTER:..... | 176.31..... | (2.84) | LEVEL 3:..... | 55.65..... | 0.16 |
| COMCAST:..... | 58.82..... | 0.04 | MICROSOFT:..... | 46.92..... | (0.31) |
| COMCAST SPCL:..... | 58.57..... | 0.14 | NETFLIX:..... | 623.91..... | 0.89 |
| GCI:..... | 16.14..... | 0.32 | NIELSEN:..... | 44.72..... | 0.17 |
| GRAHAM HOLDING:..... | 1066.32..... | (13.68) | RENTRAK:..... | 67.49..... | (0.37) |
| LIBERTY BROADBAND:..... | 53.83..... | 0.05 | SEACHANGE:..... | 7.07..... | 0.36 |
| LIBERTY GLOBAL:..... | 57.01..... | (0.41) | SONY:..... | 30.54..... | (0.26) |
| SHAW COMM:..... | 22.40..... | 0.25 | SPRINT NEXTEL:..... | 4.69..... | 0.05 |
| SHENTEL:..... | 31.85..... | 0.92 | TIVO:..... | 10.60..... | 0.10 |
| SHENTEL:..... | 31.85..... | 0.92 | UNIVERSAL ELEC:..... | 52.41..... | 0.48 |
| TIME WARNER CABLE:..... | 178.58..... | (1.7) | VONAGE:..... | 4.83..... | 0.23 |
| PROGRAMMING | | | YAHOO:..... | 43.15..... | (0.2) |
| 21ST CENTURY FOX:..... | 33.41..... | (0.18) | TELCOS | | |
| AMC NETWORKS:..... | 78.40..... | (0.32) | AT&T:..... | 34.36..... | 0.01 |
| CBS:..... | 61.65..... | 0.15 | CENTURYLINK:..... | 32.96..... | 0.09 |
| CROWN:..... | 4.26..... | UNCH | TDS:..... | 29.58..... | 0.04 |
| DISCOVERY:..... | 33.95..... | 0.02 | VERIZON:..... | 49.14..... | (0.08) |
| DISNEY:..... | 110.75..... | (0.21) | MARKET INDICES | | |
| GRUPO TELEVISA:..... | 38.73..... | 0.60 | DOW:..... | 18011.94..... | (28.43) |
| HSN:..... | 67.82..... | 0.39 | NASDAQ:..... | 5076.52..... | (6.4) |
| LIONSGATE:..... | 33.20..... | 0.28 | S&P 500:..... | 2109.60..... | (2.13) |
| MSG:..... | 84.91..... | (0.19) | | | |
| SCRIPPS INT:..... | 67.47..... | 0.72 | | | |
| STARZ:..... | 41.10..... | (0.59) | | | |
| TIME WARNER:..... | 84.72..... | 0.33 | | | |
| VIACOM:..... | 66.65..... | (0.65) | | | |
| WWE:..... | 13.77..... | (0.09) | | | |
| TECHNOLOGY | | | | | |
| ADVANTAGE:..... | 2.35..... | (0.03) | | | |
| AMDOCS:..... | 56.18..... | 0.69 | | | |
| AMPHENOL:..... | 57.66..... | 0.46 | | | |
| AOL:..... | 50.08..... | 0.04 | | | |
| APPLE:..... | 129.96..... | (0.57) | | | |
| ARRIS GROUP:..... | 33.18..... | 0.51 | | | |
| AVID TECH:..... | 17.59..... | (0.26) | | | |
| BLNDER TONGUE:..... | 0.81..... | 0.07 | | | |
| BROADCOM:..... | 54.81..... | (0.65) | | | |
| CISCO:..... | 29.08..... | (0.1) | | | |

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