

# Cablefax Daily™

Thursday — July 30, 2015

What the Industry Reads First

Volume 26 / No. 145

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## Across the Board: Triple Crown Winner Paying Dividends for Cable Nets

When Triple Crown winner American Pharoah hits the racetrack at Sun's Haskell Invitational, plenty of people will be watching. Not since 1978 has a horse proven victorious at the Kentucky Derby, Preakness and Belmont Stakes. This is the stuff of **Disney** movies, after all. And American Pharoah has the right kind of demeanor to really endear himself to his fans. "He's actually like My Little Pony. He lets people come up and pet him. He likes the attention and doesn't try to bite, kick or get overly excited," said *Richard Migliore*, a retired jockey and analyst for **The New York Racing Association** and **Fox Sports**. "It's like the perfect storm for us to get people closer to him and more interested in the sport." Certainly, **NBCU** doesn't mind the horse's success, with an average of 22mln tuning into NBC to see American Pharoah win the crown last month. With 50 hours of live racing coverage on **NBC** and **NBCSN** this year (including the upcoming Haskell as well as the Triple Crown races), the programmer has a lot of faith in the sport, even without a Triple Crown win. It's just the cherry on top. "There was a time 50 years ago or more, when the 2 biggest sports in this country were horseracing and boxing. Horseracing has maintained a strong following when the big events come along, but it has suffered from a lot of the dysfunction in the industry and the business itself," said NBC Sports and NBCSN pres of programming *Jon Miller*. "Our job as broadcasters and marketers is to make sure we do everything to showcase what a great sport it is. We've more than doubled our commitment... [we believe in the sport], otherwise we wouldn't have stepped up and done the deals we've done." American Pharoah offers opportunity beyond horseracing. Take **Ride TV**, a horse-centric fledgling independent network that's just signed a carriage deal with **DISH**. Ride TV is wrapping up a documentary on American Pharoah that covers everything from where he was raised to his siblings. "We've gotten stories from people who laid the very first hands on him. We're going to do a 1-hour mini doc on him," said Ride pres *Craig Morris*. The net offers equestrian lifestyle programming for those who may tune into the Triple Crown, but don't watch any other horseracing all year long. "We're looking for that general entertainment-type audience—the people who went to see 'Secretariat,' 'War Horse,' 'Black Beauty,'" he said. "We know we're going to garner the core horse people because we're covering a lot of the major equestrian events throughout the world... [The win] definitely created some interest from people who don't normally follow horseracing or horses in general. For us, it solidified the fact that there's an inherent love of horses in humans." American

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Pharoah's win has even upped coverage at **TVG**, a net entirely devoted to horseracing. TVG will be on site throughout the summer at Saratoga Race Course. "That's the first time we've gone on site to Saratoga for an extended duration. We've only made an appearance or two [in the past]," said *Bhavesh Patel*, TVG's svp of television Ops and marketing. TVG also will have a bigger presence at Monmouth for the Haskell this weekend. "The amount of media attention and inquiries we're getting from the press demonstrates that people are leaning forward and wanting to know more about horse racing as a result of this," Patel said. Even **ESPN's** "SportsCenter" originated from Saratoga on July 25, the first Saturday of a 40-day meet generally regarded as the best stretch of thoroughbred racing in the US. In addition to producing its own TV coverage and running a betting operation, TVG syndicates its programming to regional sports networks around the country, including **Fox Sports OH** and **MSG**. "Certainly as a result of Pharoah winning, you're going to see more of those regional network hours coming our way," he predicted. NBC Sports' Miller describes horseracing as the ultimate fantasy sport: "It's just like fantasy football or baseball, but it's there every day."

**Starz's OTT Ambition:** While **Starz** continues to focus on improving and expanding its TVE service Starz Play, a direct-to-consumer streaming service similar to **HBO Now** and **Showtime's** could be in the cards, CEO *Chris Albrecht* said during the company's 2Q conference call Wed. "We certainly see an increased interest... We think that is a good story for Starz. We are evaluating what others are doing. It's still early days, and we have yet to see any hard reported data on the benefit of that to brands," the exec said. That said, "I can tell you that a lot of people are interested in distributing Starz. We have the full capability of following in the footsteps of what other premium brands are doing. We are evaluating all of these things on the basis of which ones we think provide the best net benefit to Starz," Albrecht said. During 2Q, Starz Networks reported \$333.3mln in revenue, up 2% YOY primarily as a result of rate increases from various distributors. Adjusted OI-BDA was consistent with 2014 at \$122.2mln because of the increase in revenue and lower programming costs, offset by an increase in advertising and marketing related to original programming.

**NCTA vs Qualcomm:** The controversy around LTE-U, or unlicensed LTE technology, continues as **NCTA** fired back Wed at **Qualcomm** over the chip maker's recent FCC filing. The group not only responded to Qualcomm's "extraordinary claims," but also reiterated the need for an open and collaborative process to resolve concerns about the potential impact of LTE-U and LAA on WiFi consumers. The FCC opened a docket in May to evaluate the impact of LTE-U and LAA operations in the 3.5 GHz and 5 GHz unlicensed spectrum bands. An open and transparent process requires Qualcomm and others to recognize the "shortsightedness of their ongoing efforts to downplay the serious concerns of consumers and the unlicensed community, and to recognize that the so-called 'sharing solutions' suggested to date are incomplete and insufficient," NCTA said. Proponents suggest they can protect WiFi consumers by occupying the least-used WiFi channel and then by using a duty cycling approach. Qualcomm said the LTE-U Forum had a technical workshop that was attended by major vendors, including ones with serious concerns about the technology. It cited collaboration with IEEE on standard setting. As for co-existence specification for WiFi and LTE-U/LAA, Qualcomm said critics of LTE-U are "downplaying the LTE-U and LAA coexistence tests even though these tests are far more extensive than any testing that WiFi has defined or undergone," *Dean Brenner*, Qualcomm's svp of government affairs, said in a letter to the FCC.

**Verizon to Distribute HBO Now:** HBO's direct-to-consumer streaming service HBO Now will be available for **Verizon** FiOS broadband and DSL subs for \$14.99 a month. The service offers a free 30-day trial.

**Wireless Broadband Hearing:** Democrat **FCC** commish *Jessica Rosenworcel* advocated for unlicensed spectrum during **Senate Commerce's** hearing on mobile broadband Wed. "We need more WiFi," she told the lawmakers. However, she said legislators have overlooked the value of WiFi because it gets low marks in the scoring process at the **Congressional Budget Office** despite "the broader benefits of unlicensed 3 spectrum to the economy... So in any legislative effort to increase the licensed spectrum pipeline, we need a cut for unlicensed—call it the Wi-Fi dividend."

**New Day for Nat Geo:** **Nat Geo Channels** CEO *Courteney Monroe* on Wed unveiled a new vision for the company at TCA, vowing "to be the world's premium science, adventure and exploration network." It all started with the "Cosmos" series last year, which proved to the network that it could do "event-level programming" with success, she said. "We're really putting our money where our mouth is," but she recognized that "it's not going to happen overnight." The upcoming series that most exemplifies this vision? An unscripted/scripted hybrid miniseries "Red Planet" from *Ron Howard* and *Brian Grazer*, which follows the quest to colonize Mars on an epic canvas. Given the success of "Killing Kennedy," Lincoln

# BUSINESS & FINANCE

and Jesus, will they kill anyone else? “We’re very much open to collaborating with them,” but no announcements for now. Other new shows: the scripted project “Last Man Out” about the final 36 hours of the Vietnam War and the doc “Parched” from *Alex Gibney*, which examines the global water crisis. The “goal is not to become a fully scripted network,” Monroe said, but the net is looking for the right balance.

**Remote Control Technology: Universal Electronics**, which offers remote control technologies, said its QuickSet platform is on more than 150mln devices worldwide, reaching some 10mln pay-TV and OTT users a month. The platform, embedded in set-tops, connected TVs, media devices, gaming consoles, smartphones and tablets, seeks to enable unified control of home entertainment.

**People: Fox Networks Group** named ex-**StubHub Global** head of partnerships & business dev *Danielle Maged* to the newly created position of evp, global partnerships. He will report to *Toby Byrne*, pres, ad sales. -- **Comcast Spectacor**, Comcast’s sports and entertainment arm, upped pres/COO *Dave Scott* to pres/CEO. He still reports to chmn *Ed Snider*. The company also named *John Page* pres of **Wells Fargo Complex** and appointed *Glen Brandeburg* pres/COO, Spectra Venue Management and Food Services & Hospitality. Comcast Spectacor owns the **Philadelphia Flyers** and formerly owned the **76ers**.

## Cablefax Daily Stockwatch

Company	07/29 Close	1-Day Ch	Company	07/29 Close	1-Day Ch
<b>BROADCASTERS/DBS/MMS</b>					
DISH:	64.98	(0.71)	CONCURRENT:	5.44	(0.01)
ENTRAVISION:	7.37	UNCH	CONVERGYS:	25.27	0.60
GRAY TELEVISION:	16.19	(0.25)	CSG SYSTEMS:	30.74	0.27
MEDIA GENERAL:	15.57	(0.39)	ECHOSTAR:	46.36	0.44
NEXSTAR:	55.85	(0.33)	GOOGLE:	631.93	3.93
SINCLAIR:	28.32	0.17	HARMONIC:	5.90	(0.12)
TEGNA:	29.21	0.55	INTEL:	29.01	0.05
<b>MSOS</b>					
CABLE ONE:	416.04	6.43	INTERACTIVE CORP:	77.70	(2.9)
CABLEVISION:	26.82	0.23	JDSU:	11.11	0.09
CHARTER:	184.35	(0.32)	LEVEL 3:	49.39	(3.11)
COMCAST:	62.48	0.07	MICROSOFT:	46.29	0.95
COMCAST SPCL:	62.30	0.15	NETFLIX:	107.08	0.18
GCI:	18.23	0.23	NIELSEN:	48.32	1.14
LIBERTY BROADBAND:	53.65	0.54	RENTRAK:	66.34	0.82
LIBERTY GLOBAL:	52.36	0.63	SEACHANGE:	6.80	(0.11)
SHAW COMM:	21.04	0.22	SONY:	29.54	0.30
SHENTEL:	32.53	0.19	SPRINT NEXTEL:	3.48	0.17
SHENTEL:	32.53	0.19	TIVO:	9.94	0.07
TIME WARNER CABLE:	189.43	0.23	UNIVERSAL ELEC:	51.43	0.66
<b>PROGRAMMING</b>					
21ST CENTURY FOX:	34.01	0.38	VONAGE:	5.17	0.02
AMC NETWORKS:	83.44	(0.06)	YAHOO:	37.67	(0.05)
CBS:	52.61	(0.14)	<b>TELCOS</b>		
CROWN:	4.40	(0.01)	AT&T:	34.69	0.36
DISCOVERY:	31.61	0.30	CENTURYLINK:	28.16	(0.06)
DISNEY:	119.84	1.38	TDS:	27.75	0.25
GRUPO TELEVISA:	34.43	0.11	VERIZON:	46.56	0.67
HSN:	72.20	0.31	<b>MARKET INDICES</b>		
LIONSGATE:	38.53	0.02	DOW:	17751.39	121.12
MSG:	83.54	1.34	NASDAQ:	5111.73	22.53
SCRIPPS INT:	61.93	(0.12)	S&P 500:	2108.57	15.32
STARZ:	40.40	(4.37)			
TIME WARNER:	88.11	0.35			
VIACOM:	56.60	(0.19)			
WWE:	16.48	0.05			
<b>TECHNOLOGY</b>					
ADVANTAGE:	2.28	0.05			
AMDOCS:	56.47	0.85			
AMPHENOL:	57.05	0.50			
APPLE:	122.99	(0.39)			
ARRIS GROUP:	30.60	0.38			
AVID TECH:	12.18	0.01			
BLNDER TONGUE:	0.80	(0.03)			
BROADCOM:	51.81	0.25			
CISCO:	28.40	0.19			
COMMSCOPE:	26.03	(0.18)			

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## Think about that for a minute...

### Too Much of a Good Thing?

Commentary by Steve Effros

There's always lots of talk about customer service in our business. After all, we have millions of interactions with our customers all the time and we provide services that are considered essential by many; telephone, Internet and especially television during prime time! Why do outages always happen during prime time?

Of course they don't, but it may seem that way since folks are using our services for so much of the time and it's particularly irksome when there's a glitch just when you want to use it most. The anecdotes tell the story. Naturally, there are other problems as well: complicated bundles, billing systems that can never seem to keep up, frustrated customer service reps, often frustrated customers as well. It's not a good mix. But lots of folks are trying to resolve these problems, and in some cases they may even have gone too far.

I had to call Verizon FiOS customer service last week. The heavy rains this year are necessitating the installation of a new french drain in my gravel driveway. I know the fiber optic line was run there, but I don't know exactly where, and the odds are good that it will have to be moved. I called in anticipation, to get the line marked and figure out what the best course of action was. The tech who came out to talk about it (he had no real idea why he was there, based on the information he was given, but he did a very good job of doing as much as he could do) was fine. The "before" and "after" are the part that I'm now wondering about.

After my call and the setting of a date and time for the tech to come out I started getting emails, and



text messages, and automated calls all telling me that I had an appointment to get a technical problem fixed, and if that problem had somehow disappeared, please push 3 and the appointment will be canceled. The day before the scheduled time all the notices started bombarding me again. Then on the day he was coming I got reminder calls and messages again, and an automated call telling me he was coming within 45 minutes. He did. Whew! He actually couldn't do anything there and then, turns out "miss utility" is the only way to find out where the line is, and Verizon will then put in a temporary line if we do, indeed, think we have to cut the old one. OK, fine.

Then the calls, emails, and text messages started coming telling me the tech had been there, and he had (or had he?) fixed whatever the problem was, and was I happy with what he did, and, and, and.... well, enough already! It's sort of like the car dealers who inevitably have the "survey" after you bring in the car for an oil change, and you are always asked to mark "completely satisfied" or please let them know before you get the survey call what they can do to make sure you do! Enough! I've gotten to resent all the "customer surveys," and now tend to ignore them because they have become the thorn in my side rather than the service I got.

OK, you get the point. There can be too much of a good thing, and while we do, indeed, have to improve, let's not go overboard. It can get to be just as annoying as bad service.

*Steve*

T:202-630-2099  
steve@effros.com

*(Steve Effros was President of CATA for 23 years and is now an advisor and consultant to the cable industry)*

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