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What the Industry Reads First

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Game Plan: Eleven Sports Exec Discusses US Entry

*Launching a linear network isn't for everyone these days, but UK-based Eleven Sports (owned by investment firm Aser Media) is all in with its purchase of the overwhelming majority of One World Sports' distribution deals, giving it about 50mln homes. We spoke with Anthony Bailey, svp of Aser Media in the US, about what's in store for the channel. He will be overseeing the operation, but noted that the company is seeking a managing director (similar to a gm) to run the Eleven property in the US. **Some say it's a horrible time to launch a network, especially as we see a focus on skinnier bundles. What gives you the faith that this is a good investment?** A lot of the current networks out there—they all do a good job—but a lot of them have been focusing on debate, they've been focusing on very high rights. And they're really not programming per se for the millennial or for the underserved sports fan. Our take is that we're not going to be a place where people come and see a bunch of talking heads. We're going to focus mostly on live events, short-form—what we call millennial—content. We may have a program that's 12 minutes instead of 30 minutes. We may have programs that are 6 minutes. **The network has said programming news is to come. Can you share any details? Will you be taking rights that Eleven Sports has in different countries and transporting them to the US?** We are doing our own rights deals. If there were rights that Eleven had that we thought were exciting, we're talking to those rights holders ourselves. We did not take on any of the One World Sports rights. We focused on going out and doing on our own rights deals. We're using our expertise to find and negotiate key rights. [Aser's founder/group chmn *Andrea Radrizzani* is founding partner of international sports rights company **MP & Silva**.] **Is it a given that you would have Leeds United since Aser owns 50% of the soccer team?** Leeds doesn't have a club channel. It will eventually, and we would definitely bring Leeds United to the US once they start creating content there. We're looking at other club channels, and we're actively getting rights deals ready to sign so we can start really refreshing the network in the next few weeks. **One World Sports did have a fan base. How are you dealing with what they covered?** We want those fans to feel comfortable to come to us. It is a bit of a juggling act because there was some content they had that made no sense in the US that we want to steer clear from... Such as the Chinese Arena Football League. Time zone wise, nobody is going to get up that early to watch that. Quality wise, it was lower quality. It wouldn't make any sense for our strategy. **Did One World have any rights you like?** Yes, like the Kontinental Hockey League, which we would say is the second best hockey league in the world behind the NHL. And the Caribbean Premier League, which is looked at as a very good cricket league. It's one of those we are looking at it. **One World had various digital deals, including fuboTV. Is that part of Eleven Sports' plan?** We're doing the same thing. We're out with fubo and **Sony** to start, and we've had very productive meetings with others that are key in this. And we're going to come out with our own app and complementary digital system.*



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NAB's Auction Appeal: NAB filed a petition late Friday asking the FCC to reconsider a Media Bureau and Incentive Auction Task Force public notice setting the scheduling plan for the repack of TV stations at the close of the incentive auction. NAB claims the plan fails to take into account the potential impact of the repacking on non-repacked broadcasters, including FM radio stations. It's also worried the FCC will repack far more stations than necessary, and far more than can likely be fully reimbursed.

Altice-Meredith Makeup: Meredith's WFSB (CBS) returned to Optimum lineups in CT Friday, with Altice USA reaching a new retrans agreement with the broadcaster. The channel has been dark on Optimum's lineup since Jan 13. In a statement thanking customers for their patience, Altice USA offered a bit of a warning: "Skyrocketing programming costs, particularly those charged by broadcasters, are the greatest contributor to rising cable bills. With broadcasters having content available for free over the Internet, and over the air via an antenna, the company is working to keep retransmission costs down for our customers."

More Retrans Drama: Still no deal at our deadline between either Raycom and AT&T or DISH and Hearst. On Friday, DISH said it offered to agree to the same terms of DirecTV before the 2-week-old blackout and the offer remains on the table. Hearst has begun a radio and newspaper campaign in select markets with a "countdown clock" to track the duration of its impasse with DISH. It's also tackling some of DISH's claims, saying it never left the negotiating table. "As for DISH's repeated and false claims of financial offers, DISH is clearly misguiding its customers," Hearst TV pres Jordan Wertlieb said in a statement. "As is customary for companies seeking to protect disclosure of their confidential information to competitors, we cannot disclose the terms of our DirecTV deal to DISH. The question is, why is DISH not offering to Hearst what DISH has surely agreed to pay to other broadcasters?" So it continues...

March Madness: Many NCAA hoops fans' brackets may be busted, but they are still watching. CBS and Turner's coverage of the Div I Men's basketball championship Thursday averaged a 5.9/14 HH rating/share, making it the third highest-rated Thursday since 1991. Those metrics are based on Nielsen metered market delivery and are up 5% over last year. Additionally, NCAA March Madness Live garnered 29m live video starts over the first Thursday, up 19% over last year. The day set a new record for concurrent streams at 2:15pm—which coincides with the end of Notre Dame-Princeton.

FCC Chair to Visit ACA Summit: Count FCC chmn Ajit Pai as one of the speakers when ACA comes to Washington for its 24th annual policy summit on March 28-30. Pai will speak at 8am on March 30, ahead of ACA's lobbying day on Capitol Hill. Previously announced speakers include Rep Kurt Schrader (D-OR), Rep Cathy McMorris (R-WA) and FCC com-mish Michael O'Rielly.

People: Machinima CEO Chad Gutstein is leaving the company to pursue entrepreneurial projects, Warner Bros Digital Networks Group announced. Russell Arons, svp, worldwide marketing for Warner Bros Interactive Ent, has been named gm of the digital studio. Arons will work with Gutstein on a multi-week transition plan. -- Several familiar names have been added to Layer3 TV's content advisory board, including Weather Group CEO Dave Shull, former Disney exec Preston Padden, Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman's John Hane (a Cablefax inaugural Top Lawyer honoree), former 21st Century Fox exec Michael Regan, and consultant/angel investor Jeff Sherwin.

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