

# Cablefax Daily™

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What the Industry Reads First

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## 5 Questions: Golf Channel's McCarley Takes a Swing

The weather has been a bit rough at the Masters, but there was still plenty of excitement heading into Sunday's final round. The annual golf tournament set digital viewership records in the first round for ESPN, with a streaming average minute audience of 44,585 viewers—up 7% from 2016. It also snagged a record 174K viewers (up 3%) watching 12.1mln minutes (up 8%). It's that kind of momentum that Golf Channel hopes to take advantage of, scheduling its three-night documentary "Jack" to premiere after the tournament (premieres Sunday at 9 pm ET and continues Monday-Tuesday, at 9 pm ET). We spoke to NBC Sports Group's Golf pres Mike McCarley about the unofficial kick-off of golf season and Golf Channel's plans. **Golf Channel has had some strong ratings gains, including millennial viewership on the rise. What's driving them?** Golf Channel has experienced eight straight quarters of year-over-year viewership growth, and the primary driving force has been increasingly more live programming, both tournament and news coverage. Millennial viewership has doubled in the past two years, and our streaming numbers are hitting record numbers—so the prevailing trend is extremely positive, and viewers are responding to our commitment to delivering high-quality content. **You have this documentary on Jack Nicklaus premiering at the same time the network has been expanding its live coverage. How do you find the right mix?** There's no science to finding the right mix, but we focus on quality and aim to deliver what our fans want. Our network is at its best when we are taking viewers to golf's biggest events, but most golf tournaments are traditionally staged Thursday-Sunday. Therefore, Golf Channel bridges between these events with comprehensive golf news, instruction and entertainment programming... **What are your priorities on the digital front?** With streaming on a nine-quarter streak of year-over-year growth, we continue to offer our content on the best screen available to viewers, so they can connect with the game on their terms. We supplement our event coverage with a digital suite of offerings, including the latest news, robust social media feeds, and a portfolio of digital lifestyle businesses including GolfNow, our tee time marketplace; GolfAdvisor.com, our ratings and reviews site; and Golf Channel Academy, our brick-and-mortar instruction platform. Golf is unique because our audience not only watches, but also plays golf—so we can engage viewers on a deeper level by serving all their needs as golfers. **Are you dabbling in 4K?** Yes, we've been involved in two 4K tests of tournament coverage this year, as well as having produced 4K content for our slate of original programming. There are advantages for golf with



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4K content, due to events being staged in spectacular locales with unrivaled scenic views, as well as the minute details of golf shots that the format can highlight for viewers. It will take time, but we look forward to 4K making more progress towards becoming the norm. **Does having a president in the White House who owns golf courses and is so associated with the sport have any significance for you?** Golf has long been considered an effective tool for building lasting relationships by providing an opportunity for golfers to spend several hours together, connecting with one another in discussion and hopefully having a lot of fun. There has been a long tradition of Presidents not only loving the sport, but utilizing golf as a platform for diplomacy. Therefore, showcasing golf on the world's stage helps underscore the contributions it can make to bringing people together, whether it's family, friends, business associates or even politicians.

**At Our Deadline:** Netflix late Fri announced *Greg Peters* will take over as Chief Product Officer in July, replacing 18-year Netflix veteran *Neil Hunt*. Peters has led international development efforts from the Netflix office in Tokyo since 2015 and before that held positions in product engineering and business development. Separately, Netflix also announced that Chief Talent Officer *Tawni Cranz*, who joined Netflix in 2007, would leave the company and pursue other interests.

**Blackout Watch:** 21st Century Fox started running ads Thursday night warning that the cabler could lose its RSNs, **FX**, **Nat Geo** and more come Monday. You can see the full list at [KeepMyNets.com](http://KeepMyNets.com). The spat comes as MLB season begins and NHL and NBA playoffs are in some markets. No O&Os or **Fox News/Fox Business** are in the warning. Recall Fox News/Business, like **Univision** and **Showtime**, sued last year over Charter trying to use the **Time Warner Cable** rate card. No litigation has been filed this time around, but it still boils down to Charter wanting to use TWC's contract. Time Warner Cable's contract for Fox Nets expired March 31, with the two agreeing to a temporary extension.

**Title II Toppling:** Reports that **FCC** chmn *Ajit Pai* laid out plans last week to roll back the 2015 Open Internet order had net neutrality advocates fuming Friday. If the reports are true, began a **Public Knowledge** missive, Pai is "preparing to give dominant cable and telecommunications companies what their DC lobbyists have dreamed of for years: voluntary net neutrality 'rules' where consumer protection is no more than 'trust your cable or internet provider.'" Sen *Ed Markey* (D-MA) piled on, warning that the chairman should expect a "historic political firestorm" if anyone tries to weaken the rules. The FCC received more than 3.7mln comments when it was drafting the Title II order, so get ready for another loud, public fight.

**Press Clippings:** Reuters reported that **WaveDivision Holdings** is exploring a sale valuing the company at \$2bln, including debt. Buyout firms **Oak Hill Capital Management** and **GI Partners**, which together with Wave's management own the company, have hired investment bank **UBS Group AG** to run an auction for Wave, according to the scoop. -- Reports have some changes at **Alphabet Inc's** Access division (home to **Google Fiber**). Access vp *Milo Medin* and Google Fiber pres *Dennis Kish* are both leaving the division, but staying with the Alphabet holding company, *Bloomberg* reported.

**OpenAP Initiative:** **Turner**, **Fox** and **Viacom** held an event Friday to detail more about their **OpenAP** initiative, an open platform for cross-publisher audience targeting and independent measurement. **Accenture** will serve as third-party managing auditor for OpenAP. **Nielsen** and **comScore** also will participate with the consortium on the effort.

**Privacy Beat:** Hey, Republicans can write letters to the **FCC** about privacy rules too! Fifty Republican colleagues, led by House Commerce chmn *Greg Walden* (R-OR), *Marsha Blackburn* (R-TN) and *Bob Latta* (R-OH), urged that ISPs hold to their privacy promises "until such time as the FCC rectifies the Title II reclassification that inappropriately removed ISPs from the FTC's jurisdiction." The letter comes after a public backlash following the repeal of the FCC's never-enacted broadband privacy regs. Meanwhile, Senators *Ed Markey* (D-MA) and *Orrin Hatch* (R-UT) reintroduced the "Protecting Student Privacy Act," aimed at helping safeguard the educational records of students in the digital world.

**Ratings:** **WGN America** notched its best monthly audience delivery last month among total viewers (+7% to 446K vs a year ago) and its best month in prime among 25-54s in L+3 viewing (+5% to 157K). -- **AMC's** "The Walking Dead" completed its 7th season Sunday with 15.6mln viewers L+3, up 38% from live/same day. AMC boasted that the zombie series has extended its lead over the #2 program ("Big Bang Theory," CBS) by 61% among adults 18-49.

**People:** *Colleen Fahey Rush* was named evp, insights & audience science and chief research officer for **Viacom Media Networks**. She will oversee Viacom Media Networks' now united Research & Audience Science team and assume oversight of the dedicated research teams for **MTV**, **VH1**, **Comedy Central**, **BET**, **Paramount Network**, **TV Land** and **CMT**.