

Cablefax Daily™

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What the Industry Reads First

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Directly Digital: NFL Execs Talk Tech

There's a lot of talk about whether the Amazons and Apples of the world could win **NFL** TV rights when they expire in 2022, but it doesn't sound like execs are quite ready to call that play. "Our entire model is based on reach," said *Brian Rolapp*, NFL chief business and media officer. "It's based on reaching as many people as we can as long as we can. Traditionally the best way to do that is broadcast television. I think these digital companies are really working on this reach part. What kind of quality can they distribute these games in? I've not seen a live event on the internet that can serve 25mIn viewers at the quality we can." Execs at the 2018 NFL Media Season Preview in NYC on Thursday discussed digital and tech companies increasingly aggressive moves into traditional television, and how media companies and networks are combatting the changes. "When you think of the traditional media companies, they're seeing big changes. Ratings for the NFL are down, but ratings for traditional television are down far more," explained *Rich Greenfield*, **BTIG** media & tech analyst. "When you think about the consolidation trend, that's what you're seeing. If we get bigger, we can fight off these behemoths, the tech companies. The single biggest thing we're focused on over the next two years is are we going to see the big move? When do we see one of these big tech companies do to sports what they're doing to traditional media?" The message from Thursday's event seemed to be co-existing. "I don't think television is going to go away, I think it's just going to be a different form," Rolapp said. "Everyone loves to focus on the ratings, but the reality is historically if you look at it, the ratings of NFL have always gone up, they've just never gone up in a straight line." League execs on Thursday praised **NFL Network**, declaring that last year it was the second-most watched sports network on cable for the first time in its history. The net is increasingly focusing on digital content, describing a business strategy with three key focus points: the game, the fans, and the engagement. "I really think that having the full market of wireless carriers able to stream our games is going to be for-sure a game changer, and it's really helping us get to that younger audience," NFL COO *Maryann Turcke* said. In previous years, only **Verizon Wireless** customers could live stream games on their phones via the NFL Mobile app. Now, anyone can on their mobile devices, provided it's a local, in-market game or a nationally televised games (like the Super Bowl). NFL's digital content includes all live local and primetime games on the NFL Network app.

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Are You Ready for Some Blackouts?: Football always seems to bring out the retrans fireworks, so much so that the **American TV Alliance** (made up largely of MVPDs) sent out a missive warning consumers of a potential #blackoutblitz timed to football kickoffs and **MLB** post-season play. Some markets are entering college football kickoff weekend with blackouts already in place. On Wednesday, **DISH** lost **Quincy Media** stations, including Waterloo, IA's (**KWWL-NBC**) and La Crosse, WI's (**WXOW-ABC**). The blackout impacts 13 markets in 12 states. DISH is offering free digital over-the-antennas as it works to reach an agreement. Salt Lake City **NBC** affil, **KSL-TV**, has been dark for **DirecTV** and **DirecTV Now** customers since Aug 14. The blackouts could impact games such as Saturday's Michigan at Notre Dame match-up, unless subs view it through over-the-air antennas or potentially stream it. This is actually the second time in three years DirecTV and KSL haven't been able to reach an agreement. "We want to get KSL back into our Salt Lake City customers' local lineup as soon as possible. The station's owner, **Bonneville International**, is demanding a significant fee increase just to allow them to keep KSL the same as before. The fact is that anyone can watch all of the same shows for free over the air on channel 5 and often via nbc.com or the NBC app," a DirecTV spokesperson said. The last time these two squared off in 2015, the station was dark on DirecTV for 27 days. DISH lost KSL for three days in January 2017. ATVA, whose membership includes DISH and **Mediacom**, said that blackouts for 2018 are continuing at a record pace, with 83 already. Among those are the 11 DISH markets that lost SagamoreHill stations from May 21 to Aug 14. Last year, ATVA recorded a record high of 213 blackouts.

Regulatory Fee Parity: The **FCC** adopted an order that moves cable/IPTV and satellite closer to regulatory fee parity. For FY2018, the cable/IPTV fee will be 77 cents per sub (down from 95 cents in 2017), while DBS will see its annual per sub fee jump 10 cents to 48 cents. **AT&T** and **DISH** had fought the increase (natch), claiming it would result in "rate shock." The FCC was having none of it, agreeing with commenters like **ACA** that DBS operators' participation in Commission proceedings, along with the use of a common pool of FCC full-time employees to oversee MVPD matters (including matters related to DBS operators in particular), justifies an increase in the rate.

Comcast NBCU Conditions: No comment from **Comcast** on a *Bloomberg News* report that **DOJ** plans to monitor how the company handles programming and distribution even after its antitrust conditions expire on Wednesday. FCC conditions expired earlier this year. All of this comes, of course, as DOJ is appealing the combination of **AT&T-Time Warner**.

beIN beOUT: **BeIN SPORTS** was dropped from **AT&T** and **DirecTV's** channel lineups after negotiations failed. The programmer was attempting to move its channels to lower priced packages. "BeIN SPORTS remains committed to

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servicing its loyal fans and will continue its industry fight to achieve carriage in lower priced tiers,” *Antonio Briceño*, the company’s deputy managing director for the US and Canada, said in a statement. In contrast, DirecTV shifted the blame to beIN, stating “It’s unfortunate that we could not agree to terms to extend beIN SPORTS and beIN SPORTS en Español. As the cost of televised sports continues to soar, we strive to deliver the content our customers want at a value they can also support. There are now fewer leagues, popular matches and premier events on beIN channels than before.” **Comcast** dropped beIN at the end of July when the two couldn’t agree to new terms. BeIN’s networks also went dark on Verizon for about a week and a half this month before a new agreement was reached.

Expanded Vue: **PlayStation Vue** users in select markets now have access to local broadcast stations at no extra cost. Over 450 local broadcast stations are being offered to its customer base. According to PlayStation Vue head *Dwayne Benefield*, over 97% of the US population now has access to at least one major broadcast station from the Big Four.

For the Backend: **Arris** introduced its Managed Business Networks enterprise solutions set Thursday. A part of Arris Professional Services, the solution offers network hosting, customer acquisition, field services, streamlined service activation and 24/7 network monitoring and dispatch. Future offerings will include managed SD-WAN, managed venue networks and managed education networks.

Shark Tank: As part of its sponsorship of the Long Island Entrepreneurship Conference, **Altice Business** is launching an “Innovation Challenge.” Entrepreneurs are invited to design a product, service or tool to be used by small business owners to better communicate with their customers. The top three finalists will present at the LIEC on Sept 29, with the winner being selected by Altice Business executives and given a \$10K prize. The winner will also participate in a closed Q&A session with LIEC keynote speaker *Daymon John*, founder/pres/CEO of the **FUBU** clothing brand. Participants can enter through Sept 7.

Ready for Kickoff: College football fans may be seeing **fuboTV** in a new light as the streamer is set to be the first to stream **NCAA** football in UHD and HDR. **Fox Sports’** NCAA Football Game of the Week will be available in 4K HDR10 Beta for Androids with HDR10 displays as well as Apple TV, Chromecast, Fire TV and Roku devices. The effort kicks off Friday night with San Diego State’s showdown with Stanford.

New Additions: Four additional a la carte channels have been added to **Sling TV’s** lineup for purchase on a stand-alone basis or with another Sling TV subscription. Sling customers now have access to **CONtv** (\$5/month), **Docurama** (\$5/month), **Grokker** (\$7/month) and **Here TV** (\$8/month).

Wow! Cable!: **WOW!** partnered with **Breland Companies** to make the town of Madison the first completely fiber-connected community in northern Alabama. The 563-acre community will now be using WOW’s 1 gig internet speeds.

Bigger, Better: **Insight TV** is bringing its latest 4K app to LG’s webOS-based TVs in September. The app will have 50 hours of HDR content live ready to air in native 4K HDR, and it will also support HLG or HDR10 formats. Created by **Accedo**, the app is officially launching on Aug 31 at IFA 2018 in Berlin.

Ratings: The 72nd Little League Baseball World Series saw a 13% rise in viewership YOY, bringing in 1.02mln average viewers on **ESPN’s** linear networks, including **ABC**. The championship game on ABC was the most-watched since 2015 with 3.248mln average viewers.

SVOD Numbers: **Nielsen** said that the first ep of **Netflix’s** “Disenchantment,” an adult animated series from “The Simpsons” creator Matt Groening, generated an average minute audience of 4.4mln US viewers P2+ within its first three days of availability. During that same period, the show’s first 10 eps received an average minute audience of nearly 2.1mln viewers. The show has a median age of 29.

Programming: *Taylor Swift* fans subscribing to **DirecTV Now**, **DirecTV** and **U-verse** can now watch an intimate performance presented by **AT&T**. -- **History’s** original documentary “Watergate” is set to make its theatrical debut on Oct 12 in NYC and LA following premieres at the Telluride Film Festival and the New York Film Festival. After the theatrical release, Watergate will premiere on History on Nov 2 at 9pm. -- **BET Networks** is offering commercial-free coverage of *Aretha Franklin’s* funeral services on-air and online Friday at 10am. The coverage airing across BET, BET Her and BET.com will be hosted by *Marc Lamont Hill* and music critic *Emil Wilbekin*. -- **IFC** will debut “An Emmy for Megan” on Sept 17. The short program stars comedian *Megan Amram* and meets the minimum requirements for the Emmy Award for Outstanding Actress in a Short Form Comedy or Drama Series and was made solely for Amram to attempt to win the award. -- **HBO** announced its **HBO Asia** series “Miss Sherlock” will be available to US subscribers across all platforms starting Sept 1.

PROGRAMMER'S PAGE

Covering 'Every Little Step' Of Bobby Brown's Life

BET partnered with *Bobby Brown* to tell the story of the King of R&B with "The Bobby Brown Story," airing in a two-part event on September 4 and 5 at 9pm. While giving some glimpses into the singer's early life, the biopic mostly picks up where the network's New Edition miniseries left off. Covering 30 years of his life, viewers will follow Brown through the highs and the lows of his exit from New Edition, his solo success and his troubled marriage to *Whitney Houston*. *Woody McClain* reprises his role as the singer, who is using the project to seize the microphone back from tabloids and onlookers who have given the public a certain perception of him as a man. It would have been easy for Brown and executive producer *Jesse Collins*, writer *Abdul Williams* and director *Kiel Adrian Scott* to craft an angelic image of the singer. Instead, *The Bobby Brown Story* is one of drugs and violence, of cheating and lies. Much of his early career saw him living the lyrics of hit song "My Prerogative," not asking anyone for permission and doing what he pleased. His weakness was women, and his wandering eyes earned him a player's reputation he could never quite shirk. One scene in particular seems like an effort by Brown to own up to how his actions affected the life of the late Houston, even locking himself in a bathroom before his wedding and admitting that he blamed himself for her miscarriage following their engagement. BET went the extra mile to promote the series, placing a 30-foot replica of Brown's head in NYC during the city's Harlem Week. The activation was one of several to promote the series and take fans inside the mind of Brown, according to BET chief marketing and communications officer *Jeanine Liburd*, and included interpretations of his music, relationships and his creative process. -- *Sara Winegardner*

Reviews: "Dinner for Two," 7pm ET, Sunday, **TV One**. *Alfred Hitchcock* films teach that things aren't always what they appear. This good film from TV One begins as a typical love story between two late 20-somethings (Tristan "Mack" Wilds and Chaley Rose). It ends up, though, twisting and turning rapidly, owing to a plot change that few will see coming. Dinner's initial 20 minutes include far more talk than action and a lot of face acting, as the two principles replay the basics of their relationship. Eventually the story deepens to include lost love, forgiveness and a look at how addiction can damage nearly everything it touches. Wilds and Rose aren't bad in the lead roles, though their love doesn't always seem believable. -- "Twisted Sisters," premiere, 10pm, Monday, **Investigation Discovery**. The buzz on this series about sisters who murder is that the exec prod is *Khloé Kardashian*. Should a loyal ID viewer not know this, or care, she will see a textbook ID series, loaded with elements that have made shows on this network prime viewing for those with a hunger for mystery. In this debut ep, a family is found murdered for no apparent reason in their home in a small OR town. The puzzle pieces are arranged slowly so the viewer is guessing nearly the whole way. -- *Seth Arenstein*

Basic Cable P2+ Prime Rankings* (08/20/18-08/26/18)		
Mon-Sun	MC US AA%	MC US AA (000)
FNC	0.742	2,259
MSNBC	0.678	2,065
USA	0.475	1,446
HGTV	0.456	1,388
CNN	0.417	1,271
HIST	0.354	1,077
HALL	0.345	1,051
TBSC	0.340	1,037
DISC	0.331	1,007
A&E	0.326	991
ID	0.321	978
NICK	0.312	950
ESPN	0.288	876
TLC	0.286	870
FOOD	0.273	833
NAN	0.265	808
MTV	0.261	794
ADSM	0.239	727
AMC	0.227	692
HMM	0.215	656
DSNY	0.215	656
VH1	0.191	581
TVLAND	0.186	565
FX	0.184	559
LIFE	0.180	547
CRN	0.176	537
DSJR	0.174	530
TNT	0.171	522
INSP	0.170	517
APL	0.166	506
PARA	0.164	499
BRAVO	0.160	486
SYFY	0.158	480
OWN	0.153	465
HBO	0.150	456
TRAVEL	0.147	448
FRFM	0.147	448
WETV	0.147	447
GSN	0.135	411
NATGEO	0.133	405
NKJR	0.129	392

*P2+ L+SD rankers are based on national Nielsen numbers, not coverage.

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