Cablefax Daily...

Wednesday — October 17, 2018

What the Industry Reads First

Volume 29 / No. 200

Sports & Tech: The Future of RSNs and Next Gen Media

RSNs have had their issues over the years, from ratings hits to carriage drama, but network executives have no doubt about their future. "Live sports is the last and best reality television, it's the only television that is appointment viewing anymore, so with it we have the best product in TV," Ted Griggs, pres, group leader and strategic production and programming for NBC Sports Regional Networks, said Monday during a session at the NeuLion Sports Media & Technology conference presented by SportsBusiness Journal. Despite concerns around cord cutting, RSNs are still thriving. "There's certainly transition in the industry. We've seen some slippage in the last 3 or 4 years," said **NESN** pres/CEO Sean Mc-Grail. "We're still a big believer in the bundle, and we do everything we can to promote, reinforce and support that distribution stream." Despite minor ratings drops, he said NESN saw 72% of its telecasts rated No. 1, with the net winning prime seven days a week for six months in a row—thanks to the **Red Sox** strong season. Over in LA, **Charter** is feeling good about the **Lakers** with *Lebron James* joining the team. "That's probably going to increase our ratings. We still have very good ratings that are above where the **Dodgers** were just 5-10 years ago," said *Daniel Finnerty*, svp & gm for **Spectrum** Networks, which includes Dodgers channel Spectrum SportsNet LA and Spectrum SportsNet, home to the Lakers. While the vibe for linear RSNs was upbeat, that doesn't mean the nets don't recognize the importance of streaming and vMVPDs. Rather, the consensus is that more people prefer to consume sports live. "Streaming is a growing number, which is a great thing," NBC Sports' Griggs said. "Virtual MVPDs have been a godsend to our businesses, and another reason why streaming is so important. As the cable universe shrinks a little bit, live sports and RSNs are more important. People who are sports fans are not cutting the cord. They're probably the last people who are going to cut the cord. We're the most important thing to the cable subscriber." There continues to be a lot of discussion over how to divide resources when it comes to sports, particularly as players like Amazon and Facebook step in to the sports arena. "We're really balancing where to spend our time and where to invest our money. We have a traditional ecosystem—the reports of its demise are exaggerated. We're also spending a lot of time and a lot of money investing in our DTC platform," Turner Sports COO Matt Hong said during an earlier session at the conference. Facebook is currently experimenting in both long- and short-form sports content. "We look at that data and learn from that before we make the decision for the next steps," Peter



Rita
Katrina
Sandy
Matthew
Harvey
Irma
Maria
Florence
Michael

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Cablefax Daily (ISSN 1069-6644) is published daily by Access Intelligence, LLC • www.cablefax.com • 301.354.2101 • Editorial Director: Amy Maclean, 301.354.1760, amaclean@accessintel.com • Publisher: Michael Grebb, 323.380.6263, mgrebb@accessintel.com • Associate Editor: Sara Winegardner, 301.354.1701, swinegardner@accessintel.com • Associate Editor: Mollie Cahillane, 212.621.4951, mcahillane@accessintel.com • Acct. Exec: Olivia Murray, 301.354.2010, omurray@accessintel.com • VP Marketing: Amy Jefferies, 301.354.1699, ajefferies@accessintel.com • Director of Marketing: Kate Schaeffer, kschaeffer@accessintel.com • Prod. Mgr: Joann Fato, jfato@accessintel.com • Diane Schwartz, SVP Media Comms Group, dschwartz@accessintel.com • Group Subs or Subscription Questions, Client Services: 301.354.2101, clientservices@accessintel.com • Annual subscription price: \$1,699.97/year • Access Intelligence, LLC, 9211 Corporate Blvd., 4th Floor, Rockville, MD 20850

Hutton, head of global live sports programming, explained. Although Turner sees the value in traditional media, it decided after acquiring website **Bleacher Report** in 2012 that it made the most sense to keep it as a digital property. In April, it launched premium live sports streaming service "Bleacher Report Live," featuring UEFA Champions League and UEFA Europa League, NBA League Pass games, 65 NCAA Championships, PGA Championship, National Lacrosse League and more. "Young sports fans in the US were consuming more and more European Soccer, and that really influenced our decision for the Champions package a couple years ago," Hong explained. "We're three match days into our new package, split between TNT for linear and B/R Live for OTT purposes."

Netflix Numbers: Netflix blew past its 3Q subscriber forecast, racking up 7mln net additions in 3Q—up 31% vs 5.3mln a year ago. It had forecasted 5mln with the number representing a new 3Q record. "The variance relative to forecast was due to greater-than-expected acquisition globally, with strong growth broadly across all our markets including Asia," the streamer told shareholders. For 4Q, it expects paid net additions of 7.6mln and total net additions of 9.4mln—up 15% and 13%, respectively, vs Q417. Netflix called out some of its competitors' moves in its quarterly shareholder letter, noting changes in linear TV. It said New Fox appears to have a "great strategy" with its focus on large simultaneous viewing of sports and news. "These content areas are not transformed by on-demand viewing and personalization in the way that TV series and movies are, so they are more resistant to the rise of the internet. Other linear networks are likely to follow this model over time," Netflix said. Revenue for Q3 came in as analyst expected at \$4bln.

Remote DVR Revival?: Comcast tallied up another win in the patent scorebook against TiVo as the Patent Trial and Appeal Board ruled that Rovi's patent No 8,578,413 is invalid. That patent relates to interactive programming guides that allow for DVR scheduling from mobile devices. "We are pleased that the Patent Office agrees with us that these Rovi patents are invalid," Comcast said in a statement. "These rulings confirm what we have said throughout this dispute: these patents should never have been granted and Rovi's assertion of them against Comcast has always been meritless. Comcast engineers independently created our X1 products and services. Rovi has nonetheless attempted to charge Comcast and its customers for technology Rovi didn't invent." TiVo (formerly Rovi) did not respond to requests for comment by our deadline. This ruling in particular could open doors for Comcast to reintroduce the remote DVR recording feature to X1. ITC ruled in favor of Rovi last November on patent No 8,006,263 and 8,578,413, both of which were related to that remote DVR recording feature. PTAB invalidated No. 263 back in September. Comcast shut down that feature at the time, but with PTAB's invalidations, Comcast could move to bring it back to life.

Pai Slams Wireless After Hurricane: "Even though efforts to restore communications services have been going well



in most of the areas affected by Hurricane Michael, the slow progress in restoring wireless service in areas close to where the hurricane made landfall is completely unacceptable," **FCC** chmn *Ajit Pai* said in a statement Tuesday. "I am therefore joining Governor *Scott* in calling on wireless carriers to waive the bills of Floridians in these affected areas for the month of October and to allow them to change carriers without penalty," Pai said. As of 11am ET Tuesday, 61.5% of cell sites in Bay County weren't working, the FCC said. Cable/wireline outages have been steadily improving at 138K in FL Tuesday, up from 157K the day before.

NAMIC Notebook: NAMIC launched its 2018 NYC conference Tuesday with **CNN** anchor *Don Lemon* recounting his harrowing journey from Louisiana to the halls of CNN where he has become one of the most recognizable names in news. But he said he never expected politics to get so toxic. "Everything has changed when it comes to this new world order and beyond in the media," said Lemon, who when recalling racism early in his career said he never thought "that I would be fighting those very same forces now." Lemon said he now receives death threats, but "I am here for it, and I am ready to live up to the challenge. I have no choice. There are people who look like me and who I represent every single day. I'm the only person who likes me in primetime in cable news. I'm a unicorn." He called this "the most important time in recent history—maybe ever—to be a journalist in the United States of America... The role of media has never been more important. It has never been more dangerous." In a panel following Lemon's remarks, TV journalists said the lack of civility may not be worse than, say, the Civil War—but it's still disturbing as news consumers look at the world through a tribal lens. "We're seeing the world through the prisms of red and blue," said *Juju Chang*, co-anchor, of **ABC News**' "Nightline." *Jeff Ballou*, news editor of **AI Jazeera** and immediate past president, **National Press Club**, predicted "more gridlock" in Congress after the mid-term elections—no matter which side comes out on top. "What I'm not seeing is courage," he said of politicians unwilling to come out of partisan enclaves. "Compromise has become such a dirty word in Washington."

Me Too: Diversity Week continued with Day 2 of the WICT Leadership Conference Tuesday. The organization held a "Beyond the Hashtags" event discussing the #MeToo and Time's Up movements, led by WICT pres/CEO Maria Brennan. Panelists discussed sexual harassment in the office, the movements in general and how the industry can seek to combat harassment and change the culture and dialogue. "Respect for women really starts with culture, and it starts in the home," said TV One gm Michelle Rice. "I started in the television business and the newsroom, and it was very sexist at times. I always had a voice, and I knew the kind of culture I wanted to work in. I'm a MeToo survivor, but I had the courage in one job to leave. And those things are difficult, especially when you have bills to pay. It has definitely fueled how I manage my team at TV One." Statistics show that as many as one in three women and one in four men experience sexual harassment in the office. "When you lose women who are talented and can move your organization forward, you lose a lot of equity. You also lose what is ultimately a lot of soul. The exit rates for women who are sexually harassed are exponentially higher," Brennan said. Activist and actress Alyssa Milano was also part of the panel discussion. "I think that cable and premium programming has always allowed women to be more faceted and flawed. I think that as art in general goes, we have a lot of opportunity to break through any divide we may be feeling in the country right now," Milano explained. "The only thing that's bridging the divide right now is art and entertainment. We can never forget that power."

NAMIC Breakfast: NAMIC's Diversity Week festivities got underway early Tuesday morning with a breakfast honoring **Cablefax's** 2018 Most Influential Minorities in Cable. A panel discussion at the event, led by Cablefax publisher *Michael Grebb*, tackled personalized content, AI machine learning and VR/AR. Panelist and Cablefax honoree *Raj Bahl*, **A+E Networks** svp, CTO, believes that machine learning will only become increasingly important to the industry. "When we have that connection, we can serve them a personalized experience. We can use these technologies to target them personally. I think there is more to come here, this is only the beginning of what these technologies



enable," Bahl said. Also on stage was fellow honoree *Rob King*, **ESPN** svp, original content, newsgathering, and digital media. King discussed how VR can be used to create empathy among viewers, even though the tech itself still has a ways to go. "I still think there's an opportunity. I think there's a huge opportunity to create experiences that drive empathy," King explained. "We did a really moving experience, the life of a young, physically challenged Ohio State fan. After that, you can't walk past someone in a stadium in a chair and think of them the same way again."

NFL Uptick: After two years of decline, it looks like **NFL** ratings are poised to stay on the up-and-up. Overall ratings this season heading into Week 7 are slightly up from the last two years, and should stay that way. The reason? "More than anything else it can be attributed to good football," *Jeremy Carey*, managing director for **Optimum Sports**, said at the **NeuLion Sports Media & Technology Conference** presented by *SportsBusiness Journal*. "A different level of talent that seems to be on the field right now. There's a lot of factors out there, it's tough to put a number on how they've impacted the lead. What's really interesting about this year is we're seeing the reach is that lower point, but the frequency and time spent viewing is increasing." Though reach may be down, panelists agreed the most important measurement is the average minute audience. "When you're talking about uniques and reach, I think that confuses the issue. I'd like to think that the industry has come a long way in framing it up that way, five years ago we were in a much more confusing place and the confusion disadvantaged television," said *Mike Mulvihill*, evp, research, league operations and strategy, **Fox Sports**. *Brendan Kirsch*, vp, media analytics consulting, at **Nielsen**, agreed. "Our entire strategy in measuring ratings will be based on the average minute audience," he said.

Remembering Paul Allen: It's been years since Paul Allen controlled Charter, but many in the industry remembered his influence as news broke Monday evening that the Microsoft co-founder had died at age 65. The cause was complications from non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. Among cable vets, there are the memories of dessert aboard his yacht at past industry shows, and of course, the time The Paul Allen band rocked NCTA's Battle of the Bands charity event. He joined the industry in 1998 by buying Marcus Cable, following it with a series of purchases that created Charter. Eventually the heavy debt load took its toll, with Charter filing for bankruptcy and Allen reducing his holdings and focusing more on Vulcan, the company behind his network of businesses and initiatives. "We at Charter are saddened to hear of the passing of Paul Allen. Paul was a true visionary. Our deepest sympathies go out to his family and friends," a Charter statement read. NCTA pres/CEO Michael Powell called Allen a visionary innovator and philanthropist who helped shape the world of connectivity today. "During a time of profound change in our business some 20 years ago, Paul invested in our business substantial time, energy, and resources, envisioning a 'wired world' and helping transform our industry into the principal source of information, communications, and entertainment that it is today," Powell said. "Paul's collaborative engagement over the years with NCTA and its member companies resonated throughout our industry, enriching our progress in technology, business, and the customer experience."

<u>Riding Solo:</u> Ooyala's current management team completed a buyout of the company from Telstra Monday. Telstra is set to remain a go-to-market partner and customer while Ooyala focuses on growing revenues through market adoption of the Ooyala Flex Media Platform. "With this transaction we're ushering in an exciting new chapter for our company, positioning ourselves to invest even more aggressively in our client solutions," Ooyala CEO *Jonathan Huberman* said in a statement. "We're now much better equipped to more nimbly drive Ooyala's growth—innovating our own technologies as well as acquiring others that deliver the best customer satisfaction."

<u>Growing Skinny Bundle</u>: More content is available on **Philo's** skinny bundle service. The \$20/month tiered package now includes **aspireTV**, **REVOLT** and **UPtv**, bringing the total number of channels to more than 50. Philo's base package remains \$16/month, while users can add 12 additional channels for \$4/month.

NBCU People Mover: Dawn Olmstead was elevated to pres, Universal Cable Productions and Wilshire Studios. She was named co-pres of the studios back in January along with George Cheeks. Last month, Cheeks was named as co-chair for NBC Entertainment with Bob Greenblatt's departure. "Now Dawn will officially and deservedly take sole reins of the job," NBCU Cable Entertainment chmn Bonnie Hammer wrote in a memo to staffers. Andra Shapiro was promoted to evp, gen counsel, legal and business affairs for NBCU Cable Entertainment, reporting to Hammer and NBCU's Kim Harris. -- Laura Molen and Mark Marshall were upped to presidents, NBCU Advertising Sales and Partnerships, reporting to chmn Linda Yaccarino. Molen will continue to lead Lifestyle and Hispanic ad sales, adding Cable Entertainment, News Advertising and Digital Partnerships. Marshall will continue to head up Entertainment and will add Sports, Advanced Advertising Sales, as well as Client Partnerships. As part of these changes, Mike Rosen, evp, Advanced Advertising and Platform Sales, and Scott Schiller, evp, gm Marketing, have decided to leave the company to pursue other opportunities.



Awards Luncheon

November 15, 2018 | 11am - 2pm | 583 PARK Avenue, NY

We are inviting you to join in the festivities. Meet & mingle with your friends and colleagues as we honor the achievements of Cablefax's Most Powerful Women. Register at www.cablefaxwomen.com

Congratulations to all the 2018 Honorees!

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- > Adria Alpert Romm, Discovery
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- Janice Arouh, Entertainment Studios Networks
- Sarah Aubrey, TNT Turner Entertainment
- > Bernadette Aulestia, HBO
- > Sarah Barnett, BBC AMERICA
- > Wendy Bass, NBC Sports Group
- > Molly Battin, Turner
-) Barbara Bekkedahl, The Weather Channel
- > Karen Bennett, Cox Communications
- Nomi Bergman, Advance Newshouse Partnership
- **> Carolyn Bernstein**, National Geographic
- > Pamela Bertino, Pop TV
- **> Frances Berwick**, NBCUniversal Cable Entertainment
- > Tricia Betron, ESPN
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- > Val Boreland. NBCUniversal
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- > Sherry Brennan, Fox Networks Group
- > Kerry Brockhage, NBCUniversal
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- **> Dawn Callahan**, Boingo Wireless
- > Mary Campbell, Qurate Retail Group

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- > Lori Conkling, NBCUniversal
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- > Kim Dickson, Spectrum Reach, Charter Communications
- > Susanna Dinnage, Animal Planet
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- > Jennifer Dorian, Turner
- Amy Doyle, MTV, VH1 and LOGO
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- > Shannon Driver, Discovery
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- **> Andrea Greenberg**, MSG Networks
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- > Cindy Holland, Netflix
- **Dale Hopkins**, iN DEMAND
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- > Liz Hsu, Altice USA

Worldwide

- **Melissa Ingram**, Aspire TV
- > Amy Introcaso-Davis, E! Entertainment
- > Tana Jamieson, A+E Networks

- > Liz Janneman, Ovation
- > Susan Jin Davis, Comcast Corp
- > Marva Johnson, Charter Communications
- > Becky Jones, Viamedia
- > Vicki Jones, AT&T
- > Dina Juliano, NBCUniversal
- > Georgia Juvelis, AMC Networks
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- > Karen Leever, Discovery
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- Vicki Lins, CTAM
- VICKI LIIIS, CIAN
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- > Tanya Lopez, Lifetime and LMN
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- > Jane Rice, A+E Networks
- > Michelle Rice, MPRM
- > Kristen Roberts, Crown Media Family Networks
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