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What the Industry Reads First

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Game Time: ACC Network Almost Ready for Launch

It's crunch time for the team over at **ACC Network**, the new 24/7 ESPN-managed sports net launching Thursday at 7pm ET. While the net has secured multiple carriage deals ahead of launch, most recently with **Charter/Spectrum**, it still lacks deals with **Comcast**, **Cox** and **DISH**. That's not deterring momentum, with ESPN svp of college networks *Rosalyn Durant* telling reporters recently that productive conversations are continuing behind the scenes. She also made note of vocal fans that want the channel, which will cover all things ACC. The U of Miami Hurricanes are telling fans on **Twitter** to contact Comcast to "demand" the net or make a switch to a provider that does. Other schools, including Florida State, are taking similar actions. ACCN has a direct relationship with all 15 schools in the conference, and as part of the network's launch each school was required to build a broadcast quality studio facility on campus. In terms of marketing ACCN, ESPN has been taking advantage of both **Disney's** vast collection of properties and the schools' pre-existing relationship with their fan bases. "We're using all of our platforms, we've been very active with social media in addition to what you see on and off channel in heavy ACC markets," Durant told **Cablefax**. "Each school has partnered directly with their fans. They're excited for the network and they're excited for their fans to have access to the network." The net will be based in ESPN's headquarters in Bristol, CT, and recently revealed its new 2,800 sq-ft home. However, Durant says ACCN will also have a strong presence in Charlotte (home to sister net **SEC Network**). Durant, who also oversees the SEC channel, emphasized that ACCN is its own entity. "Our focus is on providing fans an authentic experience. ACC Network is for the ACC fans, and our attention has been on serving that fan base specifically," she said. It is debuting with the "All ACC" launch night special featuring ACC commish *John Swofford*, Clemson head football coach *Dabo Swinney* and others. To promote the net, the first 10 minutes of programming Thursday will air across ESPN, **ESPN2**, **ESPNU** and **ESPNEWS**. "We're excited about our launch show that will preview for fans what this network will offer. [It] will bring these coaches, these fans, these alums to this network in a very special debut," said Durant. With college football season kicking off on Saturday, ACCN is coming in hot with programming. The first game on the newly-minted net is a big one: defending national champion Clemson vs Georgia Tech on Aug 29 at 8pm. But football isn't all ACCN is going to focus on. Durant hinted at upcoming basketball announcements, and with powerhouses like Virginia and Duke in the conference, it's sure

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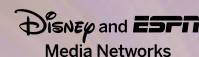
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to be big (and big ratings). “We’ll have a very strong basketball presence. We’re proud to represent the entirety of the conference across sports. Fans should expect excellent content for lacrosse, field hockey, men’s and women’s soccer and other sports,” she said. ACCN plans to televise approx 40 football games per season and multiple spring games. In all, the net will air at least 450 events per year, comprising of more than 150 men’s and women’s basketball games and 200 other regular season competitions and tournaments across the conferences 27 sports. Digital platform ACC Network Extra (ACCNX) will be available on the ESPN app.

Fios Exiting Current News Business: While rival **Altice USA** is ramping up its news operations, **Verizon Fios** is backing away—at least for now. The company said later this year it will no longer offer **Fios1 News**, a group of hyper-local news nets in the NY DMA. Verizon is ending its 10-year partnership with **RNN** on the channels, but it sounds like it may be cooking up something else. “We understand that this content is important to our customers and plan to continue to offer hyperlocal news, traffic, weather, high school sports and other fan favorite local content. Those plans will be announced shortly,” a spokesperson said. **RNN** news pres *Richard French* wrote in a [letter](#) obtained by the *Rockland/Westchester Journal News* that the contract with Fios ends on Nov 16 and that 150 RNN employees will lose their jobs.

USTelecom Efforts to Rebuild Broadband Maps Proves Successful: The results are in on the **USTelecom**-led Broadband Mapping Initiative pilot program and all signs are pointing to it being an effective way to track broadband deployment quickly and cheaply. In a report delivered to the **FCC** Tuesday, USTelecom said that in pilot states Missouri and Virginia, 38% of homes and businesses counted as “served” under current reporting are not receiving service from participating providers and 48% of the location counts in rural Missouri and Virginia census blocks were inaccurate. Location showed huge problems as well. The presumed geocoded location for 61% of rural homes and businesses were off by more than 25 feet and 25% were by more than 328 feet. The good news is that expanding the pilot nationwide won’t cost an arm and a leg. USTelecom claims that all broadband serviceable locations is achievable in 12-15 months at a cost between \$8.5-11mln in upfront costs and \$3-4mln in annual updates.

WWE Moving NXT to USA Network: **WWE**’s “NXT” has a new home. Starting Sept 18, the two-hour weekly show will air live on **USA** at 8pm. It’s the same time slot it held on SVOD **WWE Network** since 2015, but it will now be directly competing with **TNT**’s “All Elite Wrestling,” which premieres on Oct 2. **WWE** chmn/CEO *Vince McMahon* said in a statement that the move offers up an opportunity to build the minor league brand, eventually developing a following that can be monetized at the same level as the flagship “Raw” and “SmackDown Live” programs. **NXT**’s **USA Network** premiere will come just two weeks before **Smackdown Live** makes its Oct 4 debut on **Fox**.

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T-Mobile Ready to Test 5G Devices in Bellevue: T-Mobile opened a device lab Tuesday built to test smartphones and other devices with the capability to connect to its network. The 20K-square-foot space located within its Launch Pad innovation center in Bellevue, WA, features more than a dozen testing stations for engineers to fine-tune everything from network signal quality to video optimization. The lab also includes equipment designed specifically to test devices using low-band, mid-band and mmWave 5G spectrum to ensure they're capable of utilizing that spectrum from New T-Mobile's 5G network, should its merger with Sprint be approved.

Grain Management Acquiring Another Cabler: Private equity firm **Grain Management** has signed a definitive agreement to acquire a majority interest in Oregon-based **Hunter Communications**. Hunter offers data and voice services to businesses and residents of southern Oregon and parts of northern California. The transaction is expected to close in 1Q20. It's the second new deal in eight days for the firm, which announced on Aug 12 its plans to acquire a majority stake in **Ritter Communications**.

Halloween Takes Over Travel Channel in October: **Travel Channel** will embrace the art of a good scare in October during its annual Ghostober programming event. Kicking off on Oct 1, the month-long event will be "quite simply, what my old stomping ground of Hallmark is to Christmas, Travel is to Halloween," **Discovery** group pres **Henry Schleiff** said during the **TCA** Summer Tour. New to this year's lineup is "Haunted Salem: Live," a four-hour live ghost investigation through three historic locations in Salem, Massachusetts. The multiplatform event will premiere Oct 4 at 8pm. New series "Destination Fear" will take viewers on a road trip to America's most haunted abandoned buildings. "Ghost Adventures" stars **Dakota Laden**, sister Chelsea and best friend Tanner will be at the center of the series, premiering Oct 26 at 10pm.

Atlantic Broadband Continues Gigabit Quest: **Atlantic Broadband's** gigabit footprint just grew a little bigger, now reaching residential and business customers in its Maryland, Delaware, South Carolina, Connecticut and western Pennsylvania service areas. The expansion is part of an effort to make gigabit speed internet available to 90% of its service area, which includes 11 states from Florida to Maine.

Internet, Digital Phone Services Now SIMPLE for CenturyLink Business Customers: **CenturyLink** is expanding its SIMPLE for Business portfolio to include internet and digital phone services. SIMPLE internet will offer speeds of up to 140 MBps while the digital phone service will feature unlimited nationwide calling, instant messaging, video conferencing and file sharing.

Ratings: **Paramount Network's** drama "Yellowstone" is once again the No. 1 rated telecast across cable in P18-49 and P25-54, with its Aug 14 ep pulling in 5.3mln total viewers. It was the No. 1 watched telecast for the night and the No. 2 most-watched in series history. The net's "I Am Patrick Swayze" also pulled high ratings, delivering a gross average audience of 2mln total viewers with its August 18 premiere, including a simulcast on **TV Land** and a Paramount Network encore. During the premiere, I am Patrick Swayze averaged 1.1mln total viewers. -- Original movie "A Summer Romance," airing on **Hallmark Channel** Saturday during its Summer Nights programming block, averaged a 2.4 household rating while bringing in 2.4mln total viewers and 287K W25-54 in Nielsen L+SD. The film ranked as the highest-rated and most-watched non-sports program of the day.

On the Circuit: The **WICT** Southeast Chapter will honor six of its members at the annual Red Letter Awards Gala on Oct 17 in Atlanta, GA. Recipients are **Tina Simmons**, svp, HR, **Comcast**; **Marilyn Altman**, vp, technical services contracts, **CommScope**; **Angela Cannon**, vp for **UP Faith & Family**; **Susannah Balish**, senior director supply chain management, **Cox**; **Shana Keith**, director public affairs, Cox; and **Sarah Cheatham**, director, media strategies, **Discovery**.

Programming: **Netflix** began production on an eight-episode lifestyle series featuring **Clea Shearer** and **Joanna Teplin** of home organization company **The Home Edit**. Each hour-long episode will see the duo tackle two organizational projects. -- **HGTV's** "One of a Kind" is returning for a second season on Sept 9 at 10:30pm. Renovation expert **Grace Mitchell** is set to return to overhaul Fort Worth homes. -- **Travel Channel** is getting ready for spooky season with its annual "Ghostober" event. Kicking off Oct 1, the net will air what it's calling "31 Days of Terror" including new series "Destination Fear" (Oct 26, 10pm) and a four-hour live ghost investigation "Haunted Salem: Live" on Oct 4 at 8pm.

People: **Angelique Yen** and **Eddie Gamarra** are joining **Nickelodeon** to oversee its studio model business. The pair will produce both long-form movie content as well as content for SVOD services. Yen, who kicked off her career at **Disney** in 1991, most recently headed **Netflix's** animation production and pipeline for 16 slated productions. Gamarra comes over from production company **The Gotham Group**, where he served as a literary manager with a primary focus on kids' and family entertainment.