

Cablefax Daily™

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What the Industry Reads First

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Carriage Confusion: ACC Network Rolls Out, But with Some Difficulty

The long-awaited **ESPN**-owned **ACC Network** officially launched Thursday night, bringing college sports content to millions of homes across the country. However, not all subs who thought they had the channel could tune in. **Re-****ports** came in quickly that some **Charter** Spectrum subs were seeing a blue screen that said they did not have access to the channel and featured a number to call, even though ACCN has a carriage deal with the operator. Charter confirmed to **Cablefax** that legacy **Time Warner Cable** customers are not be able to view the channel unless they switch over to a Spectrum package. The **Disney/Charter** carriage deal for ACCN was struck barely a week before launch, with TWC customers not notified that they wouldn't have access to the net. Charter says the company has been phasing out legacy packages since the TWC/Charter merger in 2016, and now 82% of its customers are on Spectrum pricing and packaging. ACCN launched on Spectrum Select in ACC markets, and on Spectrum Tier One outside of the conference's footprint. "Charter put a priority on ensuring ACC Network was available in ACC markets at launch. Outer markets will be activated on a rolling basis and should be complete in early September," ESPN said in a statement. Some **DirecTV** subs also reported difficulties on **Twitter**, with customers struggling to determine exactly which packages carry the net and in what footprints. DirecTV had not responded to a request for comment by deadline. ACC Network still lacks carriage from several major providers, including **Comcast**, **Cox** and **DISH**. Comcast's Xfinity has 22mln subs and a significant presence in metro Atlanta, home to Georgia Tech. The net's first big test will be if all the hiccups—package and carriage-wise—are worked out before Thursday's opening game between defending national champ Clemson and Georgia Tech at 8pm. Tech director of athletics **Todd Stansbury** tweeted just ahead of launch that "it's time to seriously consider switching to one of the national providers that definitely WILL have ACCN." Clemson athletic director **Dan Radovich** (who also held the same title at Tech for six years) tweeted at launch thanking all the fans and telling them to "keep the #DemandACCN going!!" Fans without carriage have been vocal on social media. On Friday, DISH responded to a disgruntled fan on Twitter, saying "We are working with the owner of the ACC Network to see if a fair agreement can be reached to carry this channel on DISH's lineup." Duke fans were happy, as launch night included a 90-min doc about Duke basketball head coach **Mike Krzyze-**

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wski. ESPN says that ACCN isn't just for ACC fans, however. "The great thing about original content, you don't have to be a fan of a particular school to appreciate great storytelling, and that's what fans of sports will come to appreciate with this network," ESPN svp of college networks Rosalyn Durant told Cablefax.

Sinclair Officially Owner of 21 RSNs: Sinclair is ready to play ball, announcing Friday that it has completed its acquisition of 21 RSNs and Fox College Sports from Disney, all of which were acquired by Disney through its purchase of 21st Century Fox assets. The transaction is valued at \$10.6bln, which, after adjusting for minority interests, reflects an aggregate purchase price of \$9.6bln. And it might not be the end of Sinclair's sports ambitions, with CEO Chris Ripley telling the WSJ that the company is interested in AT&T's four RSNs in Seattle, Colorado, Pittsburgh and the Southwest. Sinclair pulled out all the stops at last month's NCTC and ACA Independent Show, welcoming attendees to Wrigley Field for a party celebrating the upcoming Marquee channel that Sinclair and the Cubs are partnering on. Not only did it run the names of all the operators in the house on the score board, but it had several Cub players, including short-stop Javier Baez, at the shindig. As for the Fox RSNs, they were acquired via Diamond Sports Group, an indirect subsidiary of Sinclair. Entertainment Studios founder Byron Allen has signed on to become an equity and content partner as well as an indirect parent to the holding company. The portfolio excludes YES Network, but includes exclusive local rights to 42 professional teams: 14 from the MLB, 16 NBA teams and 12 NHL teams. Don't be surprised to see the Yankees close on a deal to take back ownership of YES very soon.

ESPN Digital Hits New High: ESPN Digital recorded 86.8mln unique visitors last month, marking its largest US sports category lead ever (+63% over the No 2 CBS Sports). It was ESPN's eight straight record-setting monthly reach, with July up 25% YOY.

Ratings: Hallmark Channel's "Good Witch" concluded its fifth season Aug 23 on a high note, delivering a 3.0 household rating, 3mln total viewers and 414K W25-54. The finale was the highest-rated and most-watched program of the day and the most-watched non-news program of the week. -- The L+7 numbers are in, pushing Disney Channel's "Descendants 3" past the success of its predecessor with its Aug 2 premiere reaching 11.2mln viewers (a 144% upsurge). The premiere is the highest-rated telecast since 2015's "Descendants" among kids 6-11 and 9-14. The L+7 data showed a 164% increase among 6-11 to 3.67mln delivered and a 129% increase among 9-14 to 3.25mln delivered. The premiere also reached 3.27mln A18-29.

Programming: "The Purge" will return to USA for its sophomore season premiere on Oct 15 at 9pm. It will be imme-

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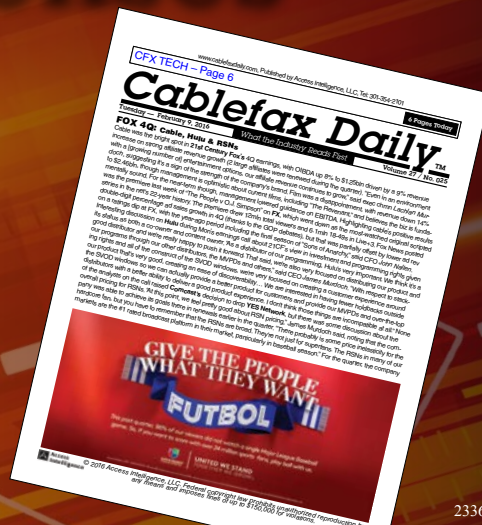
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diately followed by the premiere of “Treadstone,” an action series based on the Bourne movie franchise. -- **Investigation Discovery** is investigating the area in Colorado known as Prison Valley in six-part series “Valley of the Damned.” Making its debut on Sept 3 at 10pm, the show will unravel the psychologically charged homicides that have plagued the region. -- **Food Network** and **Cooking Channel** are coming together to celebrate Halloween with over 30 hours of themed programming, including four new series and specials. New this year on Food Network are “Halloween Cake-Off” (Sept 23, 10pm), “Kids Baking Championship: Tricks & Treats” (Sept 26, 9pm) and “Outrageous Pumpkins” (Sept 29, 10pm). Cooking Channel will premiere “Freakshow Cakes” on Oct 4 at 11pm.

Coming to IBC: SSIMWAVE isn't holding back at IBC 2019. The company will be showing off its SSIMPLUS VOD Monitor, demonstrating for the first time its capability to inspect Dolby Vision enabled content for file-based streaming environments. The system then offers up viewer scores of both the source and output files, giving SSIMWAVE customers a full look at exactly what viewers are experiencing on any screen. SSIMWAVE will also be showing off its SSIMPLUS VOD Monitor Production tool, which uses an algorithm to optimize the quality of high volumes of video assets across delivery chains.

Cablefax Dashboard

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Thank you @GetSpectrum @CharterGov for donating 50 laptops to Spring City Elementary. #CableServesTN

Ken Yager @YagerTweets - Aug 19
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Research

- > vMVPD users without an MVPD, spend 76% of their viewing time watching on a TV set and 54% have an antenna.
- > vMVPD subscribers without an MVPD are less likely than MVPD non-subscribers overall to say that with all the other options available to them, they don't feel they need it.
- > MVPD non-subs and vMVPD subs (no MVPD) agree that one of the biggest reasons for not subscribing to traditional MVPD is that it is too expensive.

(Source: **Horowitz's FOCUS vMVPDs 2019**)

Up Ahead

- Aug 27: NAMIC Conversations with TV & Film Powerhouses;** Atlanta, GA
- Sept 13-17: The IBC Show;** Amsterdam
- Sept 16: WICT Touchstones Luncheon;** NYC
- Sept 16-18: CCA Annual Convention;** Providence, Rhode Island
- Sept 17-18: 33rd Annual NAMIC Conference;** NYC
- Sept 30 - Oct 3: Cable-Tec Expo;** New Orleans, LA

Quotable

“The phenomena are the ones you don't see coming and so anyone trying to predict the next ‘Game of Thrones’ isn't really gonna have the next ‘Game of Thrones.’ It doesn't work that way... It's the sense of discovery that goes beyond just a core passionate fan base that allows things to kind of expand outward. There will be a next ‘Game of Thrones,’ but it won't be as simple as the next fantasy book featuring a little nudity and CG dragons. Anyone who thinks they can chase it in that way, isn't chasing it the right way.”

- **Dan Feinberg, former Television Critics Association pres, on CTAM's “Thinking Out Loud” with Vicki Lins podcast**

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