

Cablefax Daily™

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What the Industry Reads First

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Tip-Off: ESPN, Turner Gear Up for NBA Return

The 2019-2020 NBA season is officially returning Thursday night in a double header on **TNT**, the league's first regular season game since March. **ESPN** and **Turner Sports** are down in Orlando in the "bubble," and the last few weeks have been spent figuring out just how the rest of this season is going to look. "Throughout the company there's just an overall feeling of excitement to be part of bringing sports back to the fans in what's a historic moment for the company and the league," said *Mike Shiffman*, vp of production for ESPN, during a media call on Wednesday. "Even before the games are up and running, I feel like as a company we're off to a very good start with our coverage of league events and bringing fans the sights, sounds, storylines, anecdotes, reporting from down here in Orlando. Looking ahead, we're a little more than 48 hours from us kicking off and 24 or so hours from our friends at Turner tipping off, really excited about some of our new camera angles which was a collaboration between us Turner and the league." A total of 22 teams are returning to play, and each team will play eight remaining regular season games before playoffs begin. Finals start on Sept 30. The NBA and **Disney** teamed up for games to be played at ESPN Wide World of Sports Complex, with no fans in attendance. The NFL, MLB and NBA combine for 78% of live sports revenue, and in 2019 the NBA brought in \$9bn in revenue, over 30% from national media rights fees. "It is most important for TV ratings and revenue that the NFL returns, followed by the NBA, owing to their large media rights fees and implied ad revenue streams," **Needham** told clients in a research note this week. "Because its games are played indoors in a controlled environment, we believe it will be successful returning to play at ESPN's Center in Orlando but may take awhile before consumers are willing to attend NBA games in-person." **Warner-Media** and Disney are currently in the middle of a nine-year rights deal that's valued at over \$2.6bn per season. Turner will present a total of 18 games, highlighted by Tuesday doubleheaders and Thursday tripleheaders. ESPN is running the production of 20 NBA seeding games up to 44 playoff games. While ESPN and Turner are the only nets in the bubble, they're also coordinating with the RSNs for games that aren't nationally televised, while still giving the nets some control over cameras. "We've rehearsed with them and have had great communication with all the RSNs as to anything specific they're looking for," said Shiffman. "While we're producing it, if we're showing a replay of the visiting team they could stay with the live camera. They have some flexibility of choices. It's ourselves and Turner, we're splitting all the non-national

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games for the local markets.” Speaking of RSNs, **Fox Sports Southeast** announced on Wednesday it will televise seven additional seeding games, adding to the eight Memphis Grizzlies games it already had on the slate. Broadcasting games without fans looks a little different, and ESPN and Turner are navigating how to bring the best experience to viewers at home. Without fans in the audience, there’s a lot more option for camera placement. Both groups are utilizing a new “rail-cam” putting viewers just a few feet away from the action. “You do feel closer to the game and it’s a much more intimate experience,” said Shiffman. “We don’t want to be jarring to the fan where all the sudden a sport they’re familiar with and viewing on our air looks suddenly different, but I think we wouldn’t be taking full advantage if we didn’t use the rail-cam for beyond just replays.” And as for arena sound, the NBA put 34 microphones under the court in order to hear the sounds of “sneaker squeaks” from players, and fans can expect to hear more chatter from between the players. Sound will be pumped into the venue, but each game will sound different. “They’re making it natural to the home team. If it’s a Lakers game, it’ll sound like Staples Arena, which will be different than Boston, Milwaukee, etc,” said Shiffman. “It feels authentic in that way in that it sounds like what a home game would sound like.”

Bezos on HBO Max: Members of Congress are among those wondering why they can’t watch **HBO Max** via **Amazon** Fire devices. The question came up at Wednesday’s Big Tech hearing, featuring the heads of Amazon, **Facebook**, **Apple** and **Google**. “Is it fair to use your gatekeeper status role to promote your position as a competitor in the video streaming market with respect to content,” asked Rep *Jamie Raskin* (D-MD). Amazon chief *Jeff Bezos* said he doesn’t know the details of talks, offering to get more info to Raskin. “I predict the companies will eventually come to an agreement,” Bezos said.

CBRS Auction Gaining Steam: The **FCC**’s 3.5 GHz auction is gaining steam, with gross proceeds surpassing \$675mln at the end of Wednesday. **New Street Research** analysts said their forecast of \$3bln is still very plausible.

FCC Nails Down Pole Attachment Rules: The **FCC** Wireline Competition Bureau clarified two aspects of the 2018 Wireline Infrastructure Order, which streamlined the process for attaching new communications facilities to utility poles. Specifically, the Bureau said the imposition of a “blanket ban” by a utility on attachments to any portion of a utility pole is inconsistent with the federal requirement that a “denial of access... be specific.” It also said that while utilities and attachers have the ability to negotiate terms in their pole attachment agreements that differ from the requirements in the Commission’s rule, a utility cannot use its significant negotiating leverage to require an attacher to give up rights to which the attacher is entitled under the rules without the attacher obtaining a corresponding benefit. “The clarity that this ruling provides will help ensure that the legal rights of providers seeking pole access to build out and upgrade their networks cannot be de-

Pat McAdaragh, President & CEO, Midco | Years in Industry: 39 | Education: Augustana University, BA in Accounting 1981

The COVID-19 pandemic forever changed my perspective on: The purpose of offices and other facilities.

McAdaragh keeps the South Dakota-based operator on the cutting edge, successfully completing CBRS testing last year with plans to use the CBRS band to deploy high-speed fixed LTE wireless broadband throughout its rural footprint. Late last year, Midco began a \$6.5 million project to expand and update its ability to provide data storage services in Sioux Falls—a sign of its growing number of business services clients. But McAdaragh leadership also extends to keeping Midco focused on giving back. The Midco Foundation gave \$250,000 to food banks in its footprint during the pandemic.

It also doled out more than \$100,000 to 68 non-profits, schools and government organizations that have been recognized as positive changemakers.

Number of subscriptions to streaming services:

three, ESPN+, Netflix, and Amazon Prime – looking forward to checking out Peacock and HBO Max

Without sports on TV, I have... played more board and card games, and watched “The Last Dance” about Michael Jordan

Is cable recession proof? That is a bold statement, I’d say in this current crisis cable/ISPs are recession resistant.

My prediction for a new business or product that could emerge from the pandemic is... halos

that are six feet in diameter

My prediction for AVODs is.... Success, I believe that the 100% ad supported model will persist and meet the needs and preferences of many people. I do not think it will be the dominant model.

Best Zoom background goes to... Phil McKinney, CEO of CableLabs

Best TV commercial you’ve seen recently? All the commercials seem so similar, although I do like Uber’s “Thank You for not Riding.”

Last show binged not on your networks: “Date-line,” my wife starts watching and then I get hooked

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nied by pole owners,” **ACA Connects** pres/CEO *Matt Polka* said in a statement. “The ruling will be particularly beneficial for smaller providers... who lack bargaining power in their negotiations with large investor-owned utilities for pole access.”

O’Rielly Calls Out Media Diversity Rules: FCC commish *Michael O’Rielly* called the Commission’s rules designed to promote diversity in media ownership “a complete failure” at a virtual luncheon held by the **Media Institute** Wednesday. “A very compelling case can be made that removing our limitations, in fact, would set the stage for more minority investment and ownership,” O’Rielly said. “Consider radio ownership, where allowing bigger clusters within a market could help stabilize, and alternately, enhance minority-owned stations in that market.” O’Rielly did applaud FCC chmn *Ajit Pai* for leading the effort to adopt a radio incubator program designed to entice existing broadcast owners to partner with minority small business entrepreneurs. “While supporting this initiative, I was unfortunately unsuccessful in my effort to extend the program to television as well,” O’Rielly said. “Absent Supreme Court intervention, it will be years before any action is even considered at the Commission. This represents a huge disappointment for the agency and a lost opportunity for society.”

Telemundo Revamps Leadership Team: **NBCU Telemundo** is realigning its leadership team following the recent appointment of chmn *Beau Ferrari*. *Monica Gil* was promoted to evp, chief administrative and marketing officer, reporting directly to Ferrari. *Ana Siegel* has been upped to evp, general counsel, and CFO *Amanda Calpin* and HR svp *Ashaki Rucker* will now report directly to Ferrari. Rounding out the senior leadership team will be *Peter Blacker*, evp, revenue strategy and innovation; *Ronald Day*, evp, entertainment, Telemundo Network; *Luis Fernandez*, pres, network news, Telemundo; *Marcos Santana*, pres, Telemundo Global Studios, NBCU Telemundo Enterprises; and *Ray Warren*, pres, Telemundo Deportes.

On the Circuit: Senate Commerce chmn *Roger Wicker* (R-MS) will convene a hearing on oversight of the **FTC** at 10am on Aug 5. All of the FTC’s commissioners will attend the hearing, which will allow committee members to question them on policy issues and review the agency’s ongoing proceedings. -- **NATPE** announced Wednesday that **HBO Max** evp, content acquisitions *Michael Quigley* will be the opening keynote at NATPE Streaming Plus. The second iteration of Streaming Plus will take place from Sept 14-17. -- **Discovery** evp, employee experience and HR operations *Julie Neimat* and **WarnerMedia** svp, HR *Scott Porter* have been named co-chairs of the 2020 **C2HR** CONFERENCE. Committee members include **Charter** senior director, EEO and regulatory compliance *Jennifer Goad*; **ESPN** senior HR business partner *Miryam Hernandez*; **Cox** executive director, HR shared service *Dana LeBarnes*; **WarnerMedia** director, HR *Traron Moore* and **Comcast** senior director, people and organizational planning *Dionne Vernon*. This year’s virtual program will feature a collection of 10 interactive 60-minute sessions focused on the theme of “Catalysts for Change,” online discussion forums and networking.

Programming: **Disney** is adapting “Black Beauty” for **Disney+**. In this contemporary version, Black Beauty is a wild mustang captured and taken away from her family, who then bonds with a 17-year-old girl grieving the loss of her parents. -- **ViacomCBS** announced the multiplatform schedule for the conclusion of the 2019-2020 UEFA Champions League and UEFA Europa League. Beginning Aug 5, all matches will be streamed live on **CBS All Access**. **CBS Sports** will air a UEFA Champions League Round of 16 match each day Aug 7 and 8, as well as the final on Aug 23. CBS All Access is also offering a one-month free trial promotion for new subs through mid-August. The free trial is usually seven days. -- “Our Cartoon President” is returning to **Showtime** for Season 3 on Sept 13 at 8:30pm. -- **Hallmark Channel** is celebrating its annual Summer Nights programming event with the premieres of three originals. It starts with “Romance in the Air” on Saturday (9pm), then continues with “Love on Harbor Island” on Aug 8 (9pm) and “Wedding Every Weekend” on Aug 15 (9pm). -- **HGTV**’s “Brother vs Brother” will return Sept 9 at 9pm. *Drew and Jonathan Scott* will face off in renovation battles in Los Angeles’s Hancock Park.

Fond Farewell: We are sad to say goodbye to longtime **Cablefax** publisher *Michael Grebb*. During his 14 years with the brand, he was a dedicated, insightful leader and partner—and Cablefax is the better for it. We know that Mike (and his guitar and great hair) will end up doing amazing things with his next gig.

People: **Charter** promoted two members of its sales and marketing senior leadership team. *Pattie Eliason* was upped to svp, Spectrum stores and retail, while *Sharon Peters* has been boosted to svp, marketing. Eliason joined Charter in 2003, previously holding sales and marketing roles with **RCN**, **AT&T** and **Cox Communications**. Peters joined Charter in 2016 after spending 19 years at **Cablevision**. -- **WarnerMedia** named *Linda Lowy* evp, casting for **HBO Max**, **TNT**, **TBS** and **truTV**. Lowy spent the last 17 years collaborating with *Shonda Rhimes* on series like “Grey’s Anatomy” and “Scandal.”

THE WORK CULTURE LIST PROFILE:

HIRING PARTNER **Carlsen Resources**

“Trust is, without a doubt, the most critical component to ensuring a successful, long-term placement.” So says Ann Carlsen, who has spent the past 31 years since founding Carlsen Resources instilling trust among executives working in the cable, media and entertainment sectors.

“Executive search is an intimate process and journey. We take the time to know and understand our clients inside and out. Clients and candidates need to know they can trust us when they open up about their hopes, fears, successes, failures, concerns. Without that trust, the integrity of the process is compromised,” she says. “People have to know we will honor their confidences and advise them honestly and in an unbiased way—all while knowing we have their best interests in mind.”

As such, Carlsen and many of the more than 90 employees of the Grand Junction, CO, company often are on the road, spending time with clients and immersing themselves in holistic trends and economic, strategic, cultural and other undercurrents as the industry propels forward through vast change. Among tools, the firm also leverages technology for speed and engagement, incorporates predictive analytics, uses improved assessment tools, and engages in a disciplined referencing process.

“As in biological evolution, business survival depends on one’s ability to adapt to harsh environmental conditions, to step back and take a fresh look at old information, identify new opportunities, new threats, competition and the changing relationships in the industry ecology,” she says. “The pace of change in the industry is so rapid that transformation is no longer the role of a select few in the company; it is the responsibility of every hire.” After adaptability, she notes, critical thinking is key, followed by persuasive communication. “There is no longer a prototypical candidate for any position.” For example, she says,

today’s CFO needs to be proficient in strategic transformation, sales and growth drivers today, not solely finance. “There is no more ‘business as usual.’”

Baked into the company’s ethos is a tireless advocacy of workforce diversity and inclusion. “Diverse companies have an incredible and undeniable competitive advantage,” she says. “I fully believe true creative breakthroughs only occur when there is a diversity of ideas at the table. A company filled with different races, ethnicities, backgrounds, generations, genders and religions has so much more to offer consumers, because they are a better reflection of consumers themselves. There is more energy to harness. More productive brainstorming. Higher rates of innovation. Greater access to different insights and worldviews, and frankly, better decision-making.”

For its part, Carlsen ensures every candidate slate it presents to clients is diverse, so there is access to diverse talent. The firm begins searches by helping clients look at the diverse representation of their executive ranks against their customer base. Are their customers represented at the executive table? If not, it does its best to offer those options to clients.

At Carlsen, the definition of diversity is broad. “Our obsession with age is so extreme it has become a liability in the workplace,” says Carlsen, who notes she’s at a loss as to why more than 1.5 million Americans over 50 are unable to find comparable and meaningful work. The underlying reason is structural, she says, “the result of attitudes and institutional practices we can no longer ignore... Experience, skill set and work ethic are being dismissed because of age. It seems to start earlier for women. Many of the people we represent are discouraged to the point that they stop trying. Confronting ageism means being aware, making a concerted effort and making friends of all ages. It means pointing out bias when you encounter it.”



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Think about that for a minute...

Not So Hidden Agendas

Commentary by Steve Effros

I warned you a while ago that during the next year, regardless of who is successful in November, we're going to be talking a lot about "Section 230." That's the provision of the Communications Decency Act that says the following: "No provider or user of an interactive computer service shall be treated as the publisher or speaker of any information provided by another information content provider" (47 U.S.C. § 230).

That language is primarily responsible for the way the richest companies the world has ever known were able to develop. OK, OK, that may be a little bit of hyperbole since if you include as a "company" things like the British Empire or the Catholic Church there are bigger, wealthier institutions. But you get my point. Google, Facebook, etc., would not be functioning in the way they are today without that critical protection. They are not responsible for the information put on their platform by others, with rare exceptions. The ability to avoid responsibility and the associated costs of curation, editing, etc., that any other "publisher" has to do has helped create these behemoths.

The size of those companies, in turn, has created a reality that their "network effect," that is, their ability to be the interface between so many different users, amplifies their power and makes meaningful competition difficult, if not impossible. That's why we're now having the "show hearings" with the CEOs of Amazon, Google, Facebook and Apple that took place yesterday. The ostensible point of the exercise was to look at their might, and ask if the antitrust laws, or possibly Section 230 should be changed to ameliorate their overwhelming power.

But is that really what's going on? Well, in part, but there are a lot of other agendas in play and they're not terribly



well hidden. Leaving aside, for the moment, the issue of "too big," one of the primary underlying focuses is editorial control. This is where we get back to Section 230. What would happen if these platforms were indeed held responsible, as publishers, for the material distributed? The reason they run as fast as they can from any notion of being a "publisher" is that such potential responsibility, and the attendant potential legal liability, would probably make it impossible for them to operate the way they do today. The "internet" would be massively changed. Everyone knows that. It's not likely to happen.

But the agendas of those talking about it are pretty clear; there's a middle ground where these companies, particularly Facebook, are being pressured to impose more control over what is said on its platform. How much "editorial control" can be exercised before one is finally called a "publisher?" That's the subtext of what's being debated.

One "side" wants more editing regarding false health claims, hate speech, bogus voting information and the like. Another "side" complains that there is too much editing of a particular brand of political speech, that hidden algorithms controlling the prominence of that speech are biased. Both sides are concerned with the overall power of the "social network" to influence violent actions.

In other words, there are a great many not so hidden agendas at play behind the ostensible cover of an investigation of the antitrust laws. Given what these "social media" and "search" platforms have wrought, I might not mind the idea of tearing them down completely! But I'm in the minority. That's not going to happen right now. What will happen is open to further debate. Stay tuned.

Steve

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(Steve Effros was President of CATA for 23 years and is now an advisor and consultant to the cable industry. His views do not necessarily reflect the views of Cablefax.)



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