

Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

Going for Gold: Lazarus Still an Olympic Hopeful

2020 was a year of transformation for **NBCU**, and *Mark Lazarus* was at the center of it all as television and streaming chairman. With the launch of **Peacock** officially complete, he's hoping that the 2021 Olympics will be key to getting the streamer to cruising altitude.

"We will use Peacock as a complement in an extraordinary way and give people some exclusive content on Peacock that they won't have access to otherwise. We think that's an important element of what Peacock can be and should be," he said during a fireside chat at **NATPE** Miami Tuesday. "It was so disappointing when we had to push it last year, but the excitement of having it this year and with Peacock being at more of a cruising altitude, with **NBC's** broadcast network as the centerpiece, it's really going to be an exciting time."

Lazarus acknowledged that there is still a level of uncertainty surrounding the global gathering, which is scheduled to take place in Tokyo from July 24-Aug 9. But he's remaining hopeful that the show will go on with some fans being allowed to attend. "To me, the Olympics at this moment in time, in our history, has a chance to be a real gathering spot for the world at a time when we really need a gathering spot for the world to come together for sport, for peace and for life," he said.

NBCU as a whole continues to be a huge believer in sports, and that includes everything from the **NFL** to **Nascar**. While sports rights cost a pretty penny, Lazarus said their greatest appeal is

their ability to give a company flexibility across all of its platforms.

"The Olympics are really the gold standard in not only what it does as a unifying force, but also for [sports] rights and the flexibility of rights," he said. "We have the rights to put it on any platform at any time, and that platform doesn't even have to be invented yet. It can be invented between now and the year our rights are up, which is 2032." He's trying to incorporate a similar type of flexibility into rights deals with other sports leagues. "It's important for all of us to continue to monitor what's going on and how consumer behavior is changing and make sure that we are the place that fans have to come through in order to find their sports," Lazarus said.

He would also caution those who believe the only way forward is to follow consumer behavior. This year, Lazarus believes it is time that the industry begins paving new paths for viewers to follow. "We, as an industry, can help lead consumer behavior instead of just follow consumer behavior and I think that's what will happen this year," he said. "We will get our arms, as an industry, around what the consumer is thinking and we'll be out ahead of them to provide them with the entertainment and information that they need."

CHARTER WITHDRAWS DATA CAP PETITION

Charter has withdrawn its **FCC** petition for early sunset of merger conditions related to its 2016 acquisition of **Time Warner Cable** and **Bright House Networks**. In June, Charter asked the FCC to allow conditions preventing it from imposing data caps/usage-based pricing and prohibiting it from charging interconnection fees to expire in May of 2021 instead of 2023. "In the months since this petition was filed according to the timeline and process

Mark Your Calendars!

Cablefax Award Submission Deadlines:

The FAXIES Awards

Entry Deadline: March 19

Final Deadline: March 26

Cablefax 100 Nominations

April 9

Top Ops Nominations

April 23

The Diversity List Nominations

July 16

Most Powerful Women Nominations

September 10

Program Awards

Entry Deadline: November 19

Final Deadline: December 3



outlined by the FCC in our Merger Order, a number of conditions have been met, nullified, or vacated by the DC Circuit Court of Appeals. In light of the ongoing severity of the global pandemic and its effects on our customers, we want to offer them the assurance that they will continue to benefit from unlimited access to broadband and the accompanying financial certainty it provides during these trying times, and therefore have withdrawn our petition,” a Charter spokesperson said. The interconnection condition was made moot after free-market advocacy group **Competitive Enterprise Institute** successfully sued the **FCC**, arguing the conditions exceeded its authority. The DC Circuit hearing the case vacated the interconnection condition in August, but the usage-based pricing/data cap condition was left in place. Charter’s withdrawal comes as the FCC gets ready to flip to a Democratic majority (the conditions were put in place under Democratic chair *Tom Wheeler*) and as **House Commerce** leaders sent letters to Charter, **Comcast**, **AT&T** and others questioning their commitment to consumers amid some ISPs raising prices and imposing data caps during the pandemic.

DEMS CRITICIZE FCC BROADBAND REPORT

The **FCC** on Tuesday released its annual broadband deployment report, which drew criticism and dissents from the agency’s two Democratic commissioners who have long complained about flaws in the data and analysis. The report showed an overall decrease of more than 20% in the number of Americans without access to 25/3 Mbps broadband since last year’s report (from more than 18.1 million at the end of 2018 to fewer than 14.5 million at the end of 2019). “Over the last two years, I have decried the unwarranted victory laps these reports seem to spawn. Now—as tens of millions of Americans find themselves

unable to access online school, work, and healthcare during the pandemic—patting ourselves on the back is particularly unseemly,” commissioner *Geoffrey Starks* said in his dissent. He and commissioner *Jessica Rosenworcel* had asked *Ajit Pai* to withdraw the report, pointing to a request from congressional leaders to withdraw work on partisan and controversial items during the presidential transition. “His rationale—that the Report has no legal significance—is plainly inconsistent with the Telecommunications Act, which directs the Commission to take ‘immediate action’ if it determines that advanced telecommunications capability is not being deployed to all Americans on a reasonable and timely basis. That determination should have been left to the next administration, which could have addressed the question before the statutory deadline,” Starks said.

CHARTER SPORTS REFUNDS COMING

Charter customers should soon see a credit soon for sports programming that didn’t air during the pandemic. “We are finalizing the details and our residential video customers as of July 31 will see a credit on their February bill for sports programming cancelled early last year,” a spokesperson told **CFX**. **Comcast** and **Verizon** have already issued credits, which vary by market. We’ve seen rebates in the range of \$11-14 for Comcast and Verizon.

PRENDE TV HOPES TO SCORE NICHE WIN

Univision announced its entrance into the streaming game last week, and chief digital officer *Sameer Deen* described Prende TV to the **NATPE** audience as a service that has been built from the ground up for the US Hispanic audience. The choice to make it a free, ad-based product came down to the issue of accessibility. “We’re really focusing on making it easy to get into, easy to sample

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Amy Maclean, Editorial Director,
amaclean@accessintel.com
or 301.354.1760

C-BAND AUCTION HITS \$30MLN
The **FCC**’s C-band auction surpassed the \$30mln mark before Friday’s last bidding round ended. Bidding is scheduled to continue through Round 45, which ends at noon ET on Dec 23. The auction will



an ongoing initiative made in partnership with @livingwailsatl, to help bolster the works, messages, and careers of Black artists based in the network’s hometown of Atlanta, Georgia: bit.ly/AS_ATLMP

intend to get groceries a kets (37%), buying gift local retailers (23%) at their favorite businesses and friends (24%).

(Source: Comcast Busine

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Dark Day: Powell Describes Capitol Chaos as Unimaginable

The world watched via television networks and broadband connections as the US Capitol was breached by president *Trump* supporters Wednesday as the House and Senat debated a move by some Republicans to overturn election results. “This is a sad and deeply disturbing moment for r in tion,” **NCTA** pres/CEO *Michael Powell* told **CFX**... could not... (NBC) in... They remain... time...

news networks and **Twitter**. When the House and Senate went out of session as a group broke into the Capitol, **C-SPAN** continued with live coverage from its studio (*Greta Brawner* hosting) mixing in interviews with reporters inside and outside the Capitol, members of Congress, live video

RATINGS

Fox News has now officially won prime and total day for 2020, as projected. It became the first cable news net to end a year with more than 3.5min viewers in prime. It was a pretty good year for all the news nets though. See our story. - Watching **TNT** and **TBS**’s

Retrans Agenda: Virtual MVPDs, ATSC 3.0’s Role in Retransmission

As we head into 2021, there may not have been a huge retransmission consent blackout to ring in the year (those happened a few weeks early and involved **DISH** and **AT&T**), but there’s still plenty for broadcasters and MVPDs to fret about.

Although traditional MVPD subscribers declined d first half of 2020, retransmission consent revenue e major station groups increased in both the first an quarters of 2020 by nearly 20% compared to the second quarters of 2019, according to **S&P Global**. The **FCC**’s newly released Communications Marke part broadcast retrans consent revenue jumped from

and easy to try, and free is one of the best ways to do that,” he said. Prende TV will feature both a channel-based program guide as well as 10,000+ hours of on-demand programming. “At the end of the day, irrespective of how they access it, what consumers want is variety, they want accessibility, they want premium content. In our case, that’s what we focused on giving them—premium content that’s accessible, easy to use and that is in culture, in language and free.” At a session later in the day, **Telemundo** evp/ chief commercial officer/head, DTC licensing **Peter Blacker** said he disagreed with the notion that new products were needed to properly serve multicultural audiences. Telemundo viewers can find the network’s content on NBCU streamer **Peacock**. “There needs to be the opportunity to address all of those segments, but I don’t know if those segments can be fully satisfied by just having a niche product,” he said. “I think that when you segment it too much, you run the risk of really just becoming too small and potentially not attractive enough.”

200 MILLION FOR NETFLIX

Netflix added 8.5 million paid subscriptions in 4Q20, putting it at more than 200 million paid memberships. Its growth comes as more streamers, including **Peacock** and the just-launched **Discovery+**, enter the space. “Our strategy is simple: if we can continue to improve Netflix every day to better delight our members, we can be their first choice for streaming entertainment. This past year is a testament to this approach. **Disney+** had a massive first year (87 million paid subscribers!) and we recorded the biggest year of paid membership growth in our history,” Netflix said in its letter to shareholders. Netflix intends to release at least one new, original film each week in 2021. The company’s FCF for 4Q was -\$284 million vs. -\$1.7 billion in Q419, with management believing its “very close” to being sustainably FCF positive. For 2021, FCF is expected to be around break even vs a prior expectation of -\$1 billion to break even. For 1Q21, Netflix expects paid net adds of 6 million vs 15.8 million in 1Q19—a total that was boosted from initial COVID-19 lockdowns. Netflix continues its global expansion, with 83% of its record 37 million paid net adds in 2020 coming from outside the US and Canada.

CABLE CENTER LOOKS TO THE FUTURE

The Cable Center revealed a five-year business plan Tuesday that it hopes will honor the organization’s role as the industry’s recordkeeper while allowing it to look to the future. An expansion of the organization’s Intrapreneurship Academy lies at the plan’s center. Formerly a standalone course, the Intrapreneurship Academy will now be known as the home for two distinct courses with more to come down the line. Launching this spring will be “Leading With Agility,” a course designed to teach industry professionals how to thrive in the workplace even when unplanned change strikes. It will live alongside the established intrapreneurship course, and a third offering focused on customer experience that’s scheduled to launch in late 2021.

FCC’S BROADBAND MAP MOVES

The **FCC** unanimously adopted additional rules aimed at more precise broadband deployment mapping data. The new rules specify which fixed and mobile broadband internet access service providers

are required to report availability and/or coverage data, and adopt requirements for reporting speed and latency for fixed technologies. The order also requires fixed broadband internet access providers to report whether broadband services are offered to residential and/or business customers. “With today’s Report and Order, the rules are in place to begin the process of developing the IT infrastructure to begin collecting these new coverage maps that will finally show us, with unprecedented precision, where broadband is available and where it isn’t,” chair **Ajit Pai** said. “There’s a lot of work ahead, but I know our staff is up to the challenge and will deliver.”

DISTRIBUTION

ViacomCBS has set March 4 as the US, Canadian and Latin American launch date for **Paramount+**. The service will head to the Nordics on March 25 and arrive in Australia in mid-2021.

TUBI STATS

Fox-owned **Tubi** reports that nearly half of its 33 million monthly active users are under the age of 35 and that it saw 2.5 billion hours streamed last year—a 58% YOY increase. Other stats from Tubi’s audience report: the AVOD delivered an 80% incremental reach to the top 25 cable TV networks, with 68% of its streamers also unreachable via other ad-supported video-on-demand.

DOING GOOD

National Action Network and **Charter** announced the Spectrum Community Investment Loan Fund will make a long-dated, below-market-rate loan of \$1.5 million to **Carver Bancorp**, the holding company for the largest publicly traded African and Caribbean-American managed bank in the US. This investment represents the first tranche of Charter’s previously announced commitment to invest \$3 million directly in Community Development Financial Institutions in partnership with NAN. Charter is also making a \$1 million long-term deposit in Carver as part of its pledge to support Minority Depository Institutions. – **Discovery** is donating \$1 for every new **discovery+** subscription purchased by a consumer to help fund UNICEF USA’s COVID-19 efforts, which includes providing 2 billion doses of COVID-19 vaccines for frontline health care workers and vulnerable populations in 92 low-and middle-income countries. The campaign began Tuesday and runs through April 19.

OBITUARY

A+E Networks mourns the loss of **Jennifer Bulvanoski**, who served as vp, distribution. She passed away last week following a year-long illness. College funds have been set up for her daughter and son, **Macy** and **Riley**. To donate, visit jenbulvanoski.com.

PEOPLE

A+E Networks upped longtime exec **Liz Soriano** to svp, international programming. – **BBC Studios – Americas** named **Dina Vangelisti** evp, content sales. She reports directly to president **Rebecca Glashow**. Vangelisti previously led the Domestic Television at **Paramount Pictures Worldwide**. – **Youi.TV** co-founder and CEO **Jason Flick** has left the firm, which was sold last month to **WarnerMedia**. “Everyone is asking me what’s next? Step 1) Chill, and appreciate I have no quarterly targets to hit. Step 2) Get adventuring and back into building something awesome,” Flick wrote on **LinkedIn** Monday.