

# Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

## First Serve: Wimbledon Main Draw Coverage Begins Monday

This year's edition of Wimbledon is set to be a spectacle for tennis fans as 128 players in both men's and women's compete for their respective championships. As **ESPN** and **Tennis Channel** gear up for another year of coverage, so are cable providers like **DirectTV**. This year's iteration of The Championships—the first to begin with no capacity restriction in three years—will be boosted by the return of *Serena Williams* after a one-year hiatus.

Those watching on the Wimbledon app and [Wimbledon.com](http://Wimbledon.com) will also see matches enhanced by new AI features from **IBM**. Already loaded with personalized recommendations and highlight reels and IBM Power Index and Match Insights with Watson, new features include “Win Factors” and “Have Your Say.” The former provides elements impacting a player's performance such as court surface, ATP or WTA rankings, head-to-head record and the IBM Power Index. Have Your Say allows fans to submit predictions and compare with other fans and AI-generated picks.

Those watching on cable will also have plenty to enjoy. **ESPN+** has been broadcasting the men's and women's singles qualifying that wraps up Thursday, and the service will offer coverage from numerous courts throughout the main draw. Once that begins Monday, ESPN will have the first three rounds beginning at 6am until the “Middle Weekend” on July 2-3, where matches will start at 8am. For the first time ever, **ABC** will broadcast

matches live on those days from 1pm-4pm, before ESPN and **ESPN2** provide cross-court coverage through the quarterfinals.

From the semifinals until the conclusion of the event, all matches will be on the flagship ESPN channel. The network has deep experience covering The Championships, but this year's coverage will have plenty to discuss with Williams' return, the ban on Russian and Belarusian players and *Rafael Nadal* chasing a grand slam.

“Our producer *Jamie Reynolds*, within the confines of what he can do, is always trying to find something to enhance the broadcast,” three-time Wimbledon champion and ESPN analyst *John McEnroe* said on an ESPN media call Wednesday. “Obviously you're focusing on the players that've done it. Serena [Williams], her playing is a boost. The longer she plays, the better it is.”

Storylines can change in a split second, but for young stars making new waves, the network's coverage helps tell their stories. Fellow three-time tournament winner and analyst *Chrissie Evert* emphasized the work Reynolds is doing to make sure the broadcast is as best as possible, and that studio interviews and stories help keep the spotlight on the players.

“I think that most of our creativity has to come within the creative company of ESPN,” Evert said. “The production company creating more profiles on players, trying to create more stars that way ... This is all about the players, getting to know their personalities so the public can root for them.”

While Tennis Channel doesn't have the broadcast rights to

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# We're Back In Person!

## Registration Is Open.

2022 Program Chairs:



David Watson  
President & CEO,  
Comcast Cable



Michael Fries  
Vice-Chairman & CEO,  
Liberty Global

Creating Infinite  
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Wimbledon, the network is still getting in on the action by airing match segments and commentary, as well as daily afternoon and evening shows with highlights, stories and interviews. Additionally, the channel's Bally Sport Caller Match Predictor Game will be introduced, allowing all fans to win prizes online. DirecTV will have a blend of up to six channels at once, coming with features such as player bios, draws, schedule, live scoreboard and more.

The tournament concludes with the mixed doubles championship July 7 at 1pm, women's singles and men's doubles finals July 9 at 9am and 11:30am, respectively, and the men's singles final at 9am and women's doubles championships at noon on July 10.

### STANDARD GENERAL SOOTHING TEGNA CONCERNS

**Standard Media** CEO *Deb McDermott* is reassuring **TEGNA** employees that there are no plans to lay off journalists from the broadcaster's stations following its acquisition by **Standard General**. The acquisition is expected to close before the end of the year, and groups including **Common Cause** and **Public Knowledge** are among those that have expressed concerns about how Standard General will manage the station group. "Standard General and I have always placed a high value on local journalism and have no intention, and have never had the intention, of reducing news or news staff at TEGNA stations. In fact, and as we have represented to the **FCC**, we do not intend to reduce station-level staffing following the transaction," McDermott said in a letter to TEGNA employees last week. "Having been a station general manager and working with newsrooms for more than 30 years, I firmly believe that strong local journalism is an essential component to a successful local broadcast station." Standard General also attempted to put out any concerns about its post-merger intentions in an FCC filing last week. In response to questioning from the Commission's Media Bureau, it laid out its plans to improve coverage from TEGNA's current DC newsroom to boost local station performance and allow for better coverage of national events. It also spoke to its future retransmission consent negotiations, saying it does not intend to engage in any joint retransmission negotiations or coordination. "Post-Transaction TEGNA will negotiate retransmission consent like any other station group—in good faith and with an eye toward ensuring its stations can effectively compete for the ever-more expensive network and syndicated programming needed to attract audiences while still making investments in serving the stations' local communities, including investments in their local news content," Standard General said in the filing. "Likewise, CMG will continue to negotiate retransmission consent for all of its Post-Transaction stations without involvement from any other station group."

## The WHO and the WHY

CFX's spotlight on recent new hires & promotions



NATE  
**Ravitz**  
SVP, DIGITAL CONTENT  
ESPN

### 3 THINGS TO KNOW

- No stranger at ESPN, Nate earned a promotion to SVP, Digital Content. He'll still be in charge of the content experience on the network's digital platforms, the ESPN app on connected TVs and fantasy sports. In his new position, he'll also manage digital editorial, audience engagement, mobile alerts, SEO, content insights and more.
- He first joined ESPN in 2007 as a general editor of ESPN Fantasy, where he gained experience writing and on-air. Nate was quickly bumped to deputy editor the next year and oversaw all ESPN Fantasy content. After being elevated to multiple roles, he eventually oversaw all social media programming and content strategy from 2015-17, then managed ESPN's multiplatform visual content team from 2018-20. ESPN Digital set a record in 2021 under his leadership when it had 120 million unique visitors in the U.S. in a month.
- Nate won a Sports Emmy Award for "Best New Approach, Coverage" in 2007 for his on-air role for "Fantasy Football Now" and was inducted into the Fantasy Sports Writers Association Hall of Fame in 2012.

### NETFLIX SEEKING PARTNERS FOR AD TIER

**Netflix** is looking for partners to help it create an ad-supported streaming tier by the end of the year, with **NBCUniversal** and **Google** emerging as the frontrunners. That's according to a [WSJ report](#). **Roku** is also still in the mix to assist with the ad tier as well, although all has been quiet when it comes to the rumors that the aggregation leader was contemplating [acquiring](#) Netflix. Any relationship with either NBCU or Google would likely be an exclusive agreement.

### METaverse STANDARDS GROUP FORMS

A group of technology and big tech companies are joining together to create interoperability standards needed to build an open metaverse. The Metaverse Standards Forum will examine where the lack of interoperability is holding back metaverse development and deployment and will focus on implementation prototyping and open-source tooling that will hasten the testing and adoption of metaverse standards. Founding members include **Microsoft, Huawei, Meta, Sony Interactive Entertainment** and **Qualcomm**. Forum meetings are expected to start next month.

**ADVERTISING DOINGS**

In a partnership with **iHeartMedia**, **NBCUniversal** Chairman of Global Advertising & Partnerships *Linda Yaccarino* and Giant Spoon partner *Laura Correnti* launched a new podcast “Sunday Supper.” The duo will have visitors, celebrities and business figures at the dinner table in an open conversation. The podcast will start this fall. – **FreeWheel** is adding more identity capabilities to its platform, giving advertisers the opportunity to easily connect first- and third-party data to various device identifiers. The new solution also includes interoperability with publisher, operator and carrier data assets connecting household data with distributors. The goal of the solution, which is currently being piloted, is to allow advertisers to achieve greater scale, reach and frequency on television. Additional privacy-focused capabilities will arrive later this year. – **DirectTV Advertising** and **Yahoo** entered a partnership to bring additional value for advertisers in linear TV and digital and provide a more seamless way to access addressable TV and streaming inventory. Through the partnership, advertisers get access to 25 million addressable TV households and streaming inventory through Yahoo’s supply-side platform.

**FCC TO VOTE ON SPECTRUM INCENTIVES**

The **FCC** plans to expand opportunities for small and Tribal wireless carriers at its July meeting, lining up a vote to establish a new spectrum incentive program. If approved, the Enhanced Competition Incentive Program would offer benefits for wireless licensees that elect to make their underutilized spectrum available to small carriers, Tribal Nations and any carrier that resides in and serves rural communities.

**CARRIAGE**

**Philo** added **DECADES** and **Start TV** to its base package Wednesday. **DECADES** includes the best in comedy, talk and variety series from the 1950s to the 1970s. **Start TV** is dedicated to scripted dramas like “The Closer,” “Rizzoli & Isles” and “Ghost Whisperer.”

**JAN. 6 HEARING RATINGS**

**MSNBC** ranked first among cable networks for coverage of the Jan. 6 committee hearings for a fourth consecutive hearing after averaging 3 million total viewers and 359,000 A25-54 for yesterday’s hearing. According to **Nielsen**, the network was No. 1 across all cable in the 10am-4pm window. When comparing to last month’s averages, MSNBC’s full-day viewership has increased 28% for total viewers and 30% for A25-54.

**VCTI CONSULTING ON INFRASTRUCTURE BUYS**

Broadband and network strategy firm **VCTI** introduced Broadband Infrastructure Investment Analytics Wednesday to help private investors prioritize infrastructure investment opportunities. The solution brings together network planning and build cost analytics with market data, demographics and information on the competitive landscape to identify the most lucrative telecom investment opportunities.

**HOOSIER NET COMES TOGETHER**

**Hoosier Net**, a consortium of Indiana ISPs, has received an investment from **Accord Telecommunications Collaborative** that will make it the first statewide network composed of

both telephone companies and electric co-ops. Those involved in Hoosier Net plan to work together to build a statewide fiber network, and hope to collectively vie for a piece of the \$1 billion in grants included in the NTIA’s Enabling Middle Mile Broadband Infrastructure Program.

**CITY OF BROTHERLY LOVE**

Registration for **SCTE’s** Cable-Tec Expo is [open](#). This year’s event, to be co-chaired by **Comcast Cable** President *Dave Watson* and **Liberty Global** CEO *Mike Fries*, will be in person in Philadelphia from Sept. 19-22.

**DOING GOOD**

**Vexus Fiber** awarded \$45,000 in tuition scholarships to its 2021 Vexus Scholarship Award recipients earlier this month. The 15 winners from communities Vexus serves will each receive \$3,000 to use towards higher education.

**PROGRAMMING**

**Comcast NBCU** and **FaceForward Productions** are collaborating on upcoming docuseries “The Black Beauty Effect.” Releasing this fall exclusively on the Black Experience on Xfinity, the three-part show will examine social change in the beauty industry and the Black women that have led the way. – **ESPN** and **WCVB** Channel 5 will serve as the exclusive national and local broadcast partners for the Boston Marathon starting in 2023. ESPN will air the 127th Boston Marathon on its flagship network on April 17, 2023 starting at 8:30am ET. WCVB will begin its coverage at 4am ET. – **Fox Nation** is premiering “Hidden Gems with *Laura Ingraham*” on Wednesday. The three-part series follows *Ingraham* traveling across the country as she spotlights people, places and treasures that contribute to U.S. history and culture. – **GAC Family** will host its first “Great American Christmas” programming event starting July 2 through Independence Day weekend. It’ll feature 24/7 Christmas Movies, including “Christmas Time Is Here,” “Jingle Bell Princess” and “A Cinderella Christmas.”

**PEOPLE**

**Vexus Fiber** appointed *Cameron Miller* as Regional VP of East Texas and Louisiana operations. Miller’s role entails oversight of operations in the areas of Tyler, Nacogdoches and Huntsville, Texas, and Lake Charles and Covington, Louisiana. Miller began in May and is based out of Tyler. – **Tegna** shareholders re-elected members of its board. Chairman *Howard Elias*, President and CEO *Dave Lougee*, *Gina Bianchini*, *Stuart Epstein*, *Lidia Fonseca*, *Karen Grimes*, *Scott McCune*, *Henry McGee*, *Bruce Nolop*, *Neal Shapiro* and *Melinda Witmer* all held their spots after the company’s annual meeting Tuesday. *Susan Ness* retired from the Board after serving on it for 11 years. – **Allen Media Group** hired *Phil Peters* as VP of Ad Sales for AMG Global Syndication. In this role, Peters will focus on advertising sales and brand sponsorships for all AMG Entertainment Studios’ TV series programming and content. – **USTelecom** named *Marie Johnson* as SVP, Communications. She previously spent 12 years at the American Hospital Association managing its media strategy, including throughout the implementation of the Affordable Care Act and during the COVID-19 pandemic.



## Think about that for a minute...

### Game On!

Commentary by Steve Effros

A few of us will still remember the origins of the “Full Service Network.” Time-Warner, at the time, hooked up the first customers in 1994 in a testbed in Orlando, Florida. It was described as “... “the first in the world to integrate emerging cable, computer, and telephone technologies over a fiber-optic and coaxial cable network.” As we all now know, it took quite a while for that scenario to actually come to fruition for the cable industry. As usual, creating new technology is easy to imagine, but a lot harder to successfully implement.

The idea behind FSN was not only right, but a snapshot of what we all consider today as the normal complement of services offered by our modern cable/broadband infrastructure. At the time, however, one of the major difficulties was simply designing a set top box that was affordable and worked reliably. Time Warner spent lots of money trying to figure that one out on their own, and experimented with companies like Sun Microsystems putting boxes in homes that were essentially computers. The first Sun boxes, if memory serves, actually cost the company around \$5000 to build. Clearly not a consumer item.

One of the other major problems, however, was more plebeian. It turned out that folks were very used to their “over the air” television sets being able to switch from one broadcast channel to another seemingly instantaneously. All you had to do was turn the dial or push the button. But when you tried to do that with FSN, the signal went from your remote control to the box up to the headend of the system and then back down having changed the “input” to your set.

I believe the “magic number” was 240 microseconds. If customers experienced a delay of longer than that for the “channel to change” they were dissatisfied. That turned out to be a major hurdle for the engineers. FSN never really got off the ground in that first iteration, but of course as we all know, we now all have full service networks!

The issue that had to be resolved was the delay, or “latency”

in computer/telecom terminology, and we’ve been hearing a lot about that ever since. First we had to resolve it for cable. Faster and cheaper processors in set top boxes and more memory in those boxes so things could be done without data having to go back and forth all the way through the system helped. This was, and still is the debate between having lots of computing power in the home or centralizing it at the headend and having “dumb” boxes, or none at all at the consumer’s home.

Digital satellite service and the Zoom interviews which are now ubiquitous on television gave us another experience of latency. There’s nothing the satellite folks can do about the physics of the satellite being 25,000 miles up and requiring a certain amount of time to get that signal up and down! Same with interviewing someone. They have to hear the question you are asking “live” and then respond. There’s a delay.

Why go through all this? Because we are now seeing a shift in the video gaming industry. It has been very successful (we’ll get into that another time) with the equivalent of set top boxes; the Xbox, Playstation, etc. But now some very big players like Microsoft and, at least for a while, Google, are trying to move from the in-home unit game model to a fully “streaming” model. “MMOG”..massive multiplayer online gaming is going to get a major test, and so will our systems. You can’t have a successful (or fair) competitive streaming game if one delivery system has less or more latency than another! We have major challenges coming in this area, and we better be prepared.



*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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