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WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

Fanatics: Streamers Preach the Power of Sports to NAB Crowd

In the eyes of streamers, live sports are becoming more valuable, and it's better to get on the train now before being left behind.

"Sports was always part of the fabric of our platform because we knew sports was going to become a much, much bigger component to streaming," **Matt Strauss**, **NBCUniversal's** Chairman, Direct-to-Consumer, said in a keynote fireside chat at **NAB Show's** Streaming Summit Tuesday. "We have actually more live sports on **Peacock** than any other streaming service at this moment, so we built a platform designed to scale for live sports. It is hard, as you've heard, but it also allows us to do things like the exclusive NFL playoff game that we had on Peacock earlier this year, which was the most streamed live event in U.S. history."

Yes, sports are expensive. But companies believe there is value there. For **Prime Video**, which doesn't have a linear alternative, sports are a way for **Amazon** to boost its value for customers. It also introduced an ad-supported tier in January to strengthen its options for advertisers looking to buy space while also expanding its plan options to consumers.

"Sports are definitely very exciting for customers. It's [some] of the most interesting content customers engage with [and] look forward to, and therefore, it makes sense for us looking back for our customers to put in energy into building a good portfolio of sports content on Prime Video," Prime Video VP, Technology **BA Winston** said at NAB.

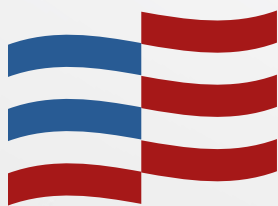
There are a few roadblocks for streamers to meander still that

will likely remain an issue for quite some time. First, linear TV remains the traditional platform that many find easiest to use, search and access an event. Then there's the issue of latency. It's been greatly reduced over the past few years, but there are technological barriers that'll impact how quickly a viewer will see live content. As a response, some like Prime Video and **YouTube TV** have offered options to turn on low latency in exchange for lower-quality video.

"Fans are focused on the best streaming experience. They want to ensure it's uninterrupted, they want to ensure people are fairly close to each other when they're streaming and not [have] everybody all over the place and they want to ensure that they are the first ones to know when there is a key play or key moment that happens—not hear it through a tweet or hear through my friends texting me," Winston said.

While the increasing migration of sports to streaming is the talk of the town, particularly with this fall's planned sports streaming jv and **ESPN DTC** launching next year, it's important to remember linear's solid foothold. Streaming Summit Chairman **Dan Rayburn** noted that the **NFL's** streaming viewership makes up less than 10% of all viewers when the game isn't exclusive to a streaming-only platform.

NBCU sees streaming and linear as complementary given that the majority of premium content is still being consumed on television. Peacock, which debuted in July 2020, boasts a wide library of entertainment content provided by the NBCU portfolio on top of what it has with sports entities such as



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the **Premier League** and **Big Ten Conference**. That includes some linear options like Bravo, which gives Strauss and his team the belief that it's not a case where companies should choose streaming vs linear—both platforms can be combined as part of a healthy offering.

“Five years ago, people thought the phone was going to be the primary place where people consume video,” Strauss said. “It's almost like TV is the new TV ... Five years ago, people were talking about the death of linear TV and the death of live TV—that was grossly overstated. We knew this, inherently, which is why we launched Peacock with linear channels.”

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LAWMAKERS REQUEST MORE INFO ON SPORTS STREAMING JV

Representatives *Jerry Nadler* (D-NY) and *Joaquin Castro* (D-TX) are looking for answers about the sports streaming JV coming this fall from **Warner Bros. Discovery, Disney** and **Fox Corp.** The lawmakers sent a letter to the companies' CEOs with a list of 19 questions regarding the service, including asks about how each company will continue to bid competitively against each other for sports rights when the JV launches and if the partners will continue to require MVPDs and vMVPDs to purchase other programming in addition to sports channels as a condition of distribution agreements. “Without more complete information about the pricing, intent and organization of this new venture, we are concerned that this consolidation will result in higher prices for consumers and less fair licensing terms for upstream sports leagues and downstream video distributors,” the letter said. The pair requested answers by April 30 and asked for the **DOJ** to be copied in the companies' responses.

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CHICAGO TEAMS MAY BID ADIEU TO NBC SPORTS CHICAGO

Chicago's biggest sports teams may have a new home when their contract with **NBC Sports Chicago** expires in October. The White Sox, Bulls and Blackhawks are working through a deal that would see their games move to **Stadium** this fall, according to a *Chicago Sun-Times* [report](#). The partnership has not yet crossed the finish line, and there is still a chance for a six-month extension with NBC Sports Chicago.

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NAB SHOW PANEL DISCUSSES WAYS TO COMBAT CHURN

The issue of churn is an elusive problem that companies have been chasing to solve for quite some time, but the message

sent from a panel at **NAB Show's** Streaming Summit was that it's an inevitable issue. How companies combat it, though, depends on each service and what their audience looks like, and there's a multitude of options to combat customers from leaving the building. “One of the things that's useful when looking at the streaming space is that it is effectively like any other direct-to-consumer product space,” *Titus Bicknell*, former Chief Digital Officer/EVP, Operations at **AMC Networks**, said. “A lot of what we looked at as we launched **Acorn TV** was the behavior of customers buying other sorts of consumer products, and essentially the dichotomy there is to say, ‘Do you have a product that makes more sense in a supermarket?’” He elaborated that it's a franchise vs brand loyalty scenario. Bicknell specifically used AMC Networks and “The Walking Dead” as an example, where fans of a certain franchise sign up for AMCN services to watch said program. That forces AMCN to offer enticing content to keep those viewers and showcase more than just a single franchise. Another way to potentially reduce churn relates to that content—specifically the windowing of programs. *Matt Ross*, Managing Director for **Digital I**, sees two strategies for releasing and positioning content. “You've got a binge strategy where you're just dropping everything at the same time. That's fantastic when it comes to getting people engaged with a piece of content and hooking people in,” he said. “But at the same time that often normally means that somebody will binge through a series in a day or two. That's not going to take people across multiple subscription windows, so a weekly drop does that. It takes your subscriber across multiple subscription windows and makes them stay there for longer, reducing churn.” A trend Ross is starting to see is split releases where half a season will be available before the second half rolls out at a later date, but it leads into the need for fresh content to bridge the gap for subscribers tied to specific shows. *Stewart Frey*, **WWE's** former VP, Technology, worked on WWE's own OTT platform in the past and views new content as a critical component to reducing churn. “You have to keep bringing in new content, or you have to have the resources to buy older catalogs and put them on your service,” Frey said. “As we're seeing the big tech companies coming into the space more, with what seems to be unlimited funds, it'll be interesting to see how the smaller streaming players are able to compete and prevent churn, because they don't have that big cash pile saved in the background.”

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CHARTER INTRODUCES NEW INTERNET-ONLY VIDEO PLANS

With **Charter** no longer offering its TV Essentials streaming plan to new customers, the operator has rolled out two other internet-delivered video packages. Spectrum TV Stream fea-

tures 90+ channels for \$39.99/month and includes some nets that weren't part of TV Essentials, such as **CNN**, **Fox News** and **National Geographic**. Charter's also offering a 45+-channel Spanish-language package for \$24.99/month that includes programming from **Univision**, **Telemundo**, **beIN Sports en Español** and **Discovery en Español**. The packages, available to Spectrum Internet customers, also include free VOD titles and are available through the Spectrum TV app.

VERIZON DEBUTS FREE OFFER FOR DISNEY BUNDLE

Verizon is continuing its trend of offering streaming perks. Starting Thursday, new and existing Verizon myPlan customers can receive six free months of the **Disney** Bundle when switching to select Unlimited plans. The deal would save customers nearly \$115 off the retail price for the Disney Bundle, which includes **Hulu**, **Disney+** and **ESPN+**.

BET, TYLER PERRY EXTEND DEAL

BET Media Group entered into a new multi-year content partnership with *Tyler Perry* that replaces their agreement set to expire this year. Under the original agreement, Perry produced over 700 episodes of series for **BET** and **BET+**. Under the new pact, he will deliver hundreds of new episodes to BET for both top existing and entirely new series. BET has greenlit "Tyler Perry's Sistas" for an eighth season, "Tyler Perry's The Oval" for a sixth season, "Tyler Perry's Assisted Living" and "Tyler Perry's House of Payne" for a sixth season. On **BET+**, "Tyler Perry's ZATIMA," "Tyler Perry's Ruthless," Tyler Perry's BRUH," and "All The Queen's Men," will all see new seasons as part of this multi-year deal. "Route 187," a new scripted series has also been greenlit as part of this agreement.

RATINGS

An April 14 showdown between the San Diego Padres and Los Angeles Dodgers became **ESPN's** most-watched "Sunday Night Baseball" game in six years, excluding games featuring the New York Yankees or the Boston Red Sox. San Diego's 6-3 win delivered an average audience of 1.961 million, according to **Nielsen**. That's up 38% from last year's Sunday Night Baseball season average and 58% with P18-49. The broadcast peaked at 9:30pm ET with 2.215 million viewers. – **TNT Sports'** coverage of the NCAA men's Final Four across **TBS**, **TNT** and **truTV** gave **Warner Bros. Discovery** its highest share night this year on April 6 with a 67% share of cable primetime viewing among A18-49 and a 63% share among A25-54 across ad-supported cable. – **Fox News Channel** is back on top after the conclusion of March Madness. For April 8-14, it topped the primetime and total day charts with 2.094 million and 1.317 million viewers P2+, respectively. **TBS** took the second spot with 1.227 million viewers, and **TNT** nabbed third with 1.173 million. **MSNBC** and

ESPN wrapped up the top five with 1.158 million and 1.091 million viewers, respectively. When it comes to total day, **MSNBC** sat comfortably in second with 800,000 viewers while **ESPN** trailed in third with 696,000. **CNN** (494,000) and **TBS** (422,000) claimed the fourth and fifth spots.

TELEMUNDO CONTINUES 'NUESTRAS FINANZAS' CAMPAIGN

Telemundo is once again commencing its *Nuestras Finanzas* campaign, an initiative designed to empower Hispanic families to cultivate their financial well-being. The programmer will work with the **U.S. Commission on Financial Literacy** to champion MyMoney.gov, and it will partner with **CNBC**, **CNBC en Español**, **NBCUniversal's** "The More You Know" and subject matter experts to create town hall-style webinars as well as on-air and digital segments to drive financial literacy awareness.

DOING GOOD

Cable One announced the 12 winners of its sixth annual Dream Bigger social media campaign, awarding \$2,500 each to schools and organizations providing STEM education to K-12 students. Cable One received nearly 100 entries outlining how the organization would use the award to fund STEM projects and how each would benefit students. Winning ideas included the implementation of an agricultural engineering component to Okatie Elementary School's garden club in Bluffton, SC, and the launch of a senior-level course using STEM concepts to teach students about investing, rocket design, city planning and more at St. Joseph High School in Victoria, TX.

AWARDS

The **Alliance for Women in Media Foundation** is celebrating *Carol Burnett*, presenting the icon with a Lifetime Achievement Award at the 29th Annual Gracie Awards Gala on May 21. The event will be held at the Beverly Wilshire in Beverly Hills. Burnett currently stars in **Apple TV+'s** "Palm Royale."

PEOPLE

David Porter is joining **Warner Bros. Discovery** as Head of Ad Sales Research, Data and Insights. The role places him as the leader of the programmer's strategy around alternative currencies, data clean rooms and more. He most recently was CEO of **Canoe Ventures** and also spent time as VP, Ad Innovation and Programmatic Solutions at **Turner**. The appointment comes one month before **WBD's** upfront on May 15. – **Tennis Channel** named *Matthias Hahn*, its first Europe-based executive, to serve as General Manager of the network's German-language platforms. He'll build a local executive team in Munich and oversee network growth in Germany, Austria and Switzerland. He joins from **Tivo**, where he served as Senior Sales Director, Europe, Middle East and Africa.