

Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

Squared Circle: Why Fox Nation is Entering the Live Sports Game

Last week, market research and consulting firm **Parks Associates** released a new [white paper](#) reporting that 33% of US internet households subscribe to DTC sports-specific streaming services. The report also found that 43% of consumers in internet households call themselves “sports viewers,” with 40% of them watching sports only via streaming services. Although it’s perhaps obvious at this point where the wind is blowing with live television, the report is one more piece of evidence that reinforces why **ESPN** and **Fox** are both set to launch their own DTC streaming products with sports content at their center. And also why **Netflix** is increasingly experimenting with live sports offerings, from **WWE**’s “Raw” to special boxing events to exclusive **NFL** games on Christmas.

This could also explain why **Fox Nation**, an SVOD largely built around news and opinion-based programming, is jumping into the live sports arena. This month, Fox Nation cut a deal to become the exclusive Friday night broadcaster of the **Professional Bull Riders** Camping World Team Series via a weekly show starting Aug. 8. The streamer also announced this month that it will be the exclusive broadcast partner of Real American Freestyle, a new wrestling company co-founded by the late **Hulk Hogan**. The inaugural event, “RAF01,” is set to air on Aug. 30.

While sports content already existed on the platform in the form of documentaries and reality series, including one about

bull riding called “Last Cowboy Standing,” the SVOD’s first true entry into live sports is “reflective of what we want to do here at Fox Nation,” SVP *Gavin Hadden* told **CFX**. “We want to be a location where, no matter what you’re looking for, we could be an all-OTT app for you, where you could be entertained, where you could learn things, where you could laugh. And live sports is in a beautiful spot right now. It’s something that brings people together...So it’s just a really nice way for Fox Nation to expand our live portfolio and bring our fans and potential fans the opportunity to really watch what most people are coming to TV for.”

A growing number of streamers are offering exclusive sports broadcasts to their customers these days—the **NASCAR** Cup series on **Prime Video** and **MLS Season Pass** on **Apple TV+** come to mind. Or just zoom in on the pro wrestling media landscape specifically, where both **WWE** and **AEW** now have streaming deals. Asked whether this trend was a factor in Fox Nation’s decision to pursue its own wrestling show, Hadden said, “I don’t think it’s a specific trend to sports...I think it’s happening with everything. The media landscape is changing so drastically and so fast, and it’s really becoming a choice experience for these viewers. And you just have to be where they’re at, and you have to have the ability to let them know that you have what they’re looking for. Whatever the vehicle is for that, content is always king. If you can be a provider of good, high-quality content, the consumer will find you. That’s very important.”

PRESENTED BY CABLEFAX

VOICES OF IMPACT
AND
Workplace CULTURE

CELEBRATING VOICES DRIVING
PROGRESS & INCLUSION

2025 SPOTLIGHT CATEGORIES:

RIISING VOICES

Recognizing rising talent and the mentors, managers, and peers who champion them.

ACCESSIBILITY INNOVATOR

Honoring individuals or companies that are advancing access for people with disabilities.

FIND OUT MORE:



FINAL ENTRY DEADLINE: AUGUST 8TH

A bull riding league and freestyle wrestling might not be the first two things that come to mind when the average sports fan thinks of live content, but Hadden, who played a major part in getting these media deals done, sees a lot of opportunity to attract an audience with PBR and RAF. “When we look at live sports and live events in general, we really care about what our viewers and potential viewers care about,” Hadden said. “It’s an exciting time for us to see that these sports that may not have had big outlets in the new media landscape—if you are passionate about something, you can find it. We want to be the place where they go to find it.”

Bull riding, he added, is “deeply entrenched in the culture and across this country—I mean, it goes from Texas to Madison Square Garden to Anaheim.” Hadden recalls attending Kid Rock’s Rock N Rodeo competition earlier this year and experiencing the “great environment of people watching these athletes do extraordinary things.” Wrestling was equally a no-brainer for Hadden: “Look, it’s the oldest sport in the world.”

CFX heard from sources that the first RAF broadcasts will still air as planned despite Hogan’s passing last week. When it does, RAF01 will spotlight current and former college and Olympic wrestlers who are looking to take the next steps in their careers, putting the show on a different playing field than the high-theatrics sports entertainment served up by WWE and AEW.

“Youth wrestling is so big in so many places in this country, and it doesn’t really have a huge outlet to go past high school or college and then Olympics,” Hadden said, adding that Fox Nation’s partnership with RAF is “an opportunity to bring a high-level classic sport that gets down to the meat of just working hard [and] bringing it to people in all these little pockets across the country, and really make sure that they know that we’re a place where they could watch and be a part of this culture of live sports through sports they love and compete in.”

Fox Nation’s entrance into live sports might seem to some like it’s coming out of left field. When we asked how long the streamer has been planning its sports expansion, Hadden said there “wasn’t a deciding moment...We’re looking to expand always and grow.”

The timing also aligns with Fox launching Fox One in the fall. The new DTC product will include Fox’s linear channels and VOD, unsurprisingly with a big emphasis on sports. Fox One users will also be able to access Fox Nation content, which means viewers will be able to tune into bull riding on Friday nights and the NFL on Sunday afternoons on the same platform. Regarding what Fox Nation’s venture into PBR and RAF adds to the larger focus of Fox One, Hadden said, “It’s another offering, another place where you could come to Fox

for more of what you want. It’s just a really cool opportunity to be able to be in all these different worlds.”

With bull riding and wrestling accounted for, what other sports is Fox Nation interested in? “Every sport that people want to watch,” Hadden said, laughing.

WBD UNVEILS POST-SPLIT NAMES, LEADERSHIP PICKS

It’s almost like we’re back to square one. **Warner Bros. Discovery** announced Tuesday that it settled on the names of the two companies it’s [splitting into next year](#). The previously labeled “Streaming & Studios” group, which will consist of **Warner Bros. Television**, Warner Bros. Motion Picture Group, DC Studios, **HBO** and **HBO Max**, will be called **Warner Bros.** On the other side, “Global Networks” will be called **Discovery Global**, containing channels such as **CNN**, **Discovery**, **TBS**, **truTV**, **TNT** and more. WBD said it chose Warner Bros. because of “the legacy of more than a century of industry-defining storytelling,” while Discovery Global recognizes the global reach of the Discovery brand. It was already known that *David Zaslav* and *Gunnar Wiedenfels* would be the respective heads of Warner Bros. and Discovery Global, but more pieces in their leadership teams are being solidified. Under Zaslav will be folks like HBO/HBO Max Chairman and CEO *Casey Bloys*, Warner Bros. TV Group Chairman and CEO *Channing Dungey* and WBD CEO and President, Streaming and Games *JB Perrette*. *Priya Aiyar* will also be in that group as Chief Legal Officer, alongside *Bruce Campbell* as COO and *Robert Gibbs* as Chief Communications and Public Affairs Officer. Wiedenfels’ team will have *Gerhard Zeiler* as President, U.S., U.K. and Germany, **Discovery+** and Chief Content Officer. *Scott Miller* will be President, Distribution and report to Zeiler, as will *Fulvia Nicoli*, who will be EVP, Content Strategy & Insights. Other notable names include CNN chief *Mark Thompson* and **TNT Sports** Chairman/CEO *Luis Silberwasser*. Additionally, Warner Bros. started the search for a CFO and Chief People and Culture Officer. Discovery is on the market for a Chief Communications and Public Affairs Officer.

FUBO SETS UP SPECIAL MEETING, DISNEY DEAL MAY COME IN 4Q

Fubo is hoping to take another step toward finalizing its merger with **Hulu + Live TV**, and it may come sooner than expected. The vMVPD filed a preliminary proxy statement with the SEC on Monday, revealing that a special meeting of shareholders will be scheduled to vote on several proposals related to the transaction. A date hasn’t been determined, though Fubo did

note that the merger could become official as soon as 4Q25 or 1Q26, as opposed to the original prediction of 1H26. Fubo is looking to close a chapter that first opened when **Venu Sports** was introduced in February 2024. After Fubo's legal efforts to prevent the sports-centric jv from launching prevailed, the company announced in January it struck a deal with **Disney** to combine operations with Hulu + Live TV.

COMCAST MOVING MARQUEE TO ULTIMATE TV TIER

Marquee Sports Network is the latest RSN that **Comcast** is moving to a higher-priced subscription tier. The company began notifying customers in the Chicago area that the network will move to the Ultimate TV package starting Oct. 1, or after the conclusion of the MLB regular season. Ultimate TV costs \$139.35/month—including the \$20.95 regional sports fee—which is about \$20 more expensive than the previous plan Marquee was on, Popular TV. Comcast will roll out promotional offers ahead of time for folks who want to continue receiving the network.

NETFLIX'S INTERNATIONAL MOVE

Streaming bundles aren't just happening in the U.S. **MBC Group**, one of the largest media companies in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, is partnering with **Netflix** to make the streamer available in the MBCNOW entertainment bundle. Subscribers to the package will get full access to Netflix as well as MBC's streamer **Shahid** and linear TV channels. Shahid originally launched in 2008 as MBC Shahid Online, before rebranding in 2020 to its current moniker. As of November, Shahid had 4.8 million subscribers.

ON THE CIRCUIT

We often see **FCC** Chairman *Brendan Carr* and Commissioner *Anna Gomez* in the media spotlight, and new Commissioner *Olivia Trusty* will do the same in a couple of months. **The WICT Network** announced Trusty is set to join the 2025 Leadership Conference lineup in a fireside chat titled "The Power of Us: A Commissioner's View" on Oct. 21. She'll dive into "defining career moments and the lessons that shaped her leadership style" as well as how partnership and perseverance translate into tangible outcomes. The Leadership Conference will take place Oct. 19-21 at the New York Marriott Marquis. Registration information can be found [here](#).

STREAMING RATINGS

As 2025's midway point gets further away in the rearview mirror, **Luminate** took a look at the top-10 streaming original TV seasons in the first 26 full weeks of the year (Jan. 3-July

3). Determined by total U.S. minutes streamed, a pair of **Paramount+** shows took the first two spots. Season 1 of "Landman" took the crown for the first half of 2026 with 14.44 billion minutes watched, while Season 2 of "1923" had 13.29 billion. **Netflix's** "The Night Agent" had its sophomore season come in third with 8.66 billion minutes streamed. The debut campaign of Paramount+'s "MobLand" and Season 7 of "Love Island USA" (**Peacock**) followed with 8.04 billion and 8.01 billion, respectively. – The third and final season of "The Summer I Turned Pretty" is off to a good start. **Prime Video** said its first episode accumulated 25 million viewers globally in the seven days following its premiere July 16. That's up 40% compared to how Season 2 started two years ago and triples the figure recorded in Season 1. Currently, Season 3 is the fifth-most-watched returning season in Prime Video's history.

DOING GOOD

Kinetic, a **Windstream** subsidiary, donated back-to-school supplies to the **Fort Bend Rainbow Room**, a nonprofit org that provides snacks, diapers, school supplies, clothes, toiletries, toys and other items to families in need in Texas. Kinetic contributed shirts, pants, jackets and other essential items for the upcoming school year. The provider's donation will also go toward full school sponsorships for 20 children, which includes uniform shirts and pants, shoes, socks, underwear, school supplies and a backpack. – **West Carolina Communications** announced that the company and its employees have contributed \$40,000 in donations this year, already surpassing the total amount from 2024. The SC-based operator credited its employee advisory fund, which is supported by contributions as well as a company match.

PROGRAMMING

"The Walking Dead: Daryl Dixon" was greenlit by AMC for a fourth and final season. Production for the eight-episode run will begin in the coming weeks in Spain. The show's third season kicks off Sept. 7 at 9pm on AMC and AMC+. – "Final Destination Bloodlines" makes its streaming debut on **HBO Max** on Aug. 1, followed by a linear premiere on **HBO** on Aug. 2 at 8pm. Leading up to the linear release, HBO will run a Final Destination movie marathon all day on Aug. 2, including five other installments in the franchise. Elsewhere in HBO's world, it handed a fourth-season renewal for its drama "The Gilded Age." The news lands as the series gets ready to air its Season 3 finale Aug. 10 at 9pm. – "Breaking Bad" and "Better Call Saul" creator *Vince Gilligan* is next headed to **Apple TV+** with a new sci-fi drama called "Pluribus," which premieres Nov. 7. – The gladiator thriller and "Spartacus" spinoff "Spartacus: House of Ashur" will make its debut this winter on **Starz**. It'll be the fifth installment of the series, which first premiered back in early 2010. The last chapter, "Spartacus: War of the Damned," concluded in 2013.

2025 CLASS OF HR GAME CHANGERS



C2HR Celebrates Extraordinary Talent in Human Resources

The C2HR Game Changers awards program celebrates extraordinary talent across C2HR's community of 4,800 human resources professionals in the media, technology and entertainment industry. HR Game Changers go above and beyond their human resources roles to innovate, drive results and elevate the employee experience. Award winners are classified into five award categories. Get to know the [2025 Game Changers](#) below.

CULTIVATORS

Cultivators build culture and amplify employee engagement by encouraging cross-department communication and collaboration. They are true ambassadors of relationship building and the glue that binds countless employees into a unified, synergistic team. The 2025 Cultivators are:

Gabby Harvilla

Senior Employee Engagement Specialist
Comcast



Gabby Harvilla is recognized as a Cultivator for her work across the Comcast Advertising and Xumo organizations. In her role, Harvilla focuses on leadership development and engagement. She leads the Virtual Engagement Community, which is designed to foster an equitable culture for all employees, regardless

of their work environment—whether in-office, virtual or hybrid. Harvilla has also designed, produced and implemented a variety of recurring experiences and forums for employees, including pop culture and book clubs, an interview series featuring guest leaders from across the organization, talent shows and trivia competitions. The community that Harvilla's initiatives foster has become a vital space for connection, learning and support for both in-office and virtual teammates.

Comcast HR Council



The Comcast HR Council was created to focus on two key pillars—Inclusion and Career Wellbeing—and to support the more than 8,000 employees across the organization's Residential Growth and Operations teams. The

initiative is committed to fostering an inclusive environment, ensuring teammates feel included, supported and valued so they can bring their best and most creative ideas to their work. It also offers intentional programming for teammates to own their career journeys, providing learning platforms, networking opportunities and developmental training that contribute to an engaged and

flourishing workforce. In its first year, the Council delivered two mentorship programs, with a Participant NPS score of 100, as well as the Meet 3 program, which pairs senior-level leaders with three teammates outside of their org to strengthen cross-functional ties across teams. Over 150 total senior leaders and teammates participated in the program.

THE IGNITORS

In their quest to elevate others, Ignitors champion development and mentoring programs. Their commitment to creating a clear pathway for advancement is inspiring. The 2025 Ignitors are:

Chelsea Bowes

Senior Director, HR
Hearst Television



Through innovative thinking, collaboration and a steadfast commitment to mentorship, Chelsea Bowes has not only had an extraordinary impact within Hearst Television but also set a new benchmark for what visionary leadership looks like. In her role, Bowes created HTV's Mentorship

Program, which fosters cross-departmental collaboration, connecting eager mentees with knowledgeable mentors. To date, over 1,500 partners have helped each other grow professionally and personally. Bowes' efforts in organizing each mentor/mentee pairing personally has energized employees and fostered a sense of belonging, creating the perfect recipe for success.

NBCUniversal Local Stations HR Team



NBCUniversal's Local Stations HR Team, led by Javier Ortiz, SVP, HR; Olga Aldape, VP, HR; and Ivelisse Varona, VP, HR, strives to build a culture of growth and performance across the organization's local businesses, which include

24 local TV stations and four regional sports networks. Leveraging the expertise of senior leadership, subject matter experts and L&D pros, the team created a program designed to build core

management and leadership skills across the critical population of middle managers—those leaders who manage the vast majority of news gatherers, content creators and sales professionals in the business. The program is almost entirely driven by internal talent and allows for participants to learn among peers and business leaders in the industry. To date, the team has run eight cohorts of talent, impacting hundreds of NBCU employees through more effective leadership.

RISING STAR

This honor is awarded at the discretion of the Awards Selection Committee to recognize an individual who is blazing trails early in their career. The 2025 Rising Star is:

Stephanie Chang
Manager, HR Strategic Programs, Comcast



Stephanie Chang keeps changing the HR game at Comcast Business, constantly looking for ways to use new technologies to automate and refine processes as well as improve connectivity within teams. Chang's ability to pivot from working on new solutions or tech to streamline workflows and enhance overall

efficiency has had a significant impact on her team's productivity and success. From the start of her Comcast career, Chang has demonstrated a keen ability to adapt and grow as well as a natural curiosity to learn new things. What truly sets her apart is her creativity and execution, taking bold ideas and transforming them into actionable plans that deliver results. Chang recently launched a new solution to automate in-office attendance reporting and management that has shaved hours off of the process each quarter, allowing teams to instead focus on more strategic work.

STRATEGISTS

Recipients in this category have the ability to see the big picture. They work tirelessly to advance their vision from a concept to a reality, thus helping their organizations achieve greater success. The 2025 Strategists are:

Marsha Smith
Asst. VP, HR Solutions
Cox Communications



Marsha Smith brings innovative thinking and relentless drive to her role. This is exemplified by her recent collaborative work to define business priorities and explore opportunities for organizational restructuring at Cox Communications to address shifts in customer expectations and a need for segmented portfolio

management better aligned with the company's positioning and maturity. Through Smith's leadership, a new operating model and organizational structure were developed in 2H24 and put into effect at the start of 2025. The new structure includes two customer-aligned business units, elevated roles, expedited decision-making and enhanced digital, analytics and AI capabilities.

Comcast Finance & Business Operations HR Team



The Comcast Finance & Business Operations HR Team exemplifies the true spirit of strategic partnership and innovation. The team's deep collaboration across departments has been instrumental in driving digital transformation and

automation initiatives that are not only reshaping the workforce but also empowering employees across the organization. Their work has played a critical role in helping the business become more nimble, accurate, efficient and effective. Initiatives introduced by the team include a six-month program that trains employees to build real, impactful automations tailored to their roles to save significant hours weekly, fostering a culture of continuous improvement and development. The team also partnered with the newly centralized Supply Chain organization to help warehouse employees move beyond manual tasks and into higher-value roles involving analytics, inventory management and planning, providing both operational gains and upskilling opportunities.

***"These awards celebrate
 HR professionals who
 don't just excel but also
 push boundaries and
 inspire others."***

— Parthavi Das, C2HR's Executive Director



TRANSFORMERS

Transformers leverage data, technology and creative thinking to innovate programs, processes and initiatives. These award recipients are passionate agents of change who exhibit agility and a fierce determination to drive results. The 2025 Transformers are:

Becca Baier

**Director, People Development, Inclusion & Impact
Paramount Global**



Becca Baier demonstrates a fierce determination to drive results and her impact spans many programs across Paramount Global. Leveraging data, technology, problem solving and creative thinking, Baier has created many impactful experiences for Paramount employees, from the new hire experience and employee

engagement to AI training. She is a powerful leader that values family, community, inclusion and kindness. Outside of work, Baier is also the founder of the Celebrate Life Foundation in memory of her mother. The foundation raises money through community events to support people battling a life-threatening illness.

Darius Clay

**Senior Director, Total Rewards
WOW!**



Darius Clay, an HR veteran with more than two decades of leadership experience, not only brings a seasoned perspective to his role at WOW! but also an innovative and people-first approach to revamp and implement several transformative initiatives across the organization. Those initiatives include the

transformation of WOW!'s Total Rewards function through data-driven innovation, creative problem solving and cross-departmental collaboration. He is currently leading the development of additional Total Rewards initiatives designed to enhance employee well-being, including programs focused on healthy nutrition, expanded mental health resources, enhanced healthcare and financial benefits and programs that foster communal success. Clay believes that employee retention is about more than just salary and benefits, which is why he champions programs that help employees achieve a sustainable work-life balance, while reinforcing that the organization genuinely cares for its people.

Midco HR/Corporate Communications Team



The Midco Human Resources/Corporate Communications team has consistently introduced groundbreaking initiatives that have significantly enhanced team member engagement and satisfaction. Their innovative approach to internal communications, including the launch of a new intranet platform and the successful migration of all content, has fostered a more connected and informed workforce. These efforts have not only improved transparency but also empowered team members to voice their ideas and concerns, leading to a more collaborative environment. Their current implementation of a new HRIS is streamlining HR processes, improving data accuracy and enhancing the overall team member experience.

FACT BOX

- C2HR introduced the Game Changers awards program in 2023 to honor professionals that go above and beyond their typical duties to elevate the employee experience.
- C2HR stands for Content and Connectivity Human Resources. The association serves HR professionals in the technology, media & entertainment industry.
- In 2019, the association changed its name to C2HR from CTHRA, the Cable & Telecommunications HR Association. The group was founded in 1993 by industry HR leaders.
- The association releases annual Compensation Surveys that look at salary increases, benefits, new job creation and more. Overall, C2HR's 2024 survey found merit increases fell to 3.3% from 3.8% in 2023 for connectivity companies and to 3.2% from 3.3% for content developers.