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WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

Tech Spotlight: How the NBA, Fox, ESPN Use AI for Live Sports

The SportsPro NY conference of course featured lots of talk about AI and how live sports orgs are implementing it into their broadcast and streaming tech stack.

“There used to be the old expression: ‘Machines are for scale, humans are for quality.’ Not sure that’s the right balance anymore. Or that’s continued to blend, and there’ll be an inflection point where those two merge. Don’t be afraid to embrace it. Utilize the technology,” **NBA EVP, Media Operations & Technology Ken DeGennaro** said during a fireside chat.

The league is currently experimenting with several enhanced, more immersive viewing experiences. One of those is [Spec-trum Front Row](#), a collaboration between **Charter** and **Apple Immersive** that brings Lakers fans into Crypto.com Arena via augmented reality on the Apple Vision Pro headset and using the NBA app. DeGennaro signaled that, with AI continuing to improve at such a rapid pace, it’s going to enable the NBA to deliver even better viewing experiences in the future.

“We often say less than 1% of our fans are going to ever experience a game live. So then, how can we program the games, the events, the services and distribute content to those fans on the platform at the right time, in a personalized experience?” DeGennaro said, highlighting how the league is leveraging user data from the NBA app to better tailor content. “Now in the digital age, it’s a bi-directional relationship [with

fans]. We’re no longer pushing one piece of content out to everyone. There is that stream of information, those signals from the fans on how they’re interacting with our content. We’re able to understand those signals and then personalize those experiences using AI.”

The NBA also sees an opportunity to use AI to localize feeds for other languages as well as for creating content for social media, an especially vital channel for capturing younger demos. “[We’re] making sure that we have the right buffet of content,” DeGennaro said. “Some fans are interested in certain aspects of the game, and we make sure that we give that choice to the fan.” Additionally, the league just launched a partnership with **Amazon Web Services** “where we use their AI to be able to build new statistics, and then we inject those into the broadcast.”

Fox Corp. SVP, Product Strategy *David Tackel* focused his TED Talk-style session on the hurdles media companies must clear when embedding AI into their live sports products. “Sports is actually an unbelievable proving ground. Either a tool fits into the workflow or it doesn’t survive,” cautioning that the minute a new AI feature disrupts or slows down an experience for a fan, they immediately start to lose interest. Tackel added that Fox is seeing success with AI-generated vertical highlights and clips. “This is something that’s obviously top of mind for everybody, but it’s something that is clearly on display in the Fox One app.”

The 2026 FIFA World Cup will be the next testing ground

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for Fox One's AI-powered features. "You'll see a bunch of new uses of AI," Fox DTC CEO *Pete Distad* said Thursday. "We're going to allow you to pull the screen back and then give you insights on what's going on during matches." The programmer is also thinking about how AI can enhance the ad experience. "We're using AI to find moments, so when something happens in an event, we can immediately trigger targeted ads." Distad added that Fox can also use AI-generated push notifications to market their own sports content after a big play.

AI-generated vertical video is the name of the game over at ESPN, which developed "SportsCenter for You" for its DTC app. This [personalized](#) edition of the show serves up snackable news clips that simulate the experience of watching the popular sports news program. Auto-generating content specific to each user's interests is a "really hard problem to solve," ESPN VP, Sports Product Management *Brian Marshall* stressed.

"We had to greatly expand the content pool that we had. We had to be able to pull what the storylines were of every video. We had to assemble them into a script. We had to train the AI voices in order to read this script," Marshall explained. "This is thousands upon thousands upon thousands of segments for people."

FloSports, a streaming service with a portfolio of sports rights that includes select NASCAR events and CONCACAF soccer matches, said that the team has spent the last 18 months using AI to streamline workflows and become more efficient. "We've pulled tens of thousands of hours out, mostly mundane work, out of our business, which allows us to invest more into the business. But more importantly, we're delivering consumer-based products," FloSports CEO *Mark Floreani* said.

In 2025, the streamer launched a tool suite they call "AI Producer," a virtual camera system that automatically follows the action without the need for a human camera operator. Designed with wrestling streams in mind, the AI allows FloSports to "virtually pan and zoom, follow the athletes, add the graphics and stream that." Floreani said it's a way AI is "bringing higher quality and allowing us to do more content."

The excitement for AI in the live sports market is palpable, and both sides of the ecosystem are revving up to do even more with it in the years to come. DeGennaro summarized that enthusiasm best at the end of the NBA session: "In our lifetime, this is the worst AI is ever going to be. It's only going to improve from here. It's only going to expand its capabilities and the services that it can provide to people, to businesses, to sports fans, to leagues. I can't imagine that we will take our foot off the gas on this one."

AMCN NEW PREZ

Kim Kelleher is adding President to her Chief Commercial Officer title at **AMC Networks**. The company is also expanding its board from 11 to 12 directors, adding CEO *Kristin Dolan* as a new Class B Director. Kelleher's promotion follows other recent senior leadership team promotions including *Dan McDermott* to Chief Content Officer and President of **AMC Studios** and *Stephanie Mitchko* to CTO and Global Head of Media Operations.

OHIO IX CELEBRATES 400G

With a lot of major data centers being developed in Ohio, we're keeping an eye on what's happening at **Ohio IX**, an internet exchange point in the state that enables ISPs, carriers, content providers and other networks to exchange traffic efficiently through a shared switch fabric. And the answer is 400 Gbps. **Com Net** and Ohio IX announced the successful deployment of a 400 Gbps connection, making Com Net the first member to establish such connectivity at the exchange. "This 400G milestone demonstrates the continued evolution of Ohio IX as a premier interconnection point in the Midwest," said *Rob Shema*, President of the Ohio IX and *altafiber's* Director of Government Affairs and Business Development. The deployment leverages OSI optics technology, enabling a streamlined and reliable implementation while supporting scalable, high-performance connectivity. As data demands grow, internet exchanges like Ohio IX can help members reduce reliance on upstream transit providers. The Ohio exchange, located in the Cologix data center, also offers remote access through switch operators across the state. Members of the exchange include **Apple, Charter, altafiber, Shentel's GloFiber and Akamai**.

BALL CAP FLAP

A social media post this week from **House Energy & Commerce** Dems calling on **FCC** Chair *Brendan Carr* to investigate **Fox News** didn't go over so well. The [post](#) on X said that if Carr wants to target news outlets for news distortion, he should be filing a complaint against Fox News for using old footage of President *Trump*. It received several replies that noted the FCC doesn't have authority over cable news nets, only broadcasters because they use the public airwaves. Never one to shy away from a social media jab, Carr [chimed in](#): "By getting the facts wrong, the law wrong, and the policy wrong, Democrats on the Commerce Committee have succeeded in meeting expectations for Democrats on the Commerce Committee." The Committee Dems were highlighting a [blog post](#) from a senior

fellow at progressive research and information **Media Matters for America** that noted the “Fox News Sunday” footage also aired on hundreds of local Fox broadcast stations across the country. Fox News has [apologized](#) for using archival footage of Trump instead of showing him wearing a campaign baseball cap during a ceremony honoring six U.S. service members killed in the Iran war. While Carr hasn’t made any moves to probe Fox Corp, he has been pretty active on X this week, posting a *Variety* piece critical of *Stephen Colbert’s* show, a townhall with the Wireline Competition Bureau and a photo of a meeting with the Chairman of the Dominican Republic’s telecom regulator.

husband—former **HBO** and **Starz** CEO *Chris Albrecht*—thought she’d lost her mind and wanted to actually live in it. Instead, she waged a two-year campaign to preserve it.

READING LIST

We enjoyed this [piece](#) in the *LAist* about the house made famous by “The Brady Bunch” now officially a Los Angeles historical-cultural monument. It was purchased for \$3.2 million by art collector *Tina Trahan* in 2023. In the article, she remarks that her

PROGRAMMING

Nexstar’s California broadcast stations will carry an exclusive telecast of a debate between the leading candidates in the race for California Governor on April 22 at 7pm PT. It will originate from the studios of KRON4 in San Francisco and be moderated by *Nikki Laurenzo*, news anchor at Fox40 in Sacramento, and Frank Buckley, veteran morning news anchor at KTLA5 in Los Angeles. – **TCM’s** 17th annual Classic Film Festival runs April 30-May 3, with the *Jane Fonda* and *Robert Redford*-starring romcom “Barefoot in the Park” set to open the event. Fonda will introduce the movie and honor the late Redford in a special tribute. Also in the festival lineup are “Alice in Wonderland,” “Gaslight” and “Out of the Past.”

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It’s been a few months since the launch of Fox One and ESPN Unlimited, and their impacts on the live sports viewing experience are only beginning to take shape. Both companies made their way to SportsPro NY to discuss their respective direct-to-consumer takeaways so far, as well as areas they’ve identified as growth opportunities.

🔗 Get the details: <https://lnkd.in/eNdFV2rh>

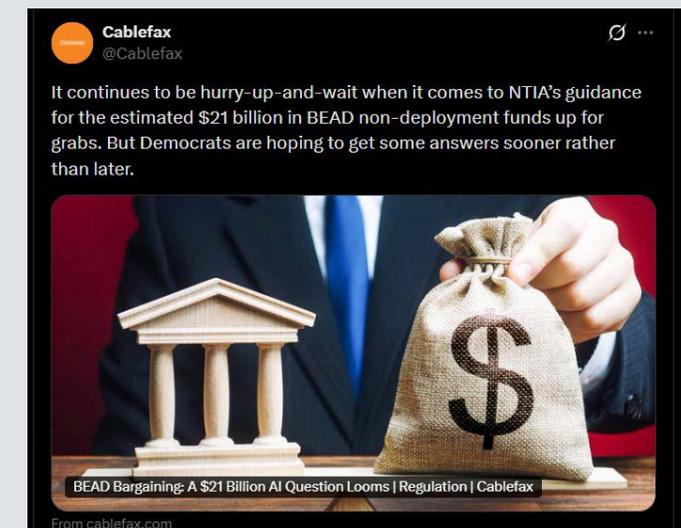


Fox, ESPN on Improving Live Sports Experience With DTC...
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Quotable

“If you want to find out if an AI strategy already works, put it into a live sports workflow. The live aspect exposes gaps immediately. Real-time pressure, emotional stakes are high, the timelines are completely compressed. The mistakes are going to be totally public, and there is no fix it later.”

- Fox SVP, Product Strategy **David Tackel** on the high stakes of AI implementation in live sports broadcasts



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It continues to be hurry-up-and-wait when it comes to NTIA’s guidance for the estimated \$21 billion in BEAD non-deployment funds up for grabs. But Democrats are hoping to get some answers sooner rather than later.



BEAD Bargaining: A \$21 Billion AI Question Looms | Regulation | Cablefax

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Up Ahead

- MARCH 12-18:** [SXSW](#), Austin
- MARCH 23-26:** [Cable Next-Gen](#), Denver
- MARCH 26:** [FCC Open Meeting](#), D.C.
- MARCH 29-31:** [NTCA Telecom Executive Forum](#), Coronado, CA
- APRIL 18-22:** [NAB Show](#), Las Vegas
- APRIL 23:** [29th Annual Cable Hall of Fame](#), NYC
- APRIL 27-29:** [CableLabs Tech Summit](#), Westminster, CO