

# Raycom files suit against the SWC

BY STEVE RICHARDSON  
WITH DAVID MCNABB  
From Democrat News Services

Raycom Sports of Charlotte, N.C., has filed a lawsuit in a district court in Houston charging the Southwest Conference with breach of contract involving the league's football and basketball television rights.

Raycom also is claiming the parent corporation of SportsChannel America - NBC/Cablevision - is engaging in "predatory trade practices, unfair competition and intentional interference" in current and future contracts between Raycom and the SWC.

Raycom, which has sought to retain the rights to SWC football and basketball after the 1989-90 season is seeking permanent injunctions that would prohibit the SWC from signing an agreement with SportsChannel America, a cable channel in Woodbury, N.Y., which is seen mainly on the East Coast, Ohio, Minnesota and California.

SportsChannel America has offered the SWC a seven-year contract worth \$29.5 million for the rights to SWC football, basketball, baseball and Olympic-type sports starting in 1990-91.

SWC Commissioner Fred Jacoby, who was served a subpoena on the podium at the league's annual kickoff luncheon Friday at the Re-

union Hyatt, refused comment on the suit.

Friday, Raycom officials said they matched on July 12 a previous \$24 million offer by SportsChannel America, and under terms of their current contract if they matched that offer they would continue with the SWC. SportsChannel America increased its offer to \$29.5 million in mid-July.

Ken Haines, executive vice president of Raycom, produced a letter signed by Jacoby on July 7 that said if Raycom matched the initial \$24 million offer by SportsChannel America, it would have the new SWC contract. On July 12, Raycom chief executive officer Rick Ray informed Jacoby in writing that Raycom would match the offer.

"Our position essentially is we either matched that and have that contract, or we continue with the existing contracts we have," Haines said.

Haines said the SWC's position earlier this week was they "had an another offer (from SportsChannel America, the \$29.5 million) and they wanted to shop it around, and we said no. We said we are following our contract."

Earlier this week, SWC and Raycom officials tried to hash out their differences in Dallas, but negotiations stalled Tuesday.