

The action was almost too fast for the fans, most of whom were screaming at the top of their lungs by the time official Joe Forte blew his whistle and approached Snyder and Lebo, still flat on their backs.

Thirty-one years earlier a similar block/charge call in the final seconds determined whether North Carolina would defeat Wake Forest in the ACC Tournament semifinals. Only the 12,400 fans at N.C. State's Reynolds Coliseum got to see official Jim Mills call a blocking foul against Wake Forest's Wendell Carr that sent UNC's Lennie Rosenbluth to the free throw line and the Tar Heels on their way to ACC and NCAA titles.

The 16,500 fans in the Greensboro Coliseum on this day, however, were hardly alone. When Forte raised his right fist and pointed his left hand at Lebo for blocking, millions of basketball fans across the country watched via NBC television. Hundreds of thousands of others in the ACC area saw not only the play, but several replays of the final seconds, via the Raycom/Jefferson-Pilot regional telecast.

Quin Snyder's mother, at her home in Mercer Island, Wash., watched her son sink two free throws to clinch Duke's 65-61 victory and the ACC championship. And Rosenbluth, whose free throw secured UNC's victory over Wake Forest in the 1957 ACC Tournament semifinals, suffered the agony of defeat with his old school as he watched from his home outside Miami, Fla.

Sitting in the Greensboro Coliseum stands were Rick and Dee Ray, the chief executive officer and president, respectively, of Raycom Sports and proud parents of ACC television broadcasts since 1983. They smiled at each other, knowing that an audience of fans across the ACC states was again treated to a classic finish of a championship game. They also knew that ACC TV sponsors, paying into the millions for precious minutes of advertising, were again pleased to have their products associated with ACC basketball.

Prior to the Tournament, Raycom/Jefferson-Pilot had negotiated a deal to pay the league more than an estimated \$8 million a year for regional television rights to ACC basketball games through the 1994 season. Less than 10 years earlier, the ACC was getting less than \$500,000 a season for its TV rights.

In many ways, the progress of TV coverage for ACC basketball parallels the advancement of the game itself. When radio was the only broadcast vehicle for ACC fans to follow games, the two-hand set shot was still a valuable weapon for any college team.

But just as the slam dunk replaced the set shot; so too did regional and national television replace radio as the primary medium for ACC fans to follow games they could not attend. By 1988, UNC center J.R. Reid was as recognizable to basket-

ball fans in Cheyenne as Charlotte.

That's a far cry from when television first hit the ACC scene in 1955. Back then, most basketball fans in Wyoming didn't know the name Dickie Hemric nor that his Wake Forest team played in the ACC.

The ACC took tentative steps into the unknown world of TV in '55. With much reservation, Commissioner Jim Weaver and league officials agreed to let WUNC-TV, Channel 4 in Chapel Hill, televise one game that season. The public TV station requested and received approval from University of North Carolina officials and those at Wake Forest University to provide a non-commercial telecast of the Jan. 8 game between the two teams from UNC's Woollen Gym.

With the ACC's approval, the game was seen by fans on a signal that carried over a 50-mile radius from Chapel Hill. UNC won the game 95-78, and the reaction to the telecast was mixed.



Dee and Rick Ray ended the 1979 basketball season with \$16.40 and no credit...

"Basketball is real good on TV, next to boxing, I would say," said Wake Forest Assistant Coach Bones McKinney. "But whether it is good for the game, well, that's something else. You can't convince me that TV will not hurt the attendance. It's so easy to stay home in the comfort of your own parlor to see a game, rather than go out on a cold or rainy night and fight the crowd."

"Yes, the telecasts of basketball in this area must be handled with kid gloves. Otherwise, somebody is going to suffer."

ACC TV was nearly grounded before it got on the air. The UNC-Wake Forest telecast was a test for TV's effect on attendance; while the Tar Heels and Demon Deacons played before a sellout crowd, Duke and N.C. State played at the same time in nearby Durham.

"Why all the empty seats?" State Coach Everett Case asked rhetorically of the crowd that was 2,000 shy of capacity at

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Duke Indoor Stadium. "Too many people stayed home to watch the Carolina-Wake Forest game on television. You can't tell me TV doesn't hurt attendance. This is the first time in five years we haven't drawn a capacity crowd in Duke Gym. You can say what you want, but I blame it on TV."

Duke Coach Hal Bradley agreed with Case and said, "If there's a conflict, and one of the games is on TV, you'll feel it at the gate."

UNC Coach Frank McGuire, usually one to take an opposing view, saw the benefits of television. He also showed great foresight.

"I guess we had an audience of 50,000 or more," McGuire said of the first telecast. "There is no doubt that the sport is in for a change. Whether this change will be good or bad, from the standpoint of attendance, I do not know."

"I do know, however, that the game will become more popular. More youngsters will be permitted to stay up at night to

"The University, aware of its status as a tax-supported institution, is determined not to compete with private enterprise unnecessarily," said Billy Carmichael Jr., vice president and finance officer for UNC. "It wishes to protect the radio industry of the state from competition by WUNC-TV in respect to presenting basketball games on the air."

A unique agreement was made between WUNC-TV and a number of radio stations. Three UNC games of 1956 were broadcast over certain cooperating radio stations, and shown simultaneously on WUNC-TV without sound. The venture was known as Broadvision.

The first three Broadvision games were UNC vs. Maryland on Jan. 16, UNC vs. N.C. State on Jan. 18 and UNC vs. Wake Forest on Feb. 15. All three were selected to avoid conflicts with Duke and N.C. State home games, as well as with area high school games.

UNC won the first Broadvision game, 64-55, over Maryland.

The "radiocast" was well received by fans, as well as by TV and radio officials. However, there were necessary adjustments to be made. For instance, TV viewers needed more access to the scoreboard and time clock. UNC solved that problem by placing a wooden, hand-operated scoreboard in one corner opposite the camera.

When commercial telecasts rendered Broadvision useless in 1958, the hand-operated scoreboard remained on the Woollen Gym sideline as an aid to the UNC coaching staff when reviewing films of the games. The scoreboard was retained when UNC later moved to Carmichael Auditorium and then to the Smith Center.

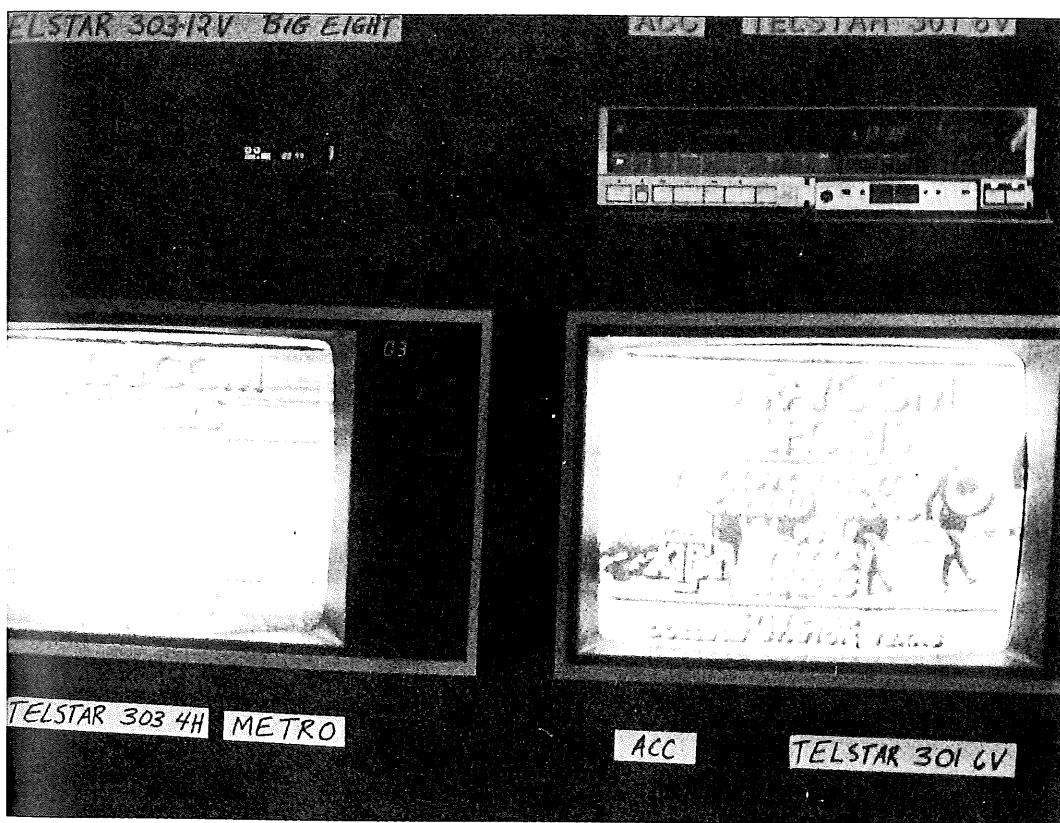
Broadvision ultimately gave way to the vision of Castleman DeTolley Chesley.

C.D. Chesley worked within the sports divisions of the ABC, NBC and Dumont Networks during the early days of television. He experimented with the TV broadcasts of Notre Dame football games, which were shown to a national audience on a delayed

basis. The voice of Lindsey Nelson saying, "After an exchange of punts, we go to further action in the third quarter," became familiar to college football fans every Sunday morning.

As coordinator of the NCAA's college football package for NBC and ABC, Chesley fostered the idea of regional telecasts. A one-time UNC football player, Chesley selected ACC football for his first regional experiment in 1956. He approached athletic directors Eddie Cameron of Duke, Chuck Erickson of North Carolina and Rex Enright of South Carolina about the regional telecasts of three ACC football games for the 1956 season. Chesley offered the ACC \$75,000 for the rights.

The response to those telecasts was not overwhelming, but the league respected Chesley's interest. A year later, after watching UNC win the ACC Tournament in basketball, Chesley was convinced that the Tar Heels would be appealing to a TV audience in North Carolina. When they advanced to



... today they preside over a company that employs 45 and bills some \$50 million a year.

see the telecasts. And even the younger girls seem to like it. We already have started receiving letters from the girls asking for pictures of our players."

Prior to that first telecast, ACC fans relied on radio play-by-play provided by Ray Reeve. In the early days of the league, Reeve formed the Tobacco Sports Network, which transmitted the games on a delayed basis so as not to affect attendance. Later on, Reeve provided live broadcasts of as many as six ACC games a week. His gravel-voiced delivery became as much a part of ACC basketball in the early '50s as Ronnie Shavlik's hook shot. Some historians have suggested that Reeve's broadcasts contributed to the ACC's early growth as much as any player, coach or administrator.

The emergence of TV into the ACC picture most upset the radio stations, which feared the loss of an audience for their commercial broadcasts.

the NCAA semifinals in Kansas City, Chesley paid the NCAA rights fee and set up a five-station network to carry the UNC games back in North Carolina. In less than one week, Chesley secured the necessary equipment for the telecasts from Kansas City, found sponsors and announcers and arranged telephone lines.

Fans across North Carolina watched nervously from their homes as the Tar Heels went three overtimes to defeat Michigan State in the semifinals. The championship game also went three overtimes with fans staying up past midnight to watch UNC defeat Wilt Chamberlain and Kansas.

"They were renting TV sets for hospitals (in North Carolina)," Chesley told the *Greensboro Daily News*. "It was the damndest thing you ever heard of.

"I knew right then and there that ACC basketball could be as popular as any TV show that was shown in North Carolina. We didn't know how it had gone over back here in North Carolina. The game started so late in the East that we wondered if anyone had stayed up to watch it.

"The next day (Sunday) we found out that almost everybody had stayed up. We got letters from fans thanking us for two years after about that one game against Kansas."

Chesley's stroke of genius, and his incredible luck in televising two remarkable games, led to the formation of the C.D. Chesley Network and ultimately to a package of regionally televised ACC games for the 1958 season.

In May of '57, Chesley sold the ACC on the idea of televising 12 league games on stations from Maryland to South Carolina. The eight member schools decided to divide all receipts from broadcasts rights.

Chesley then drove his Ford station wagon throughout North Carolina, Virginia, Maryland and South Carolina seeking TV stations to carry the games. Twenty stations liked the idea, but only if Chesley was able to find sponsors for the telecasts.

Chesley enlisted the help of Duke's Cameron, as well as coaches Case and McGuire, who spoke at several promotional luncheons on behalf of the proposed TV package.

"I have a feeling it might help college athletics in the long run," Cameron said. "I may be wrong. Time will tell. But it helps the public to know our athletes and to see what we've got to offer. I'd rather for the fans to be watching an ACC contest than Mickey Mouse or some cowboy show."

Pilot Life Insurance Co. was the first advertiser to support Chesley's project. When Chesley had trouble selling out the first year of telecasts, Pilot Life bought six minutes of advertising—half the commercial allotment—for all 12 games. (ACC fans have been sailing with the Pilot through league telecasts ever since.)

Soon Chesley and his network became fixtures in the ACC.

"I think he was very proud that he made ACC basketball," Ruth Chesley said upon her late husband's induction into the North Carolina Sports Hall of Fame in 1987. "He knew he made the ACC what it is today."

Chesley ran the company out of his home in Linville, N.C., although an associate and a secretary worked out of Philadelphia. Chesley rented equipment for the telecasts and hired all personnel on a part-time basis. Yet what appeared to be a small-time operation gained the utmost respect from the ACC.

"Chez was always above board," said Skeeter Francis, the long-time public relations director for the ACC. "He was straightforward. He knew the technical side and he produced. When his check was due in the league office, it was there."

"Make a mistake and he would tell you," said Frank Slingland, who produced ACC games for 22 years and later became

the producer of *NBC Nightly News*. "I remember a game when I missed a couple of inbounds plays because I'd cut away to the cheerleaders or something. Chez didn't like it. 'Knock it off,' he told me. He was right, of course."

Chesley was the product of a prep school background in the Washington, D.C., area. After leaving UNC, he graduated from the University of Pennsylvania and attended the prestigious Wharton School of Business and Finance at Penn. He served as an intelligence officer during World War II, then as an assistant athletic director at Penn before going into TV.

In his second year of televising ACC games, Chesley was stricken with throat cancer and underwent surgical removal of part of his voice box. Despite the surgery, Chesley learned to talk again, using esophageal speech. He often visited patients with similar problems and taught them how to speak. People who have such an operation are not supposed to be able to swim or whistle, but Chesley learned to do both.

That same kind of determination carried over to his work. Chesley's motto from the outset was, "Do it right, or don't do it." He insisted that ACC telecasts be of the same quality—or better—as national network productions.

From the outset, Chesley hired quality announcers. Jim Simpson of NBC was the first play-by-play announcer, and he was joined in the booth by Charlie Harville. Chesley also employed such announcers as former Duke standout Jeff Mullins, former ACC coaches McKinney and Bobby Roberts, and Woody Durham. Later, the team of play-by-play man Jim Thacker and color commentator Billy Packer was a staple on ACC broadcasts into the '80s.

Chesley was an innovator. For football telecasts, he had a member of the TV crew stand on the sideline and wave an orange hat to the officials when a timeout was needed for a commercial. He was the first to have two cameras located at midcourt in basketball and the first to have a camera on the floor, beneath a basket. He once experimented with a wireless microphone on a basketball official during a telecast.

Despite the success of the telecasts in the ACC region, Chesley and the league were always cautious of too much exposure. Chesley's package included only nine games as late as 1964. That was a pittance compared to the 40 games televised by the mid-'80s, but the first national telecast of a college basketball game didn't come until 1968, when UCLA played Houston in the Astrodome.

There was always the prospect of expanding his network to other conferences, but Chesley remained devoted to the ACC.

Chesley once told *The News and Observer* of Raleigh: "Lindsey Nelson, who broadcasts Notre Dame football for me, once said to me that there are four sports events you ought to see before you kick the bucket—the Masters, the Kentucky Derby, a Notre Dame home game and the World Series. Those are all great events. But the atmosphere and the enthusiasm at an ACC Tournament are better than the World Series ever thought about being."

By 1964, Chesley convinced the league to televise the ACC Tournament championship game on the first Saturday night in March. To accommodate the network, the game's tipoff was first moved from 8 p.m. to 9 o'clock, then changed to 8:30. Critics said the ACC was showing its greed for the new TV dollar by changing the game's starting time.

"That's absurd," said Roy Clogston, N.C. State's athletic director and a member of the ACC TV Committee. "The money we get out of it doesn't amount to peanuts. The committee met five times before reaching a decision. We will

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receive between \$7,500 and \$8,000 for telecast rights, and after you split this eight ways among our eight members, it means each school will get less than \$1,000."

As late as 1969, athletic officials around the league were still concerned that TV games hurt attendance. In December of 1968, only 3,000 fans attended the ill-fated Triangle Classic at State's Reynolds Coliseum, where N.C. State played Navy and Wake Forest played Washington. At the same time, UNC's game against Villanova in the semifinals of New York's Holiday Festival was televised back to North Carolina.

"It's killing us," said State Athletic Director Willis Casey. "I don't know what, if anything, can be done about it, but something must be done to protect regular-scheduled games at our home bases. Otherwise, we are going to hurt ourselves beyond recovery."

While schools scheduled more carefully to avoid conflicts with televised games, video coverage continued to expand.

By 1971, both the ACC Tournament semifinals and championship were televised live, which meant \$35,000 in rights fees to the ACC. The league also got \$120,000 for the rights to the TV package that included 14 regular-season games. The home team received 40 percent of the per-game rights fee and the other seven league members divided the remaining 60 percent.

The ACC was becoming a special event for fans every Saturday afternoon and Wednesday evening. Bedtimes were extended throughout the ACC area so school children could watch the conclusion of the 9 o'clock games.

Then came the Super Bowl Sunday game of 1973. Again, Chesley's foresight, mixed with a lot of luck, took ACC TV to another level. Chesley proposed to ACC athletic directors the idea of an N.C. State-Maryland game prior to football's Super Bowl. The league liked the idea, and Chesley added a national feed to his 16-station regional network. But even Chesley did not dream that the game would pit two undefeated teams. Maryland ranked No. 2 in the country and State No. 3.

That national TV audience got a taste of ACC basketball in grand style. State Coach Norm Sloan wore bright yellow pants and a black-and-orange checked sport coat just for TV. Wolfpack guard Monte Towe wore a mask to protect a broken nose he suffered in an earlier game. Maryland, of course, had foot-stomping Coach Lefty Driesell.

The game also featured college basketball's best player, State forward David Thompson, who tipped in a missed shot with three seconds remaining to give the Wolfpack an 87-85 victory in College Park, Md.

Fans across the nation saw why ACC basketball was so special.

The following season, 1974, the ACC televised 13 games during the regular season and the entire ACC Tournament for the first time. Athletic directors were a little concerned that four TV games in one day was too much for even the die-hard fans. Once again, ACC fans could not get enough basketball as portable television sets popped up in offices and classrooms from Clemson to College Park.

Several independent TV producers were also watching the furor over college basketball along the Atlantic seaboard. Just as Chesley had the idea to televise a few games each season, independent producers in Atlanta, Washington and Charlotte thought maybe the market could be expanded.

Washington TV station WMAL produced a few Maryland games in the late '70s, and Ted Turner's WTBS experimented with several ACC games on his national cable network in the early '80s. In each instance, the ACC and Chesley played

hardball and attempted to keep independent stations from producing games. The league claimed that it did not want the market to be saturated, and that Chesley had exclusive rights to the games.

Enter Rick Ray, Dee Birke and a fledgling company named Raycom Sports.

Prior to the 1979 season, Ray arranged to televise a package of ACC games in North Carolina. The package included all of N.C. State's games in Alaska's Seawolf Classic and seven UNC road games. Ray paid UNC \$84,000 for the rights to the Tar Heel games.

"Yes, we were a little nervous," Ray recalled. "That was the biggest debt I'd ever run up. I thought I'd have to work forever to pay it off."

To better promote the telecasts, Ray convinced Alaska officials to change the tournament name to the Great Alaska Shootout, a name it retained as it eventually became one of the nation's top early season tournaments.

Ray was in charge of producing the games that season, and Birke sold the commercials. He previously worked as a station manager for WCCB in Charlotte and she owned Birke Advertising. This was before the two were married, and Ray agreed to pay Dee 10 percent of her gross sales each year.

"The first year, that was just wonderful," she said. "That was only \$26,000. The second year he owed me \$89,000 and we were married by then. Then we went to where he owed me \$130,000, then \$900,000."

Ray added: "Now I owe her \$14 million dollars. I feel like Ronald Reagan."

In order to sell the first year's telecasts, Dee cut a deal with Gulf Oil to sponsor each game of the package. For \$40,000—a 50 percent discount—Gulf got two minutes of advertising on each game. By 1988, the same two minutes would cost Gulf, or anyone else, "millions," according to the Rays.

Following each round of games, the Rays set their alarm for 2 a.m. in Alaska. Advertising for UNC games later in the season needed to be sold. With a six-hour time difference back to the East Coast, that was the only time the Rays could contact potential advertisers.

There were a few other problems with the first live telecasts from Alaska. A control room had to be built on the University of Alaska campus. Color cameras had to be shipped to Anchorage from Seattle, Wash.

Ray also hired an Alaska native to handle the graphics to be displayed on the screen. At game time, Dee discovered that the man had never seen a basketball game and did not know how to type. Dee Ray became Raycom's first graphics technician for one night.

Despite being televised late in the evening to North Carolina, the telecasts from Alaska were very well received. The UNC road games of 1979 got an even better reception. The Tar Heels' game at Maryland drew a 33 rating in North Carolina, making it one of the most viewed TV shows for the entire year in the state.

The Rays were thrilled with the results, even though it was a financial struggle. They put 58,000 miles on their BMW that first season. (The car was still with the company in 1988, with 220,000 miles on it.) Twice the Rays ran out of fuel in their Charlotte home and had to sleep by the fireplace. They ended the 1979 season with every credit card used to the limit and \$16.40 in their pockets.

"But, we had \$230,000 in receivables," Ray said. "That was

enough to pay all the bills, pay the schools and it gave us a little bit of money to live on and operate on the next year."

Chesley was not as happy about the goings-on.

Late in the '79 season, Ray received a telephone call at home from Chesley.

"Rick, we've worked together for a long time," Ray recalls Chesley saying. "But I want you to know that this ACC is my pie. I own the pie and you can't have a piece of it."

It was too late. Chesley's pie was being divided many ways. For the 1979 season, the ACC granted NBC rights to televise the North Carolina-Arkansas, Maryland-Notre Dame, Duke-Marquette and Louisville-Duke games. The previous season, ABC televised the ACC Tournament championship on *Wide World of Sports*.

Chesley continued to fight for exclusive rights to ACC telecasts. With some concern about overexposure, and perhaps more as a statement of allegiance to Chesley, the ACC granted exclusive rights to the Chesley Network for the 1981 season. The new contract required all ACC schools to get approval from both the league and Chesley before it televised a game on its own.

Although the ACC and Chesley blocked most regional telecasts for the 1981 season, they gave way to national offers. After NBC was outbid by CBS for the rights to future NCAA Tournaments, it assembled a regular-season package of games. NBC met with ACC Commissioner Bob James in New York and agreed to a deal that would pay the ACC \$1.35 million for six national and three regional TV appearances by league teams. Chesley, meanwhile, paid the ACC \$1 million for 36 regional games.

The ACC's and Chesley's control over the rights did not sit well with independent networks in the region.

"We don't think it was appropriate for them to negotiate an exclusive agreement without opening it to bidding when there's another company in the marketplace with signed contracts (for UNC games)," Ray told the *Greensboro Daily News*.

Finally, Raycom filed an antitrust suit against the ACC and Chesley. According to the suit, the exclusive contract kept a large number of ACC games off TV, and that constituted "warehousing."

Before the suit was brought to court, the ACC opened for bidding the rights to telecasts for the 1982 season. That forced Chesley's retirement. He died a year later at age 69.

"He was one of the pioneers in the telecasting of conference programs and his programs served as a model for many conferences later," James said.

While they retained the utmost respect for Chesley and the quality of telecasts he provided the ACC over the years, the Rays also believed that TV coverage of ACC basketball could be expanded and better marketed.

The ACC took 16 bids for rights to the 1982 package of games. MetroSports of Washington, D.C., was the highest bidder at \$3 million and was granted exclusive rights by the ACC. Even though MetroSports turned a \$350,000 profit that season, there were problems.

"Chesley was such a legend to follow," Rick Ray says. "MetroSports really had to take all the hard knocks that first year after Chesley. They were the ones who had to raise the advertising rates. Really, it was a blessing that we did not have the highest bid that year."

The following year, Raycom teamed with Jefferson-Pilot Teleproductions of Charlotte to make a bid. The combination presented a strong sales package by the Raycom group, as well as a strong production force by Jefferson-Pilot. Not only did

the Raycom/Jefferson-Pilot team offer the ACC \$18 million over three years, it also campaigned for the package. When the league athletic directors met at the Holiday Inn Four Seasons in Greensboro, they were greeted by a production truck outside. Signs hung from the truck that read: ACC On The Road With Raycom/Jefferson-Pilot.

After two days of negotiations, Clemson Athletic Director Bill McLellan called the Rays into the meeting of athletic directors.

"Rick, I want you to know that from now on when you get a cut, you can't just bleed Carolina blue," McLellan said to Ray, a UNC graduate. "Now, you've got to bleed eight different colors."

For the 1983 season, Raycom had a nine-man staff and \$10 million in billings. By 1987, Raycom had a staff of 45 and approximately \$50 million in billings. Along the way, Raycom expanded to include basketball coverage of the Pac-10, Big Eight, Southwest, PCAA and Metro conferences. In football, Raycom handled the SWC, the University of Miami, the Kick-off Classic, Liberty Bowl and the All-American Bowl in '87.

Raycom televised 250 events live in 1988, more than any of the three major networks. The Raycom network included 160 stations, 90 percent of which were affiliated with ABC, NBC or CBS. More than 60 sponsors were included in Raycom's 1988 package of regional telecasts.

The rapid growth and success was not without some setbacks. Raycom offered a package of pay TV games during the 1984 season. Although the games were offered in addition to the regular package of ACC games, fans balked at the ill-fated "Season Ticket" idea, and it was scrapped at midseason.

"We just misread the public," Dee says. "We did not do a good job of explaining to the viewers that these were not games coming off the other package. They thought we were holding the ACC hostage."

Aside from the pay TV blunder, the ACC and Raycom/Jefferson-Pilot have had a happy marriage. When their original contract expired following the 1985 season, the two parties agreed on another five-year deal reportedly at a cost of \$8 million per year. Following the third season of that contract, ACC Commissioner Gene Corrigan renegotiated a new, six-year agreement between the league and Raycom/Jefferson-Pilot.

ACC basketball has long been considered the plum of regional telecasts in the country. The quality of the league's basketball, as well as a top-rate TV production, a strong network of affiliated stations and the league's history have all played into its success.

"When Rick was training me, he told me the national networks are losing shares and people are going to look more toward regional networks," Dee Ray said. "And that's exactly what's happened. Our ratings in 1987 in basketball were better than ABC's, and nearly the same as NBC's."

Rick and Dee Ray each drive shiny new Mercedes throughout the ACC. In addition to their home in Charlotte, they have an East Side condo in New York City and a beach home on Hilton Head Island, S.C.

Their goal is to make Raycom Sports Inc. a \$100 million business by 1990.

"Could you ever imagine anything like this when you took off for Alaska 10 years ago?" they were asked.

"You do envision these things," Dee Ray said. "Otherwise, they wouldn't come true."



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AN ILLUSTRATED HISTORY

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