



ACC, ESPN Strike 15-Year, \$3.6 Billion Deal

By

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For the Atlantic Coast Conference, more teams and more games means a lot more TV money.

The ACC and ESPN have extended their television deal through the 2026-27 season. A person familiar with the agreement told The Associated Press that it's worth \$3.6 billion over the 15 years. The person spoke on condition of anonymity because financial terms weren't released when the two sides announced the deal Wednesday.

The deal comes ahead of the planned additions of Pittsburgh and Syracuse from the Big East and would represent a 33-percent increase in TV money for each league school from the previous deal unveiled nearly two years ago.

ACC Commissioner John Swofford said the deal was "another step forward" for the league and "certainly bodes well in terms of our future."

"One of the things you try to do at the league level is help give the schools as many resources, tangible and intangible, as is possible to help them reach their competitive goals," Swofford said in a phone interview, "and certainly this is a major step in doing that."

The deal gives ESPN title sponsorship rights beyond football to the ACC's other championships, including men's and women's basketball. Those sponsorship deals are subject to the ACC's approval.

The extension comes eight months after the ACC announced it would add Pitt and Syracuse, though it remains unclear exactly when those schools will leave the Big East and begin play in the ACC. It also comes as the league moves to an 18-game schedule in men's and women's basketball despite having just 12 teams next season.

Burke Magnus, ESPN senior vice president, said the network liked the combination of more teams and more league games instead of lower-profile nonconference matchups.

Adding Syracuse and Pittsburgh will "help bolster ACC basketball, which is already at the top of the food chain," Magnus said. "They get more out of basketball in terms of value than most conferences do."

The extension offers a significant increase in TV money for each ACC school from the previous deal announced in July 2010 for the 12-team league. That 12-year deal was worth \$1.86 billion with an average of more than \$12.9 million for league schools annually.

The extension ups that amount to an average of about \$17.1 million for each of the 14 schools annually.

The agreement also gives ESPN the right to televise three Friday night football games per season. That includes a commitment from Boston College and Syracuse to each host one game, plus an afternoon or evening game on the Friday after Thanksgiving.

Magnus said the network was going to "dip our toe in the water" with the Friday ACC football games, but added, "We have no intention of dragging people kicking and screaming into Friday."

The deal includes televising the ACC football championship game as well as regular-season and tournament or championship games in men's and women's basketball, and Olympic sports. The network would continue to carry content across its broadcast and online platforms, as well as through its partnership with ABC.

ESPN would continue its syndication partnership with Raycom Sports, maintaining Raycom's long-running regional broadcasting relationship with the league.

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