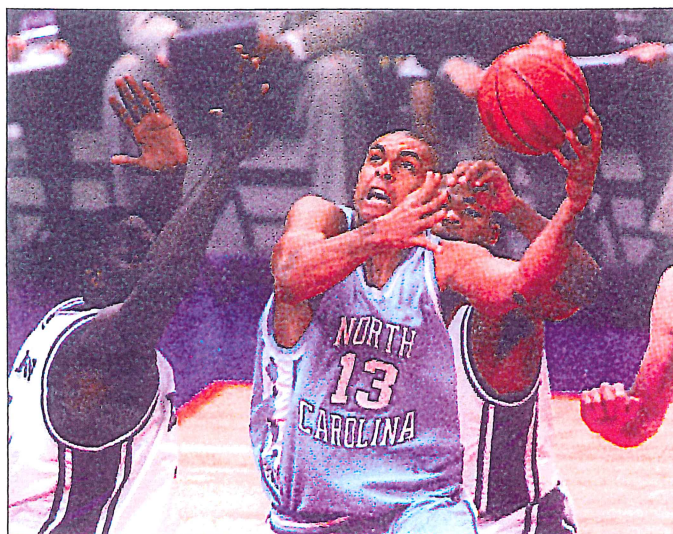


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ACC basketball TV deal nets \$300M



North Carolina-Duke is the top matchup in a powerhouse conference.

Raycom/Jeff Pilot get marketing, Net rights in 10-year deal

BY LANGDON BROCKINTON
STAFF WRITER



Raycom Sports and Jefferson Pilot Sports will keep the television rights to Atlantic Coast Conference basketball through a new 10-year deal that sources say is valued at more than \$300 million.

Under the agreement, which runs from the 2001-02 season through 2010-11, rights payments will average about \$30 million a year — roughly double the \$15 million to \$17 million annual fees of the current five-year deal.

The new pact, thought to be the country's richest conference college basketball rights agree-

ment, also includes marketing and Internet rights.

Raycom Sports and Jefferson Pilot Sports, both based in Charlotte, have held TV rights to ACC men's basketball since 1982, when they formed a joint venture to acquire those rights. In the new deal, as in the current arrangement, Raycom will syndicate and market the games. Jefferson Pilot will continue to produce the regionally syndicated

telecasts.

ACC basketball games air nationally on CBS and ABC/ESPN. In fact, just a few months ago, Raycom completed new rights deals with both CBS and ABC. Under those two-year agreements, which extend through the 2000-01 college basketball season, the two networks will air six games each a season involving ACC teams.

Talks on new network TV-rights contracts have not yet begun, said Ken Haines, chief operating officer for Raycom Sports.

"We expect to start discussions

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RAYCOM: TV partners will also manage ACC Properties

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with our broadcast and marketing partners after the start of the new year," he said. "We feel there will be substantial interest in the product."

In its new deal, Raycom Sports/Jefferson Pilot Sports will manage ACC Properties, which sells the conference's marketing and licensing partnerships.

"We have operated ACC Properties the past three or four years, but with this [new rights contract], we will increase our involvement and our aggressiveness in Properties," Haines said. In turn, Raycom/Jefferson Pilot will retain revenue derived from the marketing and licensing efforts.

"I do not believe that there is a conference college basketball arrangement that meets

or exceeds the financial commitments of this package," Haines said, declining to quantify the rights payments. "But with this new deal, while there's a substantial increase in rights fees, we feel there's also a significant increase in the opportunity to generate additional revenue."

One opportunity will be the Internet-based marketing of the ACC.

"We will certainly be focusing on increased Internet involvement, in addition to capitalizing on marketing opportunities in women's basketball and many of the championship events outside of basketball," Haines said.

The new deal is designed to increase the exposure for women's basketball and such ACC championships as swimming, ten-

nis, baseball and soccer. Some of those events already air on regional cable.

It's also likely that Raycom, in conjunction with the league, will look to create new nongame ancillary programming devoted to men's and women's basketball.

Commenting on the new rights deal, ACC Commissioner John Swofford said, "It's a terrific continuation of what has been a very mutually profitable and positive relationship that the ACC and Raycom/Jefferson Pilot have had for many years. And I think it's a tremendous plus for our schools as we look ahead — from a financial standpoint, from an exposure standpoint and from a stability standpoint."

Added Swofford, "We're extremely pleased with every aspect of [the deal]."