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Deal helps Raycom expand ACC's syndication territory

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The ACC's football syndication package has expanded into 40 new markets this season, including such faraway locales as Los Angeles, San Francisco and Denver.

Those new markets give ACC football more exposure than it's ever enjoyed in its longtime relationship with Raycom Sports, which syndicates the games for the league.

Raycom has held the conference's syndication rights since 1982. In the ACC's new 12-year, \$1.86 billion TV agreement, which kicks in this season, ESPN owns all of the media rights, so Raycom must sublicense games each week from ESPN to syndicate.

The 13-week package of football games stretches from California to New York and most markets throughout the Southeast. In the past, Raycom's agreement directly with the ACC restricted syndication to the seven states where the ACC has members.

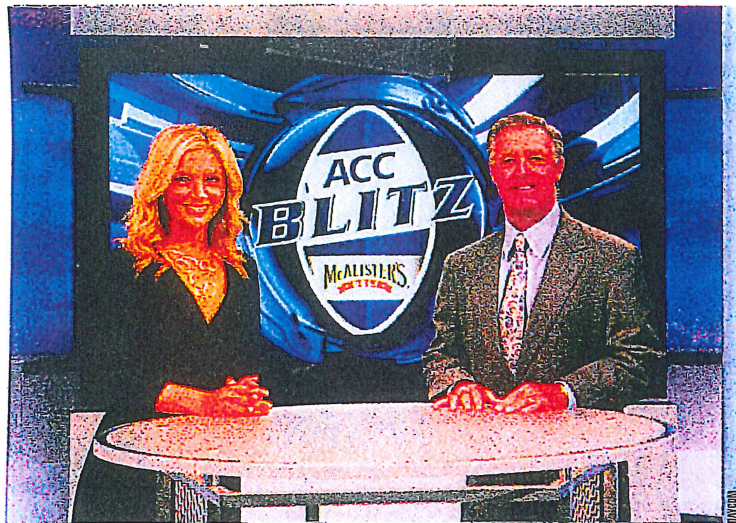
"By virtue of the new sublicensing contract with ESPN, we're permitted to distribute games outside of the ACC states now," said Ken Haines, CEO of Charlotte-based Raycom Sports. "We're going into markets now that we never dreamed of and that's all new exposure for the ACC. We've got much greater flexibility to sell and it certainly has taken the ACC to a wider audience."

Raycom began branding its broadcasts "The ACC Network" last season, and those telecasts are now in six of the top 10 TV markets, 13 of the top 25, and 25 of the top 50. The broadcasts were in 14 of the top 50 markets last year. Overall, the network coverage has nearly doubled from 28 million households to 53 million in the last year, or about 46 percent of the U.S. TV households.

While nearly all of the TV stations in the ACC Network signed on for the entire 13-week package, Raycom still has the flexibility for one-offs. For example, when Rutgers played at North Carolina on Sept. 10, Raycom was able to create syndication agreements for stations in the New York area, which further increased the ACC's exposure.

Syndication rates vary by market, and Raycom didn't reveal what stations pay for the games.

Haines said the growing appeal of college football led to some of the agreements. In some cases on the West Coast, digital channels need programming, and often they find live games, even if they're out-of-market



Danielle Trotta and Tommy Bowden host Raycom's studio show for the ACC Network, now seen in non-ACC locales such as Los Angeles and Denver.

teams, preferable to sitcom re-runs or entertainment shows.

Raycom's ACC Network games, which start at 12:30 p.m. on the East Coast, 9:30 a.m. Pacific, sometimes provide lead-ins on the West Coast to games involving their local teams.

In the ACC footprint, Raycom keeps much of the advertising inventory. The farther Raycom gets away from the ACC's states, the more inventory goes to the station.

"It's just a testament to the popularity of live college sports," Haines said.

Raycom also has launched a live pregame and halftime studio show this season for the first time. Those segments originate out of studios in Charlotte at NASCAR Media Group's facility. In addition, Raycom is producing ACC games for Fox regional networks for the first time.

The new syndication and production activity combined with the studio show, the debut of a new HD production truck, new iPhone, iPad and Android apps for live streaming and other digital initiatives with the ACC led Haines to call this "the biggest and most significant football season in the history of Raycom Sports."