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FSN/RAYCOM REACH TEN-YEAR ACC HOOPS DEAL FOR SUNDAY NIGHTS

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FSN and Raycom/Jefferson Pilot have struck a ten-year agreement for an exclusive Sunday night package to telecast ACC basketball beginning with the 2001-02 season. The new "ACC Sunday Night" Game of the Week franchise will run from December through March (FSN). ACC Commissioner John Swofford said that the games will start at 8:00ET or "sooner," adding, "Sunday night's a slot that goes largely unopposed after the football season. [FSN] will promote this in a similar way to ABC's 'Monday Night Football' games." FSN President Tracy Dolgin said, "There no longer is (an ACC) exclusive with ESPN. We're sharing one of their premier products." ESPN Dir of Communications Mike Soltys countered, "We have contractual rights to a significantly stronger schedule." USA TODAY's Rudy Martzke writes that Syracuse Univ. men's basketball coach Jim Boeheim "worries about college basketball reaching a saturation point." Boeheim: "With Sunday night basketball now, we'll have six nights of college basketball. I guess we'll (the Big East) just have to try and get Friday night. Then we'll have all seven" (USA TODAY, 8/4). In Raleigh, A. Sherrod Blakely writes that the contract with FSN "does not specify that every team in the ACC will have a nationally televised Sunday slot on the network." Dolgin: "There are no minimums in this contract like one school versus another school or maximums" (Raleigh NEWS & OBSERVER, 8/4). Swofford said that "charter flights likely would be provided to visiting schools, depending on distance, to ensure that players can be back on campus in time for Monday classes" (Baltimore SUN, 8/4). In Charlotte, David Scott writes the ACC's "efforts to aggressively market itself took another step" with the announcement of the deal. FSN's 19-game coverage now means "every ACC league basketball game will be televised, after Raycom finishes negotiating deals with other networks" (CHARLOTTE OBSERVER, 8/4).

IS IT OLBER-MANN FOR KEITH? The HOLLYWOOD REPORTER's Michele Greppi notes that Sunday night games are "likely to mean displacement for Keith Olbermann's recently announced show," scheduled to air at 9:00pm ET Sundays. Dolgin: "It may stay there. It's hard to tell" (HOLLY. REPORTER, 8/4).