

Food Lion grabs Charlotte tourney

STAFF REPORT

CHARLOTTE — Sports syndicator and event manager Raycom Inc. has signed Salisbury, N.C., grocer Food Lion Inc. to a multiyear deal as title sponsor of its annual college basketball tournament at the Charlotte Coliseum.

Terms of the deal were not disclosed, but industry experts value it at \$250,000 to \$500,000 annually.

"We are working with Food Lion on some ACC events, and this next step is logical," said Ken Haines, Raycom senior executive vice president. "They bring more ability to reach our fans at the retail level directly."

Jay Abraham, Food Lion marketing vice president, said the tournament provides a stronger link with college sports for the company. The grocer also has a sponsorship agreement with the ACC.

The 10-year-old tournament, previously known as the Harris Teeter Pepsi Challenge, has struggled at the gate. The two-day tournament at the 24,042-seat Charlotte Coliseum drew an average of fewer than 16,000 fans last year.

This year's tournament will feature the University of North Carolina, University of South Carolina, College of Charleston and Old Dominion University.