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### *It started as a sweetheart story.*

In June of 1979, a Chapel Hill grad named Rick Ray, then an employee of Charlotte's WCCB, got together with Dee (his future wife), then selling billboards. Both were basketball fans, ACC basketball fans, in particular, and they knew there were more fans like themselves out there who'd enjoy seeing more basketball games televised. They approached officials at North Carolina, University of South Carolina, and Virginia Tech, asking, "Do you have any games you'd like to see on the air?" Raycom Sports was born.

B Y S T A N S I S K & R E N É E W R I G H T

**S**tarting with a half dozen games that first year, Raycom, with partner Jefferson-Pilot, eventually acquired the rights to every ACC men's basketball game. "People think ACC when they think Raycom," says executive VP Ken Haines. "But we're involved in a lot of events in addition to the ACC." In fact, Raycom's entrepreneurial spirit and ability to acquire rights to sporting events, then find sponsors to fund the events, completely changed the face of sports marketing as it exists today. "One of the strengths of the company is our ability to obtain major sponsorships," Haines says. "People don't realize that we sold the title sponsorship that created the Tostitos Fiesta Bowl." Haines, with Raycom since 1982, specializes in product acquisition and contract negotiations with colleges, athletic conferences and major television networks.

Besides matching Frito-Lay with the Fiesta Bowl, these sports marketers paired Fieldcrest Cannon with the LPGA, DIRECTV with the Great Eight, Pepsi with the NC/SC challenge tournament and Carquest Auto Parts with the Carquest Bowl. In fact, Raycom owns and operates the Carquest Bowl, an annual football contest pitting the Big East #3 against the ACC #4 at South Florida University's Pro Players Stadium. The bowl is televised by Turner Sports.

*The logistics of such a feat seem daunting but Raycom has plenty of experience. In the last 18 years, it produced and distributed more than 10,000 live sporting events.*

PaineWebber sponsors college basketball games all over the country on ABC—games produced, scheduled and marketed by Raycom. "If you see a college basketball game on ABC, it's Raycom," Haines says. One week last December, Raycom Sports staged three major college hoops tournaments: The Great Eight in Chicago's United Center, the D.C. Children's Classic in Washington, and the Harris Teeter Pepsi challenge in Charlotte.

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#### A Game of Its Own

Haines identifies the staging and coverage of events as one of the company's current growth areas. The idea of owning its own ballgames is clearly one that appeals to Raycom Sports' management. They recently brought the first major college game to Ericsson Stadium, pitting East Carolina and North Carolina State in a well-attended match.

The secret of Raycom's success, according to Haines, is its ability to "get on the crest of the wave before the networks get interested." Two peaking trends: golf and

women's sports. "We've noticed a growing popularity for women's sports, both in attendance and events on TV," Haines says. "And Tiger Woods' run at the Masters pushed the interest in golf over the edge."

Raycom capitalizes on both trends with a growing presence in the LPGA. The company stepped in to "rescue" the endangered Fieldcrest Cannon Classic held at Lake Norman last fall, and owns and stages LPGA events in Alabama and Sacramento, CA. The company plans for its involvement to increase.

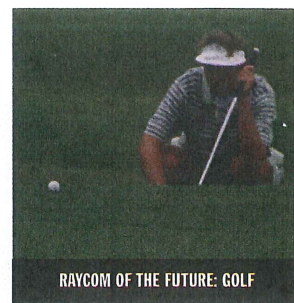
Another growth area for Raycom lies in weekly syndicated shows. In August, 1997, it launched "More Than A Game" focusing on positive and inspirational human-interest stories in sports. "We decided to do a show on the 49 team members who are doing good rather than the one that's in trouble," Haines says. "No one else was doing that." Another syndicated Raycom show combines the growing interest in NASCAR with the need for quality "kids programming," teaming Kyle Petty with two teens who solve racing and engineering problems with their computer.

Thanks to its vast network of television station contacts, Raycom gets a lot of calls to distribute programs produced by others. Last year, it distributed "Ditka Live," Tennessee Oiler pre-season games, CIAA basketball and out of market Texas Rangers Major League Baseball. "Journey of the African Athlete" reached 83% of the country thanks to Raycom's efforts.

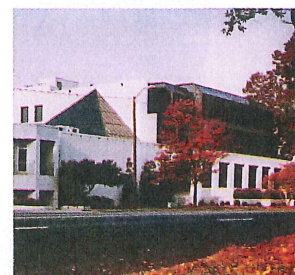
And it's not all sports. Raycom also distributed Southern Living Magazine's Christmas special and sent "Elvis: His Life and Times," a special aired on the 25th anniversary of his death, out to 95% of the nation.

#### Road to the Title

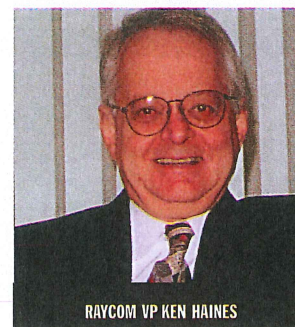
Cooperation seems to be a Raycom strong suit. Its road to success is paved with "sweetheart deals" that give it a unique place on today's sports scene. Foremost among them is the 50/50 ACC partnership with Jefferson-Pilot,



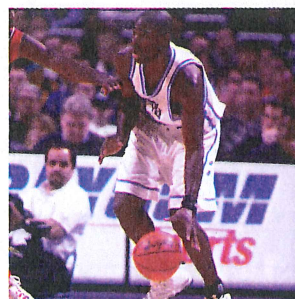
RAYCOM OF THE FUTURE: GOLF



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**NIBLOCK**

## kings of the court continues

an association dating from the company's earliest years and still going strong today.

"We realized we needed a strong business partner for the ACC deal," Haines says. "Jefferson-Pilot from Greensboro was the ideal match. We own the ACC rights 50/50 and it's been that way for 16 years. They do the production, we manage, schedule, and handle advertising sales and station relations."

Another coup for the company is the recent joint venture involving Raycom, Jefferson-Pilot and the ACC in ACC Properties, a lucrative marketing and promotions arm for one of the nation's most marketable athletic conferences.

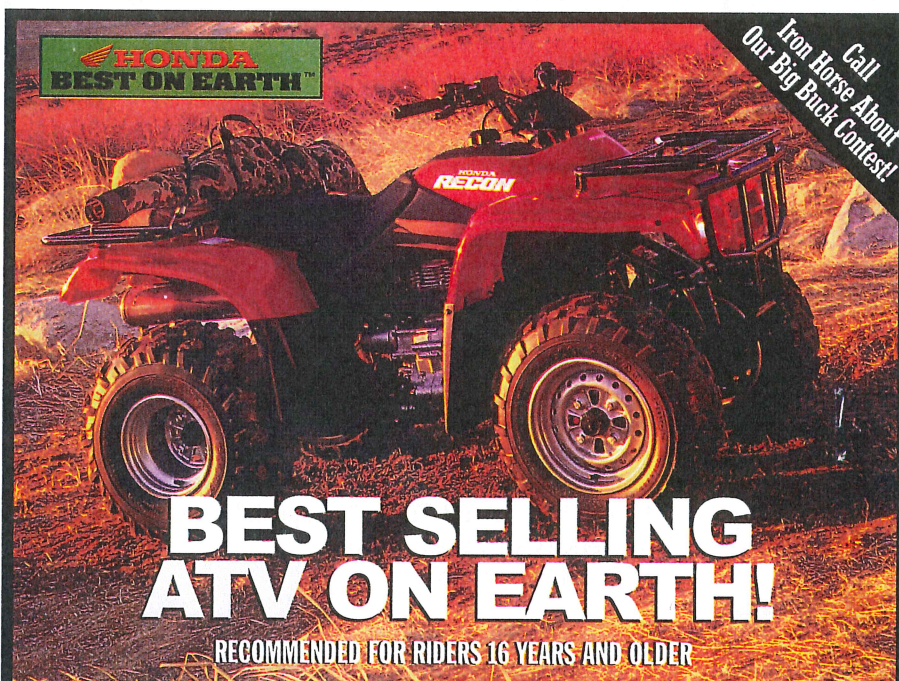
When Raycom Sports was acquired by an Alabama-based multi-billion dollar company owning television and radio stations in 16 states, the media giant took Raycom's name, becoming Raycom Media, Inc., capitalizing on the equity built up in the Raycom image.

## Cheers for the Home Team

Despite its national interests and Alabama ownership, Raycom Sports remains a Charlotte-based company. Corporate headquarters are on East Blvd. in the Dilworth neighborhood. "We've been fortunate to be based in Charlotte," Haines says. "Charlotte and Raycom have grown hand-in-hand." Today, the company has a lot of offices, opened as Raycom expanded into new markets and added conferences to its schedule.

"We needed a strong presence in New York, to give us the kind of sales we needed to meet our obligations, so our first office was there," Haines says. "As we added conferences, the Big 10, the Southwest Conference, the Big 8, we opened offices in Chicago and Dallas. When we got the PAC-10, we needed an office in L.A. And we have a Ft. Lauderdale office to handle the Carquest Bowl. But we are still a Charlotte-based company and always will be. The ACC is still our bread and butter."

"At one time, bringing in the North Carolina basketball team was the biggest show in town. Now we have professional sports teams and we've had to diversify. But NC basketball is still a draw here—especially this year."



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