

A vertical photograph on the left side of the page shows a man from the chest up, wearing a grey t-shirt. He is holding a clear plastic water bottle above his head with his right hand, and a stream of water is falling from the bottle onto his face. He has his eyes closed and a slight smile, appearing to enjoy the water. The background is a soft-focus green, suggesting an outdoor setting.

Net Work

Twenty-five years ago, a new area in ACC television began.

by Jerry Ratcliffe

Ken Haines remembers the first broadcast of ACC basketball under the Raycom Sports and Jefferson Pilot banner 25 years ago as if it were yesterday.

Having purchased the rights from the highly respected C.D. Chesley, the new Raycom/JP partnership had promoted its very first telecast as a new era in ACC television. Hyped as Virginia's Ralph Sampson versus Duke and the new 3-point shot, it was a highly anticipated matchup.

The very first broadcast, slated for 9 p.m. on Dec. 8, 1982, however, nearly didn't make it on the air.

The new company began to sweat earlier in the evening when the "CBS Evening News" reported that a man had driven a truck onto the lawn of the Washington Monument and had threatened to blow up the landmark

the Washington Monument. The truck flipped over and there were no explosives. CBS concluded its coverage and the maiden voyage of Raycom/JP made it on air with overwhelming success.

The brush with disaster was closer than the game. Virginia won 104-91.

While the company intentionally low-keyed its silver anniversary with the ACC ("We didn't want to overplay it," Haines said), an uninterrupted quarter century later, Raycom/Lincoln Financial remains proud of its unique relationship with the conference and has stayed on top of technology, such as bringing this weekend's ACC Tournament to viewers in high definition.

Commissioner John Swofford said, "Both Raycom and Lincoln Financial understand the effort it takes to be a part of a true partnership that was built with

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unless he was assured there would be an end to nuclear weapons.

Haines realized that if CBS stayed with the story through the evening it could spell disaster for the new company's maiden voyage.

"I was already wondering if I could get my old job back," said Haines, now president and CEO of Raycom Sports. "I was sure that this could be the end of Raycom/Jefferson televising ACC games. I never remembered C.D. Chesley not televising a scheduled ACC game and here we were about to miss our very first game."

Fate intervened, and 10 minutes prior to tip-off, the truck driver roared toward

the Atlantic Coast Conference over 25 years ago. From its beginning, under the leadership of Rick Ray and Jim Babb to today's leaders of Ken Haines and Ed Hull, all have been terrific people to work with and be involved with from the conference perspective. From a business model, the long term nature of the partnership between Raycom/Lincoln Financial and the ACC is extraordinary. In a world where many conference regional syndication agreements simply no longer exist, we are proud of our relationship that has stood for the past 25 years."

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