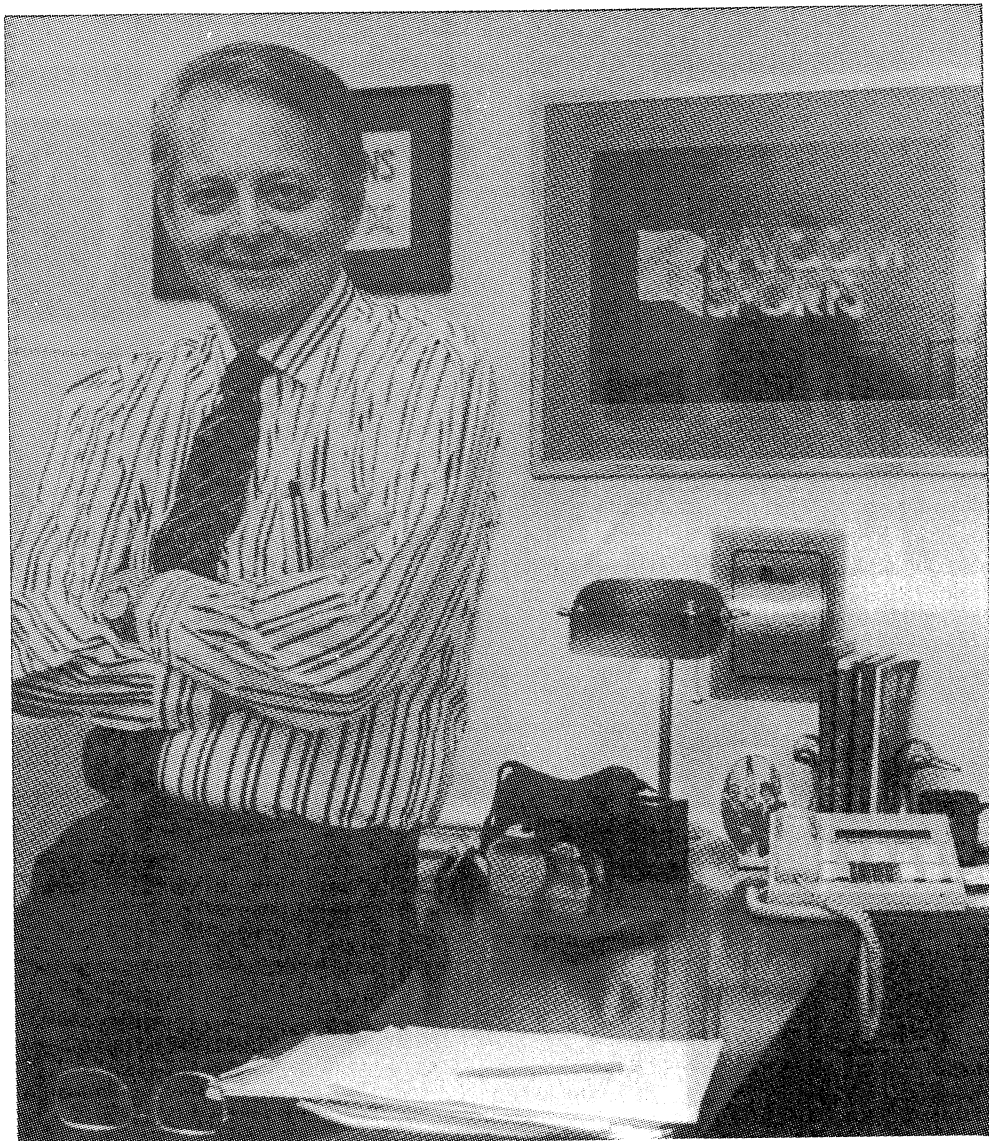


Sports

Power broker: Raycom official brings unique perspective to his job



Raycom's Ken Haines

James Parker/News & Record

SCHOLARLY BACKGROUND BIG PLUS

● Ken Haines may be the most powerful man in college athletics you never heard of.

BY WILT BROWNING
Staff Writer

CHARLOTTE — A decade and a half ago, on slow days in the public affairs office at Virginia Tech, Ken Haines used to wonder where he would be when he was, say, 40 years old.

"University president," he concluded, "which I clearly believed could happen. That's what you do late at night when you're working with the student newspaper or the yearbook or you're working at the student radio station."

Instead, Haines, now 50 and the executive vice president of Raycom Inc., the dominant sports television syndicator in the nation, has become one of the most powerful men in college athletics. He's a major force in a company that last year generated more than \$65 million in gross sales and, he says, is certain to shatter that record by year's end. Raycom's most important product is college athletics. It once was its only product.

Even after more than 10 years with Raycom, Haines still looks the part of the university president he never became. He is trim and bespectacled, with neatly styled salt-and-pepper hair and a corporate gray suit.

Though Raycom this fall will move into new quarters, at present his is a modest office in a Trade Street building that once was home to a law firm.

A signed and numbered Wayland Moore print hangs on the wall back of his uncluttered desk and visitors sit around a large coffee table.

Missing from his walls are most of the diplomas he once was collecting like so many trading cards en route to a university presidency. He holds degrees in economics and sociology and has taken graduate courses in journalism. He also received a master's degree in education communication.

He needs only to complete his dissertation to receive his doctorate in education administration from Virginia Tech, a project that has been on hold for a decade.

So successful has Haines become as a television executive that he no

longer plans to become a university president.

Still, except in the inner circles of college athletic departments and in the board rooms of the slice of corporate America that hitches advertising budgets to college athletics, Haines is a virtual unknown. He never became a sports nut.

"Oh, I do have one passion in sports — the Washington Redskins," Haines confesses. As a teenager growing up in Northern Virginia, Haines became a member of the Redskins Marching Band "just as a ticket to get into the games," he says.

Having yielded his fourth trumpet chair in the Redskins band a long time ago, Haines is the man hand-picked by Rick and Dee Ray more than a decade ago to run their budding empire, though he twice put off the invitation from the young husband-and-wife team before accepting. "I once told them that when they signed a contract with the ACC, to call me back and

I'd go to work for them," Haines says. "I thought that would be the end of that. They called me a year later and told me they'd just landed the ACC package and wanted to know when I could report to work."

"Why'd we hire Ken?" Rick Ray asks rhetorically, then laughs. "Because he's the only man we'd ever known whose strongest word was 'Jeepers!'"

"We thought he was a straightforward person, he has a good business sense, he's very, very organized and he did a very good job for the radio package at Virginia Tech. Anybody who can do all that has to be impressive. He has not disappointed us."

The Raycom empire grew quickly, catapulting Haines to the top of his new profession. He more than anyone else controls college athletics on television. If it's college football or basketball you want on the tube, Haines is your man.

And therein lies an intriguing irony.

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THE RAYCOM EMPIRE

This fall and winter, Raycom will handle scheduling, production and marketing of all college basketball games seen on ABC-TV.

Here is a list of other property rights owned by the company as of early August:

BASKETBALL



Atlantic Coast Conference, Big Eight, Big Ten, Metro Conference, PAC-10, Southwest Conference, ACC Sports Center, Diet Pepsi Tournament of Champions, University of Iowa coach's show, Big Ten Women's Basketball Preview, Basketball Dream Teams.

FOOTBALL



The Kickoff Classic, Disneyland Pigskin Classic, Freedom Bowl, Blockbuster Bowl, Alamo Bowl, Southwest Conference, the University of Iowa football coach's show, Houston Oilers pre-season, "The Jack Pardee Show" for the Houston Oilers.

OTHER PRODUCTIONS



The television special "The Making of 'It's a Wonderful Life,'" Raycom Baseball Network, Raycom Production Services, Big Ten Women's Sports Magazine, Naismith Awards, NASCAR Legends, NASCAR Super Stars.

In addition, Raycom is expected to formalize contracts with the Elvis Presley estate for a five-year series of promotions and a contract with an undisclosed major-league baseball team for the creation of regional radio and television networks.

Bill Bailey/News & Record

Sports programming has no limits in future

● Elvis productions? College women athletes with their own cable network? Here's a glimpse of the future as Ken Haines sees it.

BY WILT BROWNING
Staff Writer

CHARLOTTE — Raycom has come a long way since Ken Haines' first experience there more than 11 years ago and an even greater distance from 1979 when Rick and Dee Ray wound up their first year of operation with \$16 in cash.

"There were only a few of us when I first joined the company," Haines says. "Rick and Dee, Dee's sister Ann, me and some clerical help. And when you're that small, you do a little of everything."

Haines' first assignment was to visit a Washington television station in an attempt to clear time for ACC telecasts.

"I told the receptionist I had an appointment," he says, "and she asked who she should say was waiting. And I told her that I'm Ken Haines of Raycom Sports."

"Oh, no," she says. "Not another one of those fly-by-night sports syndicators. You'll have to wait."

"I had just come from being a respected member of the university (Virginia Tech) community," he says with a laugh, "and all of a sudden I was the lowest of people, lower than a used-car salesman. And I realized at the time that the

industry had a credibility problem. "But she was right in a way."

Regional entertainment packages don't get much interest, but the strength of sports programming is regional because people want to see the teams that matter most to them. ☉

Ken Haines,
Raycom official

There were a lot of us syndicators in 1981," he says, calling off a list of names of companies no longer in business. "We're about the only ones left standing."

And Raycom is left standing so well that in mid-October the work force of 70 to 80 people will move out of the cramped quarters on East Trade Street and into a new building that will provide almost four times as much office space. "We're growing," Haines, the company's executive vice president, says proudly. "It wouldn't surprise me if we don't at least double the size of our staff in the next two to three years."

The growth will come, he said, even though Raycom has come close to reaching the limit on college sports marketing.

Already, Raycom has embarked upon an expansion away from the

sports market to entertainment. The company soon will launch a five-year relationship with the Elvis Presley estate for a series of productions, just one example of Raycom's new non-sports diversification.

Still, Haines says, college athletics is the company's foundation and Raycom is exploring other marketing options involving the college game.

"We see more growth in women's sports," says Haines, noting that the University of Washington women's basketball team last season drew more fans than its male counterpart. "I wouldn't be surprised to see a cable channel for nothing but women's sports."

College baseball is a field that is likely to develop into a major TV venture in coming years. "We're also exploring ways fans who like to follow a particular team can follow it all through the season," Haines says. "For example, Wake Forest fans could follow all their teams on a certain cable channel — baseball, football, basketball, tennis, all the sports for men and women."

"That's the way sports is different from other entertainment opportunities. Regional entertainment packages don't get

much interest, but the strength of sports programming is regional because people want to see the teams that matter most to them."

"And we now believe that is no longer confined only to football and men's basketball."

Even the failures were valuable lessons for Raycom's staff

● Failed ventures have a place of honor at Raycom.

CHARLOTTE — Along one wall in the modest office of Ken Haines, Raycom's executive vice president, are framed color photos of Moscow. A colorful "Glasnost Bowl" knit shirt has a special place under glass near the company's board room.

Occupying a prominent space along a corridor is a poster promoting "Season Ticket," an ACC pay-per-view TV experiment from the

early '80s.

Neither Season Ticket nor the Glasnost Bowl became realities for the TV syndication company that has a long history of successes.

"We weren't successful in making people understand that with Season Ticket we weren't asking them to pay for games they already were going to get on television anyway," Haines says. "They were to be telecasts of games that were not scheduled to be a part of the regional package."

"So that didn't fly."

Neither did the Glasnost Bowl, an early-season matchup to be played in Moscow between Southern Cal and Illinois in 1989.

"Things were changing so rapidly in what was the Soviet Union when we were trying to tie down all

the details that we'd make arrangements for a hotel to house one of the teams," Haines says. "Then we'd go back a week or two later and there'd be somebody else running the hotel and they didn't have any idea what we were talking about. It became too uncertain and we had cancel our plans."

Still, the Glasnost Bowl and Season Ticket are remembered with amusement, if not fondness, in Raycom's executive suites.

"We could have pushed those plans back into the files and pretended they never happened," Haines says, "but we keep the memories very visible because we learned so much from them. They were very valuable experiences for us in their own ways."

As the liaison between the office of the president and the athletic department at Virginia Tech through the late '70s and early '80s, Haines used to fret over the relationship between athletics and academics. And he spent time seeking to strike a reasonable balance between the entertainment value of college football and basketball in particular and the mission of universities.

That, too, became important to the Rays. "We'd spent time on the university campus and understood the need to protect the student," Rick Ray says. "There's a lot of politics and a lot of things that go on on a college campus that have significance that most businessmen wouldn't relate to. But Ken understands those things and how they work and that's very important."

The Rays-Haines team has been very profitable for college athletics. By the time the final rights fees for the 1992-93 college football and basketball seasons are in the mail, the total Raycom payments to colleges and universities since its founding will total almost \$250 million.

And even *that* figure is likely to be dwarfed over the next decade. Raycom not only owns the rights to most of NCAA Division I athletics and produces game telecasts; now it manages and markets a huge portion of college athletics. "They now own the games," says ACC Associate Commissioner Tom Mickle.

So successful have Haines and Raycom been in sports TV that the company owns TV basketball and football rights to six of the eight major-college conferences. Star of the Raycom stable still is the ACC, the first to sign on more than 10 years ago. The only two major conferences not now under contract to Raycom are the Big East and the Southeastern.

In addition, Raycom holds the rights to the Freedom Bowl and owns both the Blockbuster Bowl and the Alamo Bowl.

Both football kickoff games — the Kickoff Classic played in the New Jersey Meadowlands and the Disneyland Pigskin Classic in Anaheim, Calif. — are properties of Raycom and the company schedules, produces and markets all college basketball games on ABC through a unique relationship with the network. The Raycom-ABC marriage is the first of its kind and is one in which the network in 1991 accepted Raycom's offer of \$1.8

million to clear time and provide the in-booth talent for 26 nationally televised college basketball games while Raycom handled the marketing and production of all college games shown on ABC — and took in the profits. This year, the Raycom-ABC basketball package is expected to include 36 games.

In 1992-93 Raycom will produce more than 330 college basketball games shown on stations covering at least 80 percent of the nation. It also will supply another 103 games to national and cable networks. Through regional and national telecasts combined, Raycom-produced college basketball games are available to 99 percent of the television sets in the nation, Haines says.

So complete is Raycom's — and thus Haines' — influence upon the college game that conferences such as the ACC no longer negotiate rights fees with the big three television networks. Raycom does.

In the case of the ACC and most other conferences, Raycom even plays a major role in the matchup of teams, and game dates and times.

"And that's sometimes a difficult thing, especially for me," Haines says. "As a former university administrator who was concerned about such things, I can empathize with university administrators who are reluctant to have games played at a certain time for TV."

"I have for some time felt that the basic sponsorships TV relies on so heavily need to be carefully controlled. For example, I am convinced we need to be very careful about beer advertisements on telecasts of college games because as a former university administrator, I fully appreciate the problem alcohol has become on the college campus."

"Conversely, I also know that you can't have your cake and eat it, too. Everybody needs money and wants money more and more, and if games are not played at certain times they may not be worth as much money."

"Look, we've got a business to run," Rick Ray says. "But we know there are times we've got to step back, too. These are *kids* who are performing and we have to keep that in mind. When you see a kid seven feet, two inches who can run like a gazelle, you say 'Hey! He's fully grown.' But you have to remember that, mentally and socially, he's still growing."

The fact that that the Rays and Haines have that understanding,

says the ACC's Mickle, is one of the key elements in the company's unusual and profitable relationship with college athletics.

The Rays and Haines provide the money and the ingenuity that has made Raycom the most-recognized survivor of the era in the early 1980s that produced a dozen or more TV production companies.

"We focused on sales from a business perspective," Rick Ray says. "Lots of companies focused on production. But if you can't sell it, it does no good to produce it."

"We invested heavily in people. Other people invested in equipment. We found out we could rent the equipment. We didn't go out and buy a television station. We found out we could buy the time."

Raycom's college telecasts are handled, Haines says, with an appreciation for the concerns of college administrators.

"I think it is unique that Rick and Dee Ray chose someone from university administration background for this job," Haines says.

"And that is healthy. We have many discussions about what we should and should not ask a school to do and they are discussions that conferences and individual schools sometimes never hear about. It is not unusual for us to consider a concept that involves perhaps an unusual starting time and we will say to ourselves that if we had a son or daughter involved, we wouldn't want the school doing that. And when that happens, we don't even make the request that might be in the best interest of television at the time."

Apparently, the approach has been successful.

"We can tell them we can't do certain things, and they always understand," says the ACC's Mickle.

It is a relationship that Haines cherishes.

"There is nothing like that Saturday afternoon when the stadium is filled with faculty members, students, cafeteria workers and alumni and they're all there together cheering and talking and yelling," Haines says. "That's what I think about when I sit back and wonder if I'm doing anything of value for society down the road. And I think about bringing what happens in that stadium on Saturday afternoon into thousands of living rooms and to thousands of people who otherwise would not know what that's about."

"And I say to myself, 'This is probably good.'"