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Raycom, Capitol give hoops the big picture in HDTV debut

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College basketball entered the age of high-definition TV at a tournament in Charlotte this month in a partnership between Capitol Broadcasting Co., Harris Corp. and Raycom Sports Inc.

The Food Lion MVP Classic, played Dec. 3 and 4 at Charlotte Coliseum, aired on about 30 HDTV stations. The University of North Carolina, College of Charleston, Princeton University and the University of Nevada at Las Vegas participated in the tournament, which is managed by Raycom.

"This started at the national broadcasters' meeting in New Orleans," said Ken Haines, Raycom chief operating officer. "That got the ball rolling, and we just kept going from there."

High-definition TV, which allows viewers to see much wider expanses on their screens with heightened clarity, is a fledgling technology. Most HDTV sets cost \$5,000 and up.

Capitol Broadcasting and partner Har-

ris had been seeking a sporting event to broadcast in HDTV for some time. Capitol, through its Raleigh-based TV station WRAL's digital unit, built an HDTV production truck this year to prepare for the broadcast. Raycom, TV syndicator of the tournament, granted free rights for the HDTV broadcast in exchange for a role in the partnership. The companies promoted the college basketball breakthrough by placing several HDTV sets in the coliseum for media representatives and others to see the technology at work.

"Sports is a unique property that will help sell high-definition TV," said Neal Pilson, Pilson Communications Inc. president. "It's a much more emotional experience, and it's something that sports fans haven't seen before."

Several teams and networks have experimented with high-definition TV in recent years. For example, the New York Knicks, Rangers and Yankees have all home games broadcast in HDTV by Madison Square Garden Network.