

SPORTS BARTER: HOLDING ITS OWN

By Peter Lambert

Syndicated sports programming—ranging from live college and professional games to highlight packages and the sports-entertainment hybrid known as pro wrestling—is holding its own, accounting for an estimated \$100 million to \$120 million in national ad sales revenues in a shrinking over-the-air barter universe in 1991.

As Basil DeVito Jr., senior vice president for World Wrestling Federation, puts it, "I'm sure *Wheel of Fortune* would rather be selling at the 17 rating they had several years ago, and we'd rather be selling at 13. But we're both still top five. We haven't been immune to the growth of choices for consumers, but we've been able to fare well and hold our relative position in the market."

Raycom Sports and Entertainment, Charlotte, N.C., king of live syndicated sports, has based its barter strategy on selling national and regional advertisers spots across aggregated regional college sports packages—most notably basketball, including Big Ten, Big Eight, Metro, PAC-10, Southwest Conference and ACC conference packages.

Raycom Executive Vice President Ken Haines suggests his ability to sell to regional, as well as national, advertisers explains why Raycom sales have been less hard hit by the economic downturn than those in overall syndication. In fact, he says, "with the increased number of channels and pressure on stations to distinguish themselves, regional sports is all the more attractive."

But sports barter has suffered some attrition. Phoenix Communications Group has struggled—mainly because advertisers are finding good buys in prime time—but maintained clearances for *This Week in Baseball* and other MLB Productions and NHL Productions packages, says Peggy White, vice president of sales and syndication. Although stations still see the programs as live sports lead-in money-makers, she says, competition from infomercial producers "is the thing we see as most alarming." Nevertheless,

she sees an upturn in 1992, thanks to an exciting 1991 World Series.

Other sports syndicators, such as NBA Entertainment, NFL Films, GGP Sports in Corte Madera, Calif., and ProServ Inc. in Arlington, Va., continue to hold their specialist niches on local TV.

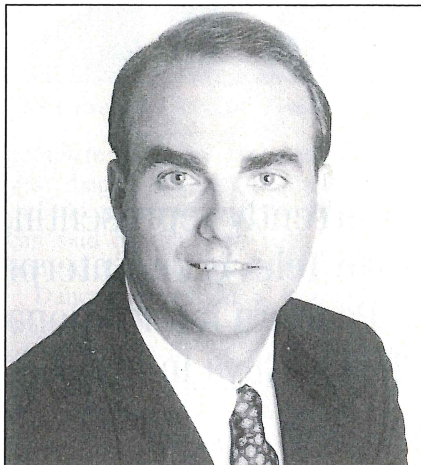
Total Video Inc. barter entertainment programming, such as Muller Media product. It counts about 450 na-

tional buyers of spots in history and highlights programs, such as *Greatest Sports Legends* and *PGA Gold Almanac*. Up and down since a tough fourth quarter in 1990, says Jon Feller, executive vice president, the company experienced a solid first-quarter 1992 and sees signs that CPM's could rise back to a healthy \$3-\$4 per 1,000 homes in the second quarter this year. ■

WHO'S WHO IN THE BARTER GAME

The universe of barter sales companies is diverse. The top 10 do well over half the business, but smaller companies may have programming equally attractive to certain advertisers. Unlike their network and cable counterparts, those selling barter time have to contend with uncertain station clearances. Thus, until the summer's selling season they may not be completely certain which shows will be available to advertisers. No one knows or agrees on how many barter sales companies there are, but the companies profiled here account for over 90% of all non-sports barter. They vary from one-person shops to large sales organizations, but in purpose they are more alike than different.

Come autumn, **Buena Vista** is bringing out *Roseanne* the sitcom on a cash-plus-barter basis. Also available for fall is *Matlock* on an all-barter basis, and Buena Vista brings out *Empty Nest*, another highly rated sitcom, in



Buena Vista's Mark Zoradi

1993, on both all barter and cash plus barter, according to senior vice president/general manager, Mark Zoradi. Buena Vista also has plans to spin off its two-hour "Disney Afternoon." *Ducktales* is moving to a morning weekday strip, with 2½ minutes of barter first through third quarter, and two minutes in the fourth quarter. *Chip 'n' Dale*, *Talespin* and *Darkwing Duck* will remain as part of the "Disney Afternoon" and will be joined by *Goof Troop*. All four strips offer three minutes for first through third quarter, and two minutes for fourth quarter.

Camelot was started by King World Productions in 1984 to handle barter spots for its programming, which currently includes the three top-ranked barter shows: *Wheel of Fortune*, *Jeopardy* and *Oprah Winfrey*. The division, headed by President Steve Hirsch, also handles barter sales for a number of other shows, including

61st YEAR

FIRST IN TELEVISION CABLE RADIO SATELLITE

1992 □ \$2.95

- HIS OWN MAN: THE OUTGOING BARRY DILLER / 4
- NATPE, INTV TO COMBINE CONVENTIONS IN '93 / 20
- FIRST WEEK FOR TVB'S NEW PRESIDENT / 36

See

Success Runs In The Family.



FULL HOUSE

The #1
New Off-Network
Strip Of '91-'92!

M/B

Miller-Boyet

PRODUCTIONS

LORIMAR

TELEVISION



Family Matters

Available
On An All Barter
Basis For Fall '93!



WARNER BROS.
DOMESTIC TELEVISION
DISTRIBUTION
A Time Warner Company

***** 5-DIGIT 28226
#012996895#P OCT92 BR102
K HAINES
5361 FIVE KNOLLS DR
CHARLOTTE NC 28226 207

A CAHNS PUBLICATION
**SPECIAL REPORT
BARTER 1992**
Vol. 122 No. 10