

# Raycom Sports Company History

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## Founding

The history of Raycom Sports dates to June 19, 1979 when it was founded.<sup>(1)</sup> It has become one of the most widely recognized names in sports television.

Televised college sports was confined in 1979 to a Saturday football game on ABC, weekend basketball games on NBC and some regionally televised conference basketball packages. The most notable being C.D. Chesley's production<sup>(2)</sup> of Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC) games on a syndicated network of east coast television stations.<sup>(3)</sup> ESPN, established in September 1979, was new and satellite transmission for cable network programs was in its infancy.

Also in 1979, [Rick Ray](#), a 30 year-old television program manager with WCCB-TV in Charlotte, NC decided that there was more interest in college basketball on television than was being provided by the networks or local television stations. When WCCB disagreed with his concept for producing more basketball games, Ray then left the station.<sup>(4)</sup>



**Rick and Dee Ray in 1981 in their office at Raycom Sports, which they founded on June 19, 1979**

He and his partner, [Dee Birke](#) who owned and operated an advertising agency, traveled to Alaska to produce the Sea Wolf Classic, a tournament Ray later renamed the Great Alaska Shootout.<sup>(5)(6)</sup> Thus began a career of buying rights to games, and producing, syndicating and selling commercials to cover expenses. The company was named Raycom, short for Ray Communications.

Following the success of their first project, Ray and Birke embarked on a mission to acquire the television rights to the prestigious ACC. Raycom's goal was to be a sports TV Network that could rival that of [C.D. Chesley and NBC](#). In 1980, Raycom obtained the local television rights to the two largest universities within the ACC region, but not a part of the conference: Virginia Tech and the University of South Carolina.<sup>(7)</sup> Raycom also telecast a five game ACC package including the Iron Duke Classic.<sup>(8)</sup> Rick Ray and Dee Birke were married in 1980.

Raycom's success with those universities and selected games from other local schools, most notably the University of North Carolina, provided experience and expertise for the company to bid for the rights to the ACC. The C.D. Chesley Company paid \$600,000 for ACC basketball television rights for the 1979-1980 season. They agreed to pay the ACC \$1 million for the 1980-81 season, but the ACC bought out the Chesley agreement and accepted a \$3.75 million offer from MetroSports of Rockville, Md.<sup>(9)</sup> In a joint venture, Raycom and Capitol Broadcasting of Raleigh, N.C., as well as several other syndication networks including Jefferson-Pilot Sports, submitted unsuccessful bids.

After the 1980-81 season, the ACC rejected a bid by Metrosports to renew their contract. Raycom Sports and Jefferson-Pilot Sports formed a 50/50 joint venture, Raycom/JP, and submitted a bid.<sup>(9)</sup> The ACC was impressed with the two Charlotte companies working together and accepted the Raycom/JP bid,<sup>(9)</sup> a three-year, \$18 million contract which provided the ACC with rights fees of \$5, \$6 and \$7 million over the next three years. Raycom/JP also launched ACC Sports Center, which aired before each regional telecast.<sup>(10)</sup>



Ken Haines on air for Virginia Tech in 1978

Ken Haines was hired before the start of the first ACC telecast season. As executive to the president at Virginia Tech and the University's public affairs spokesperson,<sup>(11)(12)</sup> Haines brought university experience into the company.<sup>(13)</sup>

## Building the Brand



Fred White and Billy Packer announced the first season of Raycom ACC games, including the first game on December 8, 1982

Virginia at Duke on Wednesday, December 8, 1982 at 9pm<sup>(14)</sup> was the first Raycom ACC conference telecast and featured announcers Fred White and Billy Packer.<sup>(15)</sup> The sponsors on that first telecast included Piedmont Airlines, Belk-Leggett Stores, Budweiser/Natural Light, Chrysler, NCNB, Mazda, Holiday Inn, Hardee's and Jefferson Pilot Life Insurance. The second year included sponsors such as Food Lion, who remains an active ACC Corporate Partner.<sup>(3)</sup> In just two short years, Raycom had become a major force in college sports television.

In 1983, Don McGuire,<sup>(16)</sup> a senior producer from NBC Sports, was hired and a year later, Wayne Spransy, a Charlotte CPA, was brought into the company. For the next five years, the company had Rick Ray acquiring new products, Dee Ray selling advertising, McGuire producing games, Spransy handling finances and Haines scheduling games and managing operations.

Raycom/JP games were distributed to stations over landlines leased from AT&T. Stations released their telco lines that received ABC, CBS and NBC programming to be able to obtain the ACC games. After the games, the lines were returned to the stations so they could receive their network programming.<sup>(17)</sup>

The 1982-83 season found Raycom/JP and ESPN launching a pay cable network of ACC basketball games titled "Season Ticket".<sup>(18)</sup> The controversial project angered fans,<sup>(19)</sup> prompted lawsuits and legislation,<sup>(20)</sup> and experienced distribution problems. It eventually failed, however it was the forerunner of the first pay cable package of more than just a single event.<sup>(21)</sup>



Graphic used in 1983 for controversial first TV pay package of college games in a unique Raycom/ESPN/ACC concept.

In March, 1984, the ACC extended the Raycom/JP television contract through the 1990 season.<sup>(22)</sup> A four year extension was then announced in 1988.<sup>(23)</sup> And in 1994, another extension was announced through the 2001 season.<sup>(24)</sup>

The syndicated Raycom model for televised college sports events was different from traditional syndication techniques and it distinguished the company from its competitors.<sup>(1)</sup>

From the start, Raycom had a unique business model. Instead of sharing equal advertising inventory with television stations, the company paid monetary compensation to each station in exchange for controlling almost all of the advertising minutes in each telecast. In that manner, advertisers could not have their messages in a Raycom game unless they purchased the time from Raycom. The company was able to generate more revenue by controlling almost all of the advertising.<sup>(6)</sup>



1987 view of original monitoring room with TV's bringing in ACC, SWC, Big 8, Pac-10 and Metro games

Another unique business technique was pioneered when Raycom established a central monitoring system within the company headquarters.<sup>(25)</sup> Employees documented each commercial and the time it was aired. They also communicated with each station's control room during the game to ensure that the game was being telecast completely with all commercials airing. The following day, advertisers would know the number of commercials and the markets in which they had aired during a respective game. This facilitated billing.

Raycom developed a customized "traffic" system that placed commercials into program and production logs that guaranteed advertisers separation from competitive commercials and assured that the commercial was aired in a different game location in each telecast. The system handled hundreds of games each season and as many as 14 games on a single weekend.

Raycom's growth was based on the philosophy that local teams playing on local television stations would generate larger audiences than other "out of market" teams.<sup>(26)</sup> The plan was to establish several regional networks, each televising local interest games.<sup>(27)</sup> Once established, regional advertisers could show their commercials to just their own region, a group of regions, or a national advertiser could purchase [all the regions](#) at one time. The result was higher ratings for both the regional and national advertisers.<sup>(28)</sup> Raycom's syndicated network of games often garnered higher ratings than many of the most popular nationally-syndicated shows.<sup>(29)</sup>

Raycom used this approach when it secured its first college football rights from Clemson University in 1983. While the NCAA had sanctioned Clemson from having live telecasts of its football games, Raycom ran tape delay broadcasts in syndication and also on ESPN.<sup>(30)</sup>

The Supreme Court in June, 1984, ruled in favor of a lawsuit brought by the University of Oklahoma and the University of Georgia against the NCAA. The court said the NCAA control over television was a violation of antitrust law. Thus, college football television was no longer within the exclusive domain of the NCAA which had resulted in many games being televised exclusively on ABC.<sup>(31)</sup> Immediately, Raycom reached an agreement with the [Southwest Conference](#) to televise an exclusive regional package of football games (1984-1995).<sup>(32)</sup> Raycom, with support from Capitol Broadcasting, had previously reached a deal with the ACC for a football package,<sup>(33)</sup> but it was ultimately awarded to Jefferson-Pilot.



In addition to ACC TV rights, Raycom held rights to the SWC and Big Eight. Those two later merged to form the Big 12

Two years later, Raycom acquired exclusive rights to regional football games of the Big Eight Conference (1985-1993).<sup>(34)(35)</sup> And in June, 1985, Raycom purchased all the sports rights to Katz Sports from Katz Communications, including the Kickoff Classic and Big Eight basketball.<sup>(36)</sup>

By 1988, fewer than ten years after the company was founded, Raycom was producing more than 400-500 events a year<sup>(37)</sup> and was the dominant regional television sports network for college basketball and football.<sup>(38)(39)</sup> In addition to the [ACC](#), [Southwest](#)<sup>(40)</sup> and [Big Eight](#),<sup>(41)</sup> the company held the television rights to the [Pac-10](#) (1987-1995), [PCAA](#) (1985-1987) and [Metro Conference](#) (1985-1995).<sup>(42)</sup> Raycom also secured rights to the [Big Ten](#) (1989-1995) through its acquisition of Rasmussen Communications Management.<sup>(43)</sup>

During this period, the rights fees to these conferences paid by Raycom, with the exception of the ACC, ranged from initial revenue sharing formulas to guaranteed annual fees ranging from \$800,000 to \$3.5 million, depending on the number of games and exclusivity of the package.



Raycom Sports and NACDA staged the Kickoff Classic and the Disneyland Pigskin Classic from 1985-1994

Working with the National Association of Collegiate Directors of Athletics (NACDA), pre-season football games, such as the [Kickoff Classic](#) (1985-1992)<sup>(44)</sup> and later the [Disneyland Pigskin Classic](#) (1990-1994),<sup>(45)</sup> were also televised by Raycom.<sup>(13)</sup> They now co-host events with the College Football Playoff.

In 1989, Raycom formed a joint venture with Prime Network (Liberty) to acquire and distribute programming through broadcast and cable television syndication.<sup>(46)</sup> This allowed cable distribution outside the respective SWC/Big 8 Conference footprint. Also in 1989 Raycom filed a lawsuit against the SWC and Sports Channel America, claiming that Sports Channel was engaging in "intentional interference" with the Raycom/SWC contract and the SWC was in "breach of contract" with its Raycom agreement.<sup>(47)</sup> The suit was settled out of court and Raycom continued to produce and distribute SWC games for another six years until the SWC and Big 8 formed the Big 12.

In 1995, Raycom signed a deal to produce and syndicate select University of Texas football and basketball games during the 1995-96 season.<sup>(48)</sup>

For each telecast, Raycom actively marketed to fans with print and electronic advertising to increase viewership of games. Raycom used both conference-specific and overall [Raycom branding](#) in its [marketing efforts](#).

In addition to broadcasting, Raycom secured title sponsorships to both the Goodyear Pac-10 Basketball Tournament (1988, 1989) and the Phillips 66 Big 8 Basketball Tournament (1988-present). Known as the Phillips 66 Big 12 Basketball Tournament, this is currently the longest-running title sponsorship of any sporting event.<sup>(49)</sup>

Statewide radio networks were established by Raycom for Purdue University, the University of Iowa and the University of Illinois from 1988 through 1990.<sup>(50)</sup> Raycom had experience in operating radio networks when the company managed the Virginia Tech radio network from 1981-1983.<sup>(7)(51)</sup>



In 2008, Tim Brando and Billy Packer announce a Raycom ACC basketball game

From a handful of employees in 1983, Raycom grew within six years to a full-time staff of more than 80 and opened offices in New York, Dallas, Chicago, Los Angeles<sup>(52)</sup> and Ft. Lauderdale. Many well-known sports commentators received their start or worked on Raycom telecasts, including Cory Alexander, Debbie Antonelli, Dave Archer, Dan Bonner, James Brown, Dave Barnett, Jay Bilas, Tim Brando, Tim Brant, Marty Brennaman, Larry Conley, Jack Corrigan, Charles Davis, Jimmy Dykes, Len Elmore, Larry Farmer, Ron Franklin, Terry Gannon, Mike Gminski, Tom Hammond, Kevin Harlan, Merle Harmon, Mike Hogewood, Keith Jackson, Craig James, Paul Kennedy, Kevin Kiley, Steve Martin, Mark May, Bob Neal, Dave Neal, Brad

Nessler, Billy Packer, Mike Patrick, Bill Raftery, Bob Rathbun, Bill Rosinski, Dave Rowe, Roger Twibell, Jim Valvano, Dick Vermeil, Dick Vitale,<sup>(53)</sup> Bill Walton, Tom Werme, Fred White, Bud Wilkinson and Jay Randolph.



Dan Bonner and Tim Brant call a Raycom ACC telecast in 2014

In addition to well-known announcers, many of Raycom's top management were recognized as national leaders in college sports. College Sports magazine in 1994-95 recognized Rick Ray as the 8<sup>th</sup> and Chuck Steedman, director of programming, as the 27<sup>th</sup> most influential people in college sports.<sup>(54)</sup> In 1992, The Sporting News had named Rick Ray as the 48<sup>th</sup> most-influential person in sports. In 2009 The Orlando Sentinel, in their series on the Most Powerful People in College Sports, named Ken Haines as the 4<sup>th</sup> most powerful in the Atlantic Coast Conference.<sup>(55)</sup>

Haines traveled extensively, during this period of accelerated growth, to colleges and conference offices arranging schedules and negotiating contracts with local television stations to carry games. Veteran station programmer Jim Duncan was hired in 1985 to assist Haines before retiring 13 years later. Pat LaPlatney<sup>(56)</sup> was hired in 1989 from the Blair television rep firm, and later was named head of Raycom programming and distribution. He was succeeded by Wil Allmendinger, hired from The Tribune Company in 1997.

In addition to sports programming, the company tried, with only limited success, to produce and syndicate entertainment programs domestically and internationally. Haines and LaPlatney made several trips to Europe, including Cannes, to try and place programming in the international marketplace.<sup>(57)</sup> Raycom prepared sales materials for shows in many different languages (Titanic) to tap the foreign markets (Elvis).

Raycom commanded high unit rates from its regional advertisers and sports revenue grew to over \$60 million per year,<sup>(6)</sup> due in measure to the 1988 hiring of former VP of sales at ABC, Ray Warren. Spransy, who was hired in 1984, managed the sprawling financial assets of the company. In 1987, McGuire left to become head of sports production at Turner Broadcasting and another NBC veteran producer, Peter Rolfe,<sup>(17)</sup> was hired at Raycom. Later, Lynn Thorneburg of Thorlo, Inc. was hired in 1988 to oversee programming.

While Raycom was growing revenues, many sports syndication companies had committed to pay premium rights fees that far exceeded what advertising revenue could be generated. Companies such as Metrosports, TVS, Mizlou, Lorimar, Petry, Total Sports (TSN), Rasmussen Communications Management (RCM), Katz Sports, Sports Productions, Inc. (SPI), Bud Sports, Creative Sports (bought by ESPN) and eventually Jefferson Pilot (later bought by Raycom) all went out of business or were acquired.<sup>(58)</sup> Raycom eventually became the only remaining live sports syndication company.



ESPN logo used on Raycom telecasts of ACC games in 1983

The cornerstone of Raycom programming has always been ACC basketball. In its early history, ESPN relied heavily on the Raycom/JP package of ACC games to help it gain viewers. As cable became more popular during the 80's, and ESPN became the national sports cable network, Raycom began supplying more of its basketball games to ESPN.

New to broadcasting was the practice of "blacking out" regions of the country from a telecast. However, since its inception ESPN has aired ACC games but blacked out the ACC region when the game was also being telecast on the Raycom/JP Network.<sup>(59)</sup>

ACC games were so popular within the ACC region, that many telecasts had ratings in the 20's and 30's.<sup>(60)</sup> The Virginia/UNC basketball game, featuring Michael Jordan and Ralph Sampson, did a 36 rating in Greensboro on February 10, 1983 and a 35 rating in Raleigh. The UNC/Georgia Tech game on February 4, 1986 did a 30 rating in Charlotte and a 31 rating in Raleigh. The UNC/Duke



matchup always does high ratings including a 33 rating in Raleigh for the February 3, 1994 game and a 32 rating in Raleigh on February 1, 2001 and again on February 9, 2005.

Stations frequently would pre-empt the most popular network entertainment programs, since the ACC games would attract larger audiences. One of the most notable pre-emptions occurred on February 4, 1986 when #1 nationally-ranked UNC played #2 ranked Georgia Tech. The game was so popular that almost every Raycom network station from Washington, D.C. to Atlanta chose to pre-empt President Reagan's State of the Union address that night to carry the game. Those stations ran the President's address on tape delay following the game.<sup>(61)(62)</sup>

A forerunner to larger college conferences occurred in 1990<sup>(63)</sup> when Haines and Steedman<sup>(64)</sup> concluded a study for the establishment of a college "super conference."<sup>(65)(66)</sup> It resulted in a major addition in membership to some college conferences and prompted a realignment<sup>(67)</sup> of the Metro Conference into Conference USA. The research<sup>(68)</sup> gained national attention and began a series of studies by all major college conferences on the benefits and liabilities of expansion.<sup>(69)(70)</sup>



In 1990, Raycom developed a comprehensive college "superconference" study that preceded future conference realignment

The CBS television network by 1992 was rapidly becoming the only major over-the-air network that was broadcasting a significant number of college basketball games. NBC had dramatically reduced its schedule, and ABC had decided to exit the college basketball business. It was at this point that Raycom and ABC formed a unique business relationship<sup>(71)(72)</sup> whereby Raycom purchased all the available broadcast time for college basketball from ABC and programmed Raycom games on the ABC network.<sup>(73)(74)</sup> The block purchase of time was regarded as the largest ever to occur on a major network by an outside company. The arrangement proved so successful that during the 1995 season, the Raycom/ABC package of games generated higher ratings than the long-established CBS package.<sup>(75)</sup>

Raycom, to add interest to the ABC games, commissioned country music star Travis Tritt to do a special customized opening, "Whoop it up on the weekend," for the ABC/ACC telecasts.<sup>(76)</sup> Sheet music was given to pep bands so they could play the opening at their games.

In 1992, Raycom syndicated a [rematch of the Michigan-Duke](#) national championship game. The national press speculated it could signal the start of national television syndication in regular season college basketball.<sup>(77)(78)(79)</sup>

Haines and Ed Hull, President of JP Sports, negotiated a new and expanded six-year contract between Raycom/JP Sports and the ACC in 1995 to provide coverage of non-conference men's basketball games, women's basketball games, baseball and championship events. The agreement provided coverage utilizing [regional cable networks](#) including Home Team Sports(HTS), FOX Sports South and the Sunshine Network,<sup>(80)</sup> and later Comcast Regional Sports.

Also in 1995, Raycom and Liberty Sports of Dallas, TX, explored a merger that would have resulted in one of the largest media companies in the country.<sup>(81)</sup> The two companies ultimately couldn't agree to terms, and the deal was abandoned.



Raycom, in a partnership with Capitol Broadcasting, produced the first college basketball game in High Definition in 1999

From past to present Raycom Sports has been visionary in its use of new production techniques. It was the first to use color billboards on all telecasts, the first to distribute games by means of satellite distribution and the first to employ "virtual signage" technology in college basketball and professional golf.<sup>(82)</sup> In a partnership with Capitol Broadcasting, on December 3, 1999 the company was the first to produce a college basketball game in high definition television (HDTV).<sup>(83)</sup> At the 2007 ACC Tournament in Tampa, Raycom produced the first syndicated sports programming in HD.<sup>(84)</sup>

In addition, Raycom was a pioneer with in-stadium instant replay, with producer Johnny Tyous providing video feeds from production trucks to JumboTron screens the company provided to such schools as Texas, Oklahoma State and Texas A&M.<sup>(85)</sup>

Raycom recognized the growing popularity of NASCAR and struck a deal to televise ten Grand National races in 1982.<sup>(86)</sup> When syndication logistics proved to be too difficult for stations, Raycom sold the rights to ESPN, marking ESPN's entry into NASCAR.

In addition to many college telecasts, Raycom provided the production of pre-season telecasts of ten NFL teams,<sup>(87)</sup> including the [Houston Oilers](#) (1990-1994), Tennessee Titans (1998), Buffalo Bills (2000-2007), Washington Redskins (1999), [Dallas Cowboys](#) (1990-1991), Detroit Lions (1995), [Kansas City Chiefs](#) (1990), Minnesota Vikings (1994-1998), Arizona Cardinals (1999) and Carolina

Panthers (1995-Present). Raycom also marketed and distributed [Texas Rangers](#) baseball games in 1996<sup>(88)</sup> and coordinated television production of the 2001 [Miss Universe Pageant](#) from Puerto Rico.



Logo for Raycom's marketing of 1989 Glasnost Bowl between USC and Illinois in Soviet Union

Raycom pioneered many other ventures in sports television, including the attempt in 1989 to stage the first major U.S. college football game in the Soviet Union,<sup>(89)</sup> the [Glasnost Bowl](#).<sup>(90)</sup> Raycom secured the rights to match Southern Cal against the University of Illinois in a regular season game in Moscow.<sup>(91)</sup> Arrangements were made for a network telecast back to the United States and planes were chartered for fans to fly to Russia. Despite Haines and others spending weeks in Moscow, the Soviets were unable to supply the needed hotel rooms and the game was rescheduled for Los Angeles.<sup>(92)</sup>

Raycom also [produced a number of videos](#)<sup>(93)</sup> including a series on the ACC, North Carolina ("[Blue Heaven](#)") and Duke ("[Royal Blue](#)") basketball programs, the Florida-Georgia football rivalry<sup>(94)</sup> and highlights of football bowl games produced by the company. The [True Value ACC Dream Team](#) was released in April 1992,<sup>(95)</sup> a special [Elvis Presley](#) video was released in 1993 and a video of NBA star [Muggsy Bogues](#) was released in 1995.

## Events

In 1986, Raycom Sports and longtime college athletic administrator [Richard Giannini](#) formed a joint venture called Raycom Management Group (RMG)<sup>(96)</sup> to manage sporting events. Giannini hired University of Florida Athletic Director [Bill Carr](#) as part of the RMG management team. RMG relied on Raycom's television production experience to build a reputation for staging major sports events. When Giannini left Raycom in 1991, RMG was dissolved.

[Terry Hanson](#), a former Turner Sports and PGA Tour executive, was hired in 1991 to oversee an events division within Raycom Sports,<sup>(97)</sup> which included the Blockbuster Bowl and the Diet Pepsi Tournament of Champions. In addition Mike Lude, former University of Washington Athletic Director, was hired during the same period to focus on the bowl game.

Beginning in 1994, Raycom, in conjunction with NACDA, has staged a unique party experience at the site of every NCAA Final Four.<sup>(98)</sup> The [popular gatherings](#) have been held at such unusual locations as a pirate ship in Tampa, a historic southern mansion in Charlotte, a racetrack in New Jersey, the State House and a 1920's big band ballroom in Indianapolis, a remodeled train station in San Antonio, the Space Needle in Seattle, the Underground and the Georgia Aquarium in Atlanta, and the House of Blues in New Orleans.

Also in 1994, Raycom organized an all-female minor league baseball game in Charlotte featuring the [Colorado Silver Bullets](#), managed by Phil Niekro. The game, televised on ESPN2, was played at Knight's Castle. Raycom was instrumental in bringing several [other sporting events](#) to the city of Charlotte, including college football, basketball and LPGA golf.

## Bowls

The [Blockbuster Bowl](#)<sup>(99)(100)</sup> (1990-1993), conceived by Giannini<sup>(101)</sup> was staged for 11 years from 1990 through 2000 in Joe Robbie Stadium, later renamed Pro Player Stadium. It was managed by Keith Tribble, former University of Florida Associate AD, for two years, then [Brian Flajole](#), a former University of Washington athletic department employee, for five years, and longtime staff member Mitch Morrall for the last four years. Retitled the [Carquest Bowl](#) (1994-1997) and then the [Micronpc.com Bowl](#) (1998-2000), the game became a major bowl on CBS and later on TBS.<sup>(102)</sup>



In 1990, legends Joe Paterno and Bobby Bowden faced off in the Inaugural Blockbuster Bowl in Ft. Lauderdale

The first game in [1990](#) was memorable in that it pitted FSU's Bobby Bowden against Penn State's Joe Paterno, two of the winningest coaches in college football.<sup>(103)(104)</sup> The [1993](#) game between Penn State and Stanford was also memorable in that Penn State's Paterno agreed to play in the game, for the second time, before the season had even started. It was the earliest school-specific bowl agreement in NCAA history.<sup>(105)</sup> At that time, Penn State was not in the Big Ten and had no guaranteed bowl berth.

In 1996, the Carolina Panthers opened Bank of America Stadium (then Ericsson Stadium) in Charlotte and Raycom staged the first college football game in the new stadium.<sup>(7)(106)</sup> It pitted [North Carolina State University and East Carolina University](#) in a sold-out stadium. That was followed by games between the University of North Carolina and NC State in [1998](#) and [1999](#),<sup>(107)(108)</sup> and a second

NC State vs. ECU game in 2004. In 2006, Raycom staged the Clemson vs. Temple football game, and managed the Virginia Tech vs. ECU game in 2008 and the ECU vs. South Carolina game in 2011. The games were overseen by long-term employee, [George Johnson](#), who had been hired in 1992 in the programming and event division.

In 1996, Raycom purchased the rights to the regular season game between FSU and Maryland and moved it from College Park, Md. to Miami's Pro Player Stadium.<sup>(109)</sup>

In 2002, Haines had a vision and plan for Raycom Sports to begin a new bowl game in Charlotte, the [Continental Tire Bowl](#).<sup>(110)</sup> The game was scheduled to be sanctioned by the NCAA on September 11, 2001. Haines had flown to Philadelphia that morning to meet with the NCAA, but minutes before the meeting was to begin, the attack on the World Trade Center occurred and it was seven months later before the game was officially certified.<sup>(111)(112)</sup>



A crowd of 45,000 packed the intersection of Trade & Tryon in 2002 for the first bowl game in Charlotte

The game, featuring teams from the ACC and the Big East, was an unparalleled success.<sup>(113)(114)</sup> A sellout crowd of 73,535 witnessed the #2 teams in the ACC and Big East renew a border war as Virginia defeated West Virginia.<sup>(115)</sup> The game became [one of the hottest tickets](#) of the bowl season<sup>(116)</sup> and an uptown pep rally staged the night before the game brought an estimated 45,000 fans to the Trade & Tryon intersection in Charlotte. The Continental Tire Bowl also rated as the second-most viewed program on ESPN2 in 2002. The game was so successful<sup>(117)(118)</sup> it established a new Bank of America Stadium attendance record and was the second-most successful first-year bowl game in history, ranking only behind Raycom's inaugural 1990 Blockbuster Bowl between Penn State and Florida State.

In addition, the game garnered national news when the Virginia Pep Band unflatteringly mocked West Virginia during its halftime performance.<sup>(119)</sup> The episode resulted in the abolishment of the [pep band](#) and establishment of a sanctioned University of Virginia marching band.

The Sports Business Journal named the game one of the five best start-ups in sports over the past five years<sup>(120)</sup> along with the NFL Houston Texans and ESPN the Magazine. It sold out two of the first three years.<sup>(121)</sup> Haines turned the Executive Director role over to Will Webb, a longtime successful Charlotte businessman. In January 2005, a new title sponsor was signed and the game was renamed the [Meineke Car Care Bowl](#).<sup>(122)</sup> In 2011, the game was renamed the [Belk Bowl](#).<sup>(123)</sup>

The game has featured such teams as North Carolina, Boston College, Clemson, Louisville, Duke, Cincinnati, Wake Forest, Virginia, Pittsburgh, NC State, West Virginia, Connecticut, South Florida and the United States Naval Academy.

Raycom also played a major role in Charlotte being awarded the bid for the ACC Football Championship Game in 2010 and 2011.<sup>(124)</sup> The championship game and the bowl game are currently owned by a non-profit entity, with Raycom involved in operational aspects of both games.<sup>(125)</sup>

### College Basketball

The [Diet Pepsi Tournament of Champions](#),<sup>(126)</sup> later titled by [Harris Teeter](#),<sup>(127)</sup> [Food Lion](#)<sup>(128)</sup> and [Hardee's](#), became one of the premier pre-season basketball tournaments.<sup>(129)</sup> The Charlotte tournament was staged for 14 consecutive years, from 1988 through 2001, the last few years under the supervision of Johnson.

Matching the previous season's top eight basketball teams was a concept that became reality with the 1994 establishment of the [DIRECTV Great Eight](#).<sup>(130)</sup> The Detroit, and later, Chicago event was staged by Raycom and ESPN.<sup>(131)</sup> The Great Eight enjoyed a successful run from 1994-1999, benefiting the [CHAMPS/Life Skills](#) program, before the NCAA chose to eliminate tournament exemptions, thus forcing the end of the event.<sup>(132)</sup>



Legendary UNC head coach Dean Smith at media day in 1996 for one of his many appearances in the Diet Pepsi Tournament

The Franklin National Bank Classic, later renamed the BB&T Classic, in Washington, DC and hosted by Maryland and George Washington was marketed and telecast by Raycom from its inception in 1995 through 2004.<sup>(133)</sup> These types of events provided the company with the ability to integrate event marketing and television exposure.

Raycom organized a second basketball tournament in Charlotte in 1996, [The Naismith Classic](#), which was played for one year.

## Golf



Raycom's saving of the 1997 Fieldcrest Cannon Classic, won by Wendy Ward, started an 11-year period of Raycom ownership of LPGA tournaments in Alabama, California and Tennessee

In 1997, a company (Del Wilbur) that was managing and operating an LPGA golf tournament in Charlotte, the [Fieldcrest Cannon Classic](#), filed for bankruptcy.<sup>(134)</sup> It was three weeks before the start of the tournament at the Peninsula Club at Lake Norman. Facing the prospect of the scheduled local event being cancelled on short notice, Haines assembled the entire Charlotte staff and Raycom stepped in and successfully staged the tournament, with only three weeks planning. The LPGA official tournament report gave the event a near perfect score.

As a result of the success of the Charlotte LPGA event, Raycom was able to add two LPGA golf tournaments, the [Longs Drug Challenge](#)<sup>(135)</sup> (1998-2008) in Sacramento and later San Francisco, and the [Mitchell Company Tournament of Champions](#)<sup>(136)</sup> (1998-2007) in Auburn/Opelika, Alabama and later Mobile.

Beginning in 2005, the Mitchell Company Tournament of Champions added Kathy Ireland Worldwide as the presenting sponsor.<sup>(137)</sup> And in 2006, the Longs Drugs Challenge moved to Blackhawk Country Club, near San Francisco.

Fully-staffed offices were opened by Raycom in Sacramento, Nashville and Mobile. Bowl director Brian Flajole was promoted to Vice-President of Golf and relocated from his position in Ft. Lauderdale to head the newly formed golf operations division in Sacramento in 1997. In a short period of time, Flajole negotiated to have Raycom hired by the Sacramento Sports Commission to handle sales and marketing for the U.S. Track & Field Trials in 2000, and again in 2004.<sup>(138)</sup>

In Nashville, the [Electrolux USA Championship](#) hosted by Vince Gill and Amy Grant was added in 2000<sup>(139)(140)</sup> and was staged for three years initially under the Raycom leadership of LPGA veteran director Clyde Russell and later Steve Nieman.<sup>(141)</sup> In 2002, Raycom and former Alabama All-American and NFL All-Pro Cornelius Bennett started a golf outing to raise money for local charities, the [McDonald's Cornelius Bennett Celebrity Golf Classic](#), which took place for three years.



Vince Gill, Amy Grant and Raycom CEO Ken Haines in 2000 at the Nashville LPGA Tourney

## Sports and Entertainment Programming

Raycom utilized its sales, distribution and production resources to telecast and produce a number of sports and entertainment specials including the Dove Entertainment Awards (1987), [Elvis' Graceland Special](#)<sup>(142)</sup> (1987,1988), the [Emmy Awards for Sports](#)<sup>(143)(144)(145)</sup> (1988,1989), [The Making of "It's A Wonderful Life"](#) (1991), the [Naismith Awards](#) (1992-1998), [Lone Stars](#)<sup>(146)</sup>(1992), [America Comes to Graceland](#) (1993), [Elvis: His Life and Times](#)<sup>(147)</sup> (1993,1995,1997), [Off the Record with Pat Summerall](#) (1994), [Elvis, Touch the Dream, a New Generation](#) (1995), [Ford Supermodel of the World](#)<sup>(148)</sup> (1995), [Holidays at Home](#)<sup>(149)</sup>(1995), [SI 40th Anniversary "Forty For the Ages"](#) (1994), [The Making of the SI Swimsuit Issue](#)<sup>(150)</sup> (1994,1995), [SI, The Year in Sports](#) (1995), [Beauty Reigns in Spain](#) (1995), [Journey of the African-American Athlete](#) (1997), [Don't Tell Me No](#) (1995), [New Year's Eve Coast to Coast](#)<sup>(151)</sup> (1995), [ThunderDome Shootout](#) (1995), [Racing Home](#)<sup>(152)</sup> (1995), [The Wendy's Classic](#) (1996), [Southern Living Holiday to Remember](#) (1997), [NASCAR Think Fast!](#) (1998), [BASSMasters Classic](#)<sup>(153)</sup> (1998), [AVP pro beach volleyball](#) (1999), [Golf 2000 with Peter Jacobsen](#) (1999), [The Sports Edge with Rudy Martzke](#) (1999), [MLB '99: A Season of Heroes](#) (2000), [Get Golf](#) (2000), Tiger Woods Charity golf (2002-2003), [The Ladies First Celebrity Golf Classic](#) (2006), New Year's Eve Peach Drop (2002-2005) and Citrus Bowl Parade (2002-2004).

In addition, Raycom produced and televised several college and pro coaches and administrators shows for North Carolina's John Swofford (1979-81), Virginia Tech's Bill Dooley (1981-83), Illinois' John Mackovic and Lou Henson (1988-1991), Purdue's Fred Akers and Gene Keady (1988-1989), Iowa's Hayden Fry and Tom Davis (1989-1993), and Houston Oilers' [Jack Pardee](#) (1990-1994).



## More Than A Game

From 1997 through 2001, Raycom also syndicated a nationally acclaimed sports program, “[More Than A Game](#),”<sup>(154)</sup> featuring positive stories from the sports world. The show was hosted by Fred Hickman and Janet Evans, and later Brandi Chastain. In 1999, Raycom hosted a World Series promotion, looking for a story exemplifying sportsmanship. Jason Duncan, a seventh grader from Ft. Lauderdale, Fla. caught Mark McGwire’s 56th home run ball and gave it back in return for a few autographed items. He then donated one of the items to a local children’s shelter auction. [Raycom sent Duncan](#) on an all-expense paid trip to Game 1 of the 1999 World Series featuring the New York Yankees visiting the Atlanta Braves.



Raycom launched “More Than A Game” at the NATPE Convention in 1997

## Elvis Specials



On August 15, 1997, an estimated 70,000 fans turn out for a candlelight vigil at Graceland for a Raycom TV production on the 20th anniversary of Elvis Presley’s death

While the company began concentrating more on its core sports programming, Raycom maintained [an exclusive contract](#) with the Estate of Elvis Presley<sup>(155)</sup> (1987-1997). Haines became very close to the administrators of the Estate and as a result, Raycom syndicated a number of specials on the life of Elvis Presley. The first special, “Elvis’ Graceland”(1987), was distributed to nearly every television market in the United States and delivered an outstanding 7.2 rating over 93% of the country.<sup>(142)</sup>

Following the initial success of the first Elvis special, the company produced more specials to coincide with the August 26<sup>th</sup> events in Memphis surrounding the anniversary of Elvis’ death. Raycom hired such stars as [Travis Tritt](#), [Lisa Hartman](#) and [Mac Davis](#) to host the specials. New York producer Cary Glotzer was in charge of production and the programs were distributed nationally during Elvis Tribute week. On the eve of the 20th anniversary of Elvis’ death, Raycom fed exclusive footage of the candlelight vigil to a special telecast airing nationally on VH-1.

## Unsuccessful Entertainment Programming

Raycom was unsuccessful in several entertainment ventures. This included production and distribution of such shows as [Ushuaia](#)<sup>(156)</sup>, [The RFK Assassination](#)<sup>(157)</sup>, [Slam Sports](#), [Fish the Carolinas with Ty Mathis](#), [Power Pro Wrestling](#), [Sporting News TV](#), [Missing Without A Trace](#), [ACC Kids](#), [John-Boy and Billy](#) TV Specials, [Killers at the Box Office](#), [Night Creatures](#), [Lords of Hollywood](#), [The Innocent of Hollywood](#)<sup>(158)</sup> and [The Titanic](#).<sup>(159)</sup>

## Sales and Marketing

Re-focusing of the company into event marketing and sports was accelerated in 1993 when the Fox network outbid CBS to acquire rights to the NFL.<sup>(160)</sup> That single negotiation elevated the fees for all sports rights and opened a renegotiation of station and network contracts that resulted in many television station affiliation switches. Raycom capitalized upon the dramatic changes in the marketplace and used the opportunity to reduce its risk in a heightened sports rights marketplace. Concurrently, the company dramatically increased its role in providing marketing services to effectively maximize sports properties, starting a consulting division.<sup>(161)</sup>



Raycom sold the landmark title sponsorship for the Fiesta Bowl to Tostitos in 1995

The company found greater success in the sports arena than in entertainment shows. Increased emphasis was placed on sports marketing and packaging.

Indicative of the company’s change in focus was the fact that Raycom represented, sold advertising and, in many instances, found distribution outlets (stations and networks) for a number of major sports properties. In 1995, Raycom sold the title to the Tostitos Fiesta Bowl in what many considered, at that time, to be the most expensive title to a college football game ever sold.<sup>(162)</sup> In 2002, veteran salesman Jim Brannon sold Mazda the title to the Tangerine Bowl, and Continental Tire the title to the bowl game in Charlotte. In 2005, he then secured Meineke Car Care Centers as the title for the Charlotte bowl.

In addition, the company has represented the marketing/advertising rights to prestigious football games including the Cotton Bowl (1995), the Toyota Gator Bowl (1995-1996), the [Liberty Bowl](#) (1985-1989), the [Freedom Bowl](#) (1989-1994),<sup>(163)</sup> the [All-American Bowl](#) (1987), The [Bluebonnet Bowl](#) (1986), the Holiday Bowl (1985) and the Tangerine Bowl (2002-2003). Raycom also represented properties such as the Big 12 Conference, the Pac-10, the Southeastern Conference, the ACC, and the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA).<sup>(164)</sup> Raycom coordinated advertising sales for the [Raycom Baseball Network](#),<sup>(165)</sup> and represented the entire sports schedule of [Sports News Satellite](#), a company that provided sports highlights to all NBC network affiliates. Raycom also was hired to seek sponsorships for [Tony Stewart's Ranier/Walsh racing team](#) in 1996.

### ACC Properties

The company teamed with the ACC in 1994 to establish ACC Properties.<sup>(166)</sup> Managed by Raycom, the venture was regarded as the forerunner and model for future college sports marketing strategies with a core foundation of [corporate partners](#). ACC Properties controls all marketing, internet, merchandising, promotion and licensing rights to ACC sports.<sup>(167)</sup> In addition to having exclusive rights, each corporate partner is a major television sponsor on ACC sports telecasts.



In 1999, ACC Properties and Raycom Sports erected a 4-story, 10,000-sq. yard hospitality tent outside the Charlotte Coliseum for ACC Tournament fans

The [ACC Corporate Partner Program](#), now known as the [ACC Corporate Champions Program](#), includes [ACC FanFest](#) (formerly [ACC Fan Fair](#)), the public events and exhibitions component of ACC men's & women's basketball tournaments and the ACC Football Championship game. Corporate Champions have heavy activation during these events.

Many companies have been or were part of the [ACC Corporate Partner Program](#) for more than a decade. Some of these companies include Pepsi, Geico, Chrysler, RBC Bank, Gatorade, AT&T, Toyota and Food Lion,<sup>(3)</sup> a longtime account of Raycom executive Jim Ford.

### Raycom, JP Sports and The ACC

Haines and JP's Hull in late 1999 worked with ACC Commissioner John Swofford in negotiating a renewal to the prestigious ACC basketball television contract. As a result, Raycom Sports and partner Jefferson-Pilot Sports extended their contract with the ACC for all basketball television and conference marketing rights through the 2010-2011 season.<sup>(167)</sup>

The new package dissolved a cable exclusivity of ESPN and introduced a unique nationally-televised Sunday night game of the week on FOX Sports Net,<sup>(168)</sup> while maintaining ACC games on ESPN, ABC, CBS, and the traditional Raycom syndicated package.<sup>(169)</sup> All scheduling of ACC basketball games on any network was coordinated by Johnson, who worked closely with the ACC. Raycom continued to also handle marketing, sales, and distribution while Jefferson-Pilot oversaw production of the ACC package of games.

The financial package committed more than \$300 million to the ACC over a ten-year period<sup>(167)</sup> and continued the conference's record of being the most televised college basketball conference in the nation. It gave the ACC the highest rights fee per school of any of the 31 leagues in Division I.<sup>(170)</sup> The agreement between Raycom and the ACC marked 30 years that Raycom had been a television partner with the ACC. It also signified 30 years of a successful business relationship with Jefferson Pilot.



ACC logo during the initial years of Raycom Sports' telecasts of ACC games

That successful relationship was strengthened again after the ACC announced that it was expanding and adding Virginia Tech and Miami, and later Boston College.<sup>(171)</sup> The new teams helped cement the ACC as a national football power.

The ACC football syndication rights were held by Jefferson-Pilot Sports since 1984. In looking to renew those rights, it became obvious to both JP Sports and Raycom Sports that expanding their partnership was the next logical step. By using their basketball rights with new syndication football rights, Raycom/JP Sports could maximize marketing and distribution for both at the same time.

On Monday, April 19, 2004, Raycom Sports and Jefferson-Pilot Sports made a joint presentation to the ACC,<sup>(172)</sup> which would secure football syndication rights as well as increase the basketball rights fee under the existing contract, for a combined \$6 million increase. Despite bids by many other sports networks, and as a testament to the strong relationship with the

ACC, Raycom/JP Sports was awarded the football syndication rights. As a result, Raycom Sports and Jefferson-Pilot Sports held the full ACC men's basketball television rights and syndicated football rights through 2010-2011 for a reported \$36 million per year.<sup>(173)</sup>

Prior to 2010 a major shift occurred in the economics of college television rights. Starting in 2007 the Big Ten Conference launched its own "Big Ten Network"<sup>(174)</sup> and five years later the [PAC 12](#) followed suit. And in 2013, the SEC concluded a landmark network deal with ESPN.<sup>(175)</sup> Traditional advertising dollars could no longer support the high rights fees that colleges and conferences were charging for televising their games. It was apparent that subscriber cable fees would now be the main revenue source in funding the escalating television fees.

Realizing this change in the TV sports landscape,<sup>(176)</sup> during the 2009 NCAA Final Four in Detroit, Ken Haines met with ESPN's John Skipper and Burke Magnus to discuss a joint bid for extending the ACC television rights. Following 15 months of negotiations between IMG, ESPN and Raycom, the ACC made an announcement on June 8, 2010 that through a sublicense arrangement with ESPN, Raycom would continue its long-standing position as the syndication home of Atlantic Coast Conference content for over-the-air and regional cable network distribution. In addition, the syndicated Raycom ACC telecasts would become part of a branded "The ACC Network."<sup>(177)</sup>



Starting in 2010, all ACC Raycom Sports telecasts and productions were branded as "ACC Network"

Unprecedented in length for Raycom, the 12-year deal with ESPN covered the 2011-2012 through 2022-2023 seasons and was reported to be \$1.86 billion to the conference over the term.<sup>(178)</sup> More importantly, it provided that Raycom would continue to oversee the ACC's official corporate partner program, ACC Corporate Champions. Raycom would also continue to manage the conferences' digital assets, all mobile platforms and theacc.com, the official conference web site.

The ACC Network was established in 2010 by Raycom Sports and the ACC following the founding of the Big Ten Network and prior to the launching of the PAC-12 Network and SEC Network. The ACC Network uses broadcast stations, cable distribution and digital media to disseminate its branded "Network" products. The Big Ten, Pac-12 and SEC do not use broadcast television stations but have a dedicated cable channel and digital mediums. The [ACC Network](#), produced by Raycom Sports, [reached 84% of the U.S.](#) in 2014.

The new agreement lasted for only one season as the ACC announced in 2012 the additions of the University of Pittsburgh and Syracuse University beginning in 2013.<sup>(179)</sup> This forced the negotiation of a new 15-year ESPN agreement that was reported to be \$3.6 billion over the term.<sup>(180)</sup> The new agreement included full members Pittsburgh and Syracuse. Haines again successfully negotiated with ESPN and FOX amendments to existing Raycom contracts that added the additional schools<sup>(181)</sup> and ensured Raycom coverage of the ACC through the 2026-2027 seasons.

In September of 2012, the ACC [added Notre Dame](#) in all sports except football. And in November, Maryland accepted membership into the Big Ten, followed shortly by the ACC announcing that [Louisville](#) would become its newest member. This again resulted in a renegotiated ACC television contract, reported to be worth \$4.2 billion over 14 years, or \$20 million per year to each school.<sup>(182)</sup>

The amended agreements continued syndication of ACC games nationally, included all previous digital rights and continued management of the ACC Corporate Champions program. In addition, it allows for an expanded package of regional cable games that Raycom sub-licenses to FOX Sports South.



Raycom President & CEO Ken Haines is regularly asked to speak to industry and civic groups

Television rights fees to conferences increased at a staggering rate from 2009 to 2012. Raycom's Haines in 2013 delivered a lecture<sup>(183)</sup> to a graduate class of broadcasting students at Elon University in Elon, N.C. in which he made the following opening statement regarding the reasons for the spectacular increase in television sports rights fees:

*"In the span of 30 years, the television rights to the ACC have increased from \$1 million to approaching \$250 million per year. Given that most of the major conferences have added membership to expand their geographic footprint, all major conferences have seen dramatic increases in rights as the value of live televised sports have become recognized by networks, especially ESPN and FOX. The economics of television have changed with most of the population getting their television programming from cable and satellite providers. The cable or satellite provider collects fees from each TV household. The sports rights holders are paid a portion of these fees collected by each provider. This guaranteed revenue allows the rights holder to pay significantly more money to colleges and athletic conferences.*

*“Another factor that increased the value of sports rights was the fact that live games were viewed by advertisers as “record proof” since viewers wanted to watch the games live which assured that commercials would be seen and not skipped through as is the case with many recorded entertainment programs that are viewed later in the day or week.*

*“In addition, advancements in technology have also played a major role when digital platforms enabled sports events to be seen on everything from computers to tablets to phones. This has increased the value to rights holders, and subsequently, to colleges and conferences.*

*“Finally, with the addition of high definition television pictures, coupled with higher ticket prices for attending games, the experience of viewing a game on TV or on a digital device can be more entertaining and cost effective than attending the game in person.*

*“At sometime in the near future technology may allow colleges and conferences to televise all their sports events directly to their fans, bypassing all third party providers and networks. The colleges and conferences would then be able to retain almost all the revenue from the viewer.”*

### JP Sports

Jefferson-Pilot Sports and its parent company, on April 1, 2006, were merged into Lincoln Financial Group and Jefferson-Pilot Sports was renamed Lincoln Financial Sports (LFS). Then on November 30, 2007, Raycom Media purchased Lincoln Financial Sports and the company became part of Raycom Sports.<sup>(184)</sup> The purchase brought additional resources to Raycom in personnel and production facilities.<sup>(185)</sup>

The 26-year history of JP Sports/ LF Sports includes the production, marketing and distribution of [Southeastern Conference](#) basketball from 1986-2008 and football from 1992-2008. In addition, the company’s production facilities have been used for nearly 300 events each year.<sup>(186)</sup>



The company established in 1986 a network of stations and produced the NASCAR Winston Cup races from Charlotte (1986-1987) and the World 600 (1986-1987). The Charlotte Carousel Parade (since 1983), the NBA Charlotte Hornets (1988-2002), the NFL Carolina Panthers preseason games (since 1995), the NHL Carolina Hurricanes (1997-2008), the Charlotte Criterion Bicycle Race (2004-2009), and Charlotte First Night (since 2008) utilized JP production services.

JP Sports, and its predecessor Jefferson-Pilot Teleproductions, also had a history in producing and marketing such events as The Great American Independent Football Package (1987-1990), which was a precursor to the Big East Football Conference, the North Carolina-South Carolina High School Football Shrine Bowl (1987-1990) and college football shows including Football Saturdays in the South (since 2004). Made for TV shows became a staple of JP Sports and have included such programs as the [Southern Sports Awards](#)<sup>(187)</sup> (2005-2006), Beach Country Christmas (1996) and Olympic programming in ice skating, gymnastics and basketball.

As the U.S. prepared to host the Summer Olympics in 1996, JP Sports produced Olympic programming from 1994 through 1996, including the U.S. Olympic Festival on Ice, the John Hancock Gymnastics Tour, Riders Skating Tour, the John Hancock Rock'n'Roll Figure Skating Championship, Too Hot to Skate, Skater X 2, Rock'n'Roll on Ice, Christmas on Ice and Champagne on Ice.

JP Sports conceived and produced [Road to U.S. Olympic Gold](#) (1995-1996), Ice Wars (1990-1996) and pre-Olympic basketball (1988). The company sponsored, produced and syndicated the Carolinas Invitational (1988), which was a pre-Olympic exhibition in basketball, swimming, cycling, baseball and boxing, and in partnership with NBC and USA Network, distributed the [Tour de Trump](#) (1988-1989).

### Digital Media and New Ventures

Raycom Sports took the ACC Tournament online in 1995, as it partnered with the Greensboro News & Record to host live updates from the tournament with “The ACC Tournament: Wired.” This was believed to be the first college sporting event represented live on the internet.<sup>(188)</sup>



In conjunction with Turner Sports New Media, in September 2006, Raycom began programming accselect.com,<sup>(189)</sup> a broadband-based live streaming internet network. The venture featured live streaming

Raycom manages the official ACC website, TheACC.com, and other digital properties



of ACC Olympic-type sporting events. Over 1,000 events were produced the first two years of the service. In 2008, Raycom teamed with Jacked, Inc. to provide an interactive web initiative to integrate the web with the Raycom game telecasts.

In 2010, Raycom began a unique digital service<sup>(190)</sup> on the official ACC web site which is managed by Raycom. The service named “The Vault”<sup>(191)</sup> allows users to access old games, highlights and bundled facts and characteristics on players and games from the extensive Raycom and ACC libraries.

Also in 2010, Raycom began providing an iPhone and iPad app, and later a Droid and Windows app, to mobile ACC users featuring immediate access to live streaming games, highlights, detailed scoreboards, wireless alerts and other features.<sup>(192)</sup>



The ACC Digital Network, operated by Raycom, was established in 2011 and includes programming on digital and mobile platforms

In 2011, Raycom entered into an agreement with Silver Chalice to establish an ACC Digital Network<sup>(193)</sup> that would provide ACC programming to numerous digital platforms. It is accessible 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and contains a menu of news, information, analysis, features, videos and live programming about the ACC and its teams. A studio and edit suites were built in the Raycom Sports’ building. The ACC Digital Network<sup>(194)</sup> is managed by Chad Swofford, who was hired in 2007 from the Boston College athletic department.

In the fall of 2011, Raycom began telecasting a live college football pregame and halftime studio show, “ACC Blitz,”<sup>(195)</sup> with live game updates and cut-ins to other ACC games. The show was hosted by Danielle Trotta and now Tom Werme, with former Clemson football coach Tommy Bowden.

Raycom launched the first conference gaming app in 2013, the ACC Football Challenge.<sup>(196)</sup> The app let fans compete as their favorite school and play its full 2013 ACC football schedule. Additionally, the game features real-time head-to-head match-ups and allow fans to challenge and post scores on Facebook and Twitter, all the while keeping track of overall performance on conference and school-specific leaderboards.

Raycom maintains two fully-equipped state-of-the-art High Definition production trucks<sup>(197)</sup> that were put into service in August of 2011 and 2013. The trucks are frequently used by national and regional networks to produce live events. Also, Raycom has satellite services, uplink facilities and extensive HD editing capabilities.



First use of new Raycom HD truck was at Virginia Tech for a game in September 3, 2011

### Raycom Ownership

While playing tennis together at Hilton Head, S.C., Rick Ray and fellow Hilton Head resident Bert Ellis often talked about the changes in the broadcast industry. Ellis owned Ellis Communications and was looking to expand his broadcast holdings and properties. Ray was interested in finding a situation that would bring more capital and synergy to Raycom.<sup>(198)</sup> On April 12, 1994 Ellis Communications purchased Raycom<sup>(199)</sup> and a new era began. Raycom Sports had become a nationally recognized brand, and in the process had become very visible in the Charlotte community.



In 1989, the Ray’s purchased the historic Duke Mansion, known in Charlotte as “White Oaks”

In 1989, the Rays purchased the spacious Duke Mansion,<sup>(99)</sup> also known as “White Oaks.”<sup>(6)</sup> Dee and Rick Ray retired from Raycom in 1994<sup>(200)</sup> and 1995<sup>(201)</sup>, respectively. They sold the Duke Mansion in 1996.

The company was sold again on September 12, 1996 when Ellis sold his holdings to a media group funded by the Retirement Systems of Alabama.<sup>(202)</sup> The pension fund provided funding to acquire numerous radio and television stations and, based on the national visibility and reputation of the Raycom Sports name, chose Raycom Media as the name of its new corporate entity.<sup>(203)(204)</sup>

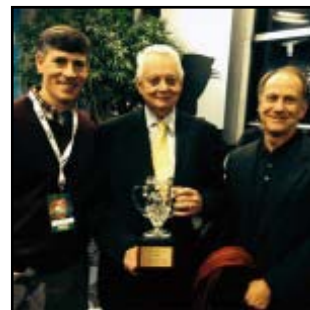
Raycom Sports, with over 70 employees, became a division of Raycom Media of Montgomery, Alabama. John Hayes was the first CEO of the newly formed company and was succeeded in 2001 by Paul McTear.<sup>(205)(206)</sup> In addition to having oversight of Raycom Sports, McTear, a former Providence Journal company executive, manages the 53 Raycom Media television stations that comprise over 12.6% of the U.S. television marketplace. McTear was inducted into the Broadcasting and Cable Hall of Fame in 2007. In 2011, Pat LaPlatney, a former Raycom Sports employee who now works for Raycom Media, took over corporate responsibilities for Raycom Sports.

On December 16, 2011, Raycom acquired Tupelo-Honey, a leading sports and entertainment company based in New York City.<sup>(207)</sup> Combined with Raycom Sports, the acquisition provided additional production and programming for Raycom Sports, including major league soccer and arena football. Tupelo-Honey is headed by [Cary Glotzer](#), who worked with Raycom on several Elvis entertainment projects in the 1990's.

### Raycom Sports Management

Raycom Sports is managed by President & Chief Executive Officer Ken Haines,<sup>(13)</sup> who has been with the company since its inception.<sup>(121)</sup> Prior to 2003, Raycom's President & CEO was Ray Warren, who served in that capacity from 1995 to November, 2002.<sup>(208)</sup> The senior management at the company is one of the most tenured in the business.

Following the purchase of Lincoln Financial Sports,<sup>(209)(210)</sup> Raycom retained key management, including Executive Vice President Ed Hull, who had been Jefferson-Pilot Sports President since 1984 (Hull retired in May, 2008), [Jimmy Rayburn](#), VP of production since 1986, and [Rob Reichley](#), coordinating producer since 1993. In 2012, Jimmy Rayburn was promoted to Chief Operating Officer<sup>(211)</sup> of the company under Haines and Reichley was named Executive Producer. Other key personnel included Charles Moye, operations director since 1984 and Becky Smith, finance director since 1985, who was promoted to controller in 2012. Roger Roebuck continued in distribution and production. He had been at JP Sports since 1988 (Roebuck retired in 2009).



Raycom executives (l to r)  
George Johnson, Ken Haines  
and Jimmy Rayburn

Distribution and digital multimedia were handled by Colin Smith, hired in 1995 and served as Vice President of New Media until 2012, when he left to become Managing Director of Digital Platforms at NASCAR. Chad Swofford took over new media and was named Senior Director of New Media & Business Development. Station syndication is managed by George Johnson, who also oversees event operations. Ad sales and marketing is under the leadership of Jeff Tennant while media relations and communications are headed by [Frank Kay](#), who has been with the company since 1998.

Raycom Sports prides itself on stability and experience. Those employees who have served the company for more than 20 years include Ken Haines, Jimmy Rayburn, George Johnson, Peter Rolfe, Jim Brannon, Jim Ford, Charles Moye, Kathy Fretz, Becky Smith, Laura Rhyne, Rob Reichley and Kelly Kent.



Raycom Sports' staff dressed for  
Halloween and Christmas in front  
of Trade Street office in 1990

Raycom has been housed in seven locations in Charlotte since 1979.<sup>(212)</sup> It was initially located on [E. Morehead St.](#) and then on [Park Road](#), near the Park Road Shopping Center. In 1982, the company moved to [Rexford Road](#), near The Shops at South Park. From 1985-1992, the headquarters were on [Trade Street](#), near the county courthouse. In 1992, the company operated from a spacious facility on [East Boulevard](#) in the Dilworth section of the city.<sup>(213)</sup> Raycom relocated to a new [building complex](#) near the Charlotte Coliseum in 1998.<sup>(214)</sup> With the purchase of LFS (Jefferson-Pilot Sports), Raycom moved in 2008 to a sports complex on [Morehead Street](#) across from WBTV, also owned by Raycom Media.

The Charlotte based company, has provided employment to over 500 employees and hundreds of freelance employees. It is not only the oldest, but also the only remaining regional television sports syndication company in the nation.<sup>(215)</sup> Every Raycom event designates a local charity to be a recipient of funds.<sup>(216)(217)</sup>

Several different [Raycom Sports logos](#) and [Jefferson Pilot logos](#) have become familiar on television sports broadcasts over the long history of both companies.

Raycom Sports uses the slogan of "integrating powerful media with innovative marketing." The company has been widely acknowledged as being a visionary that is at the forefront or ahead of the curve in the business of collegiate sports.<sup>(218)</sup>

[Raycom Sports Quick Facts - with results of Raycom events \(LPGA, college basketball, college football\)](#)



Two most frequently used logos.  
Top logo used from 1979-95.  
Bottom logo from 1995-present

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