

# Raycom to televise GN races in 1982

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Raycom, Inc., an independent sports broadcasting network in Charlotte, will televise 10 NASCAR Grand National auto races next year, along with at least 10 of the shorter Sportsman events.

The package, which Raycom will produce and sell to individual television stations across the country, will make the company the leader in network telecasting of the sport.

It has not been determined which, if any, Charlotte station will purchase the package.

"We did a lot of research into the ratings of previously televised NASCAR events," said Raycom President Rick Ray, "and they draw almost as much of an audience, if not more, than an ACC basketball game in this area.

"We were looking to diversify and become a year-round network, and very little in sports is available after basketball season. But NASCAR racing was virtually untouched in North Carolina and Virginia, and look at the audience it draws. You won't see 120,000 people at a college football game."

One source said that the 10 Grand National events Raycom would show would be two apiece from Rockingham; North Wilkesboro; Martinsville, Va.; Bristol, Tenn., and Dover, Del.

"We aren't ready to release our schedule yet," Ray said. "Some of those will be included, but there will be additional races on top of that."

Ray did add that none of Charlotte's Sportsman races are on the schedule.

"We've been developing this thing for over a year, talking with stations and advertisers, finding out what they will accept and filling their needs," Ray said. "We're planning to sell the races to stations as a package rather than individually."

It was reported elsewhere that Raycom would pay each track be-

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tween \$90,000 and \$120,000 for each race in the three-year contract, but Ray wouldn't confirm that.

"That estimate's awfully expensive," he said. "I really can't say what we're going to pay, but it's based on the area that the track owner wants blacked out. We've tried to keep compensation on a formula basis."

Ray said that he expects the completed network will beam NASCAR races into a viewing area of perhaps 30 to 40 million homes, adding that he's gotten favorable response from as far away as Los Angeles.

"It's a tremendous challenge," he said. "The production budget is six to 10 times that of a basketball game. You've gotta have 10 cameras, and we want two helicopters at each race. You've got to do all kinds of feature material, and we'd like to mount a camera in a car, like CBS did."