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Raycom keeps piece of ACC rights



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A new, 12-year broadcast deal between ESPN and the Atlantic Coast Conference keeps Charlotte-based Raycom Sports in the game as part of the agreement.

[Raycom will produce and distribute broadcasts of ACC football and basketball games](#) on a regional and national basis. The new arrangement, disclosed Thursday, begins with the 2011-12 season.

Keeping a piece of the ACC broadcast rights is crucial for Raycom, [which lost the Southeastern Conference in 2008 as ESPN gobbled up all media rights](#). Raycom, founded in 1979, has counted the Greensboro-based ACC as a key clients since its inception.

North Carolina, Virginia and Clemson are [among the schools in the 12-member ACC](#).

The new ESPN contract combines football and basketball rights in the ACC for the first time. In the past, Raycom retained the rights to all basketball games, producing some for regional distribution and selling others to national networks. In 1999, Raycom agreed to pay \$300 million for ACC basketball broadcast rights beginning in 2001 and ending next year. Subsequent expansion in the ACC, as well as Raycom's 2007 merger with fellow sports syndication company Lincoln Financial Sports, led to revised terms. In all, the ACC generates \$75 million annually from its various broadcast deals.

ACC Commissioner [John Swofford](#) says TV revenue will more than double in the contract that begins next year.

[SportsBusiness Journal, a sister publication, estimates the value of the deal at \\$1.86 billion, or an average of \\$155 million per year.](#) Officials declined to comment on specific financial terms during a teleconference this morning.

Raycom remains a key player, executives said.

"Those relationships continue — a little different structure than in the past, but very, very exciting for the future of the Atlantic Coast Conference," Swofford said.

ESPN executive vice president [John Skipper](#), a University of North Carolina alum, praised the deal for maintaining the network's emphasis on college sports. While noting ESPN's new role as the exclusive home of both Duke-North Carolina basketball games each season, Skipper also named Raycom as an important part of the new contract.

"They're a key partner in this deal for us," Skipper said. "It is a three-way arrangement."

Raycom will operate on a sublicense to primary rights-holder ESPN.



[Ken Haines](#), Raycom Sports chief executive, said the company will have a similar role within the ACC's geographic region as it has had in the past. Syndicated games can air on ESPN's national networks and on stations in the Southeast and mid-Atlantic through Raycom. If anything, the new contract enhances what the Charlotte company does with the ACC, Haines said.