

# Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

## In the Game: Big Strides, Big Numbers for Women's Sports

Sports fans have long been courted as super sticky and highly profitable, but women fans haven't always gotten the individualized attention their numbers deserve. That's changing.

"We're just starting to crack the surface of what really speaking directly to female fans can mean to grow professional sports in particular," *Charlene Polite Corley*, VP, Diverse Insights & Partnerships for **Nielsen**, said during a **WICT Network DC/Baltimore** panel this week on women in sports. "When you speak to women over 50 who are a key driver for **NFL** ratings, when you look at somebody like the Miami Heat who is going into the **NBA** finals with the largest female fan base in the NBA—just having that relationship with the female fan can often translate into a more valuable franchise."

Women's sports coverage is also on the rise, both in terms of hours televised and viewership. Last year, **ESPN** aired more than 33,000 hours of women's sports programming with more than 18,000 events. That included 16 **NCAA** Women's Championships, every game of the **WNBA** Playoffs and Finals as well as **FIBA** Women's Basketball World Cup, Premier Hockey Federation, pro softball, volleyball and lacrosse, women's tennis grand slams and more. When looking at **ABC** and **ESPN's** past two seasons, the programmer's female 18-49 viewership is up 66%, while women 25-54 are also up 66%.

In 2022, **ESPN** expanded linear hours devoted to women's sports by 56% and the ratings followed. Live women's sports

events on **ESPN** networks amassed nearly 19 billion viewing minutes, an increase of 4% over the full year 2021. Streaming's also been popular for women's sports. Unique viewers of women's sports events on **ESPN+** were up over +100% in fiscal year 2022, with the **SVOD** offering coverage of more than 11,000 women's sports events.

**Nielsen** research shows that over a third of fans feel that the biggest impact you can have to grow women's sports is through brand sponsorship. "Culture plays in sports, from fashion to music. It's the crossover that makes them have access to you in your home in multiple ways. So, when it comes to brand partnerships that stuff becomes really important," **D.C. United's** President of Business Operations *Danita Johnson* said during the **WICT Network** panel. She cited **Carmax's** commercial with four-time **WNBA** champion *Sue Bird* alongside **NBA** great *Steph Curry* as a game changer. "It wasn't always engraved in how they did their partnership deals from the league level. And nowadays, a lot of times you'll see the crossover, which is why you see them in the ad sets together. They're coming across in authentic ways versus just being like 'you just have to support women,'" she said.

The stats for **ESPN's** coverage of the Women's College Basketball Championship show that advertisers are stepping up. The 2023 championship featured 15 sponsors and nearly 100 advertisers, up from 14 sponsors and 22 advertisers in 2022.

Promoting women in sports is not just about breaking barriers on the field, with the panel repeatedly hitting on the

Cablefax Daily

Partner  
with  
Cablefax  
Daily

Contact Ellen Kamhi at  
917.626.5574 or  
ekamhi@accessintel.com

Cablefax

THE SMALL BRANDS & EVENTS THE MAGAZINE SPECIAL REPORTS THE LISTS ADVERTISE

**Cablefax is THE Place to Advertise.**

Send a targeted eblast.  
Advertise in our Daily newsletter.  
Promote your content to our audience.  
And MORE!

importance of having women in leadership positions. *Julie Donaldson*, SVP of Media and Content for the **Washington Commanders**, has personal experience as the first female to be a regular on-air member of an NFL radio broadcast booth. “I get letters from women all over the country, my DMs get full nonstop, saying, ‘I’m always the one girl in the room and I’m only hearing male voices,’” Donaldson said. “Now I’m hearing the female voice, and not just to intro and exit, but a female voice consistently. And it gives them the hope and encouragement to say ‘OK, I can do this too.’ Because if you don’t see it, you don’t know. Somebody has to be that first but my goodness, we better either be opening up the door wide open for more opportunities.”

Before joining D.C. United in 2020, Johnson served as President/COO of the WNBA’s L.A. Sparks. She felt it was important to make that return to the male side of sports to help take it to the next level. “A lot of times we don’t get the opportunity to transition. People don’t really trust us in the space—that just because we were in predominately women sports we could run a predominantly male sport. I think business is business. The way that I treated the business of our women and our athletes is the same way I treat the business of D.C. United,” she said.

More women are becoming decisionmakers in sports. In March, *Rosalyn Durant* was named ESPN’s EVP of Programming and Acquisitions. Among her early leadership actions was to expand the role of *Susie Piotrkowski*, VP of Women’s Sports Programming & espnW, to broaden the scope of the company’s women’s sports strategy and work with partners across the company on female audience expansion.

“People still make a point to engage with sports—it’s the last bastion of appointment viewing... It’s just wide-open potential. That being said, the things that worked a generation ago, five years ago, probably won’t work to carry us forward when it comes to messaging to that fanbase, when it comes to competing for that fanbase, when it comes to competing for their time or trying to find them in a new platform,” said Corley. “There’s a lot of work left to do, and I do think that women as fans are open to it and hungry for it.”

.....

## COX BOOSTS GIVE MOST CUSTOMERS HALF-GIG SPEEDS

Cox Communications announced a major upgrade to its broadband packages that includes moving everyone from its 250 Mbps tier to its 500 Mbps tier at no extra cost. That means more than three-quarters of all Cox customers will have download speeds of a half-gig or more. Cox also elevated subscribers on its 150 Mbps package to the 250 Mbps tier.

Cablefax Daily (ISSN 1069-6644) is published daily by Access Intelligence, LLC | www.cablefax.com | 301.354.2101 | Editorial Director: Amy Maclean, 301.354.1760, amaclean@accessintel.com | VP/Group Publisher, Cablefax and Cynopsis: Robbie Caploe, 917.974.0640, rcaploe@accessintel.com | Managing Editor: Sara Winegardner, 301.354.1701, swinegardner@accessintel.com | Associate Editor: Noah Ziegler, 301.354.1704, nziegler@accessintel.com | Director of Business Development, Cablefax: Ellen Kamhi, 917.626.5574, ekamhi@accessintel.com | Production Manager: Joann Fato, jfato@accessintel.com | Kerry Smith, Divisional President, Marketing & Media Group, ksmith@accessintel.com | Group Subs/Subscription Questions, Client Services: 301.354.2101, clientservices@accessintel.com | Annual subscription price: \$1,899.00/year | Access Intelligence, LLC, 9211 Corporate Blvd., 4th Floor, Rockville, MD 20850

## The WHO and the WHY

CFX’s spotlight on recent new hires & promotions



GUILLAUME  
**van Gaver**  
CO-CEO  
AIRTIES

**3 THINGS TO KNOW**

- Guillaume was appointed as co-CEO of the managed WiFi solutions company after spending three years as Group CEO of LINK Mobility Group. He’ll work alongside fellow co-CEO/founder Metin Taskin, and the two will search for new growth opportunities among broadband providers from across the globe.
- Guillaume has over 25 years of experience in the telecommunications industry. He was CMO of British MNO EE from 2010-2011 before becoming regional CEO of phone retailer Carphone Warehouse. He was there for five years and would become International CEO of the mobile network provider Tele2 from 2016-2019.
- His journey so far has taken him around the world. Guillaume started as a marketing analyst for the aerospace company Arianespace in Washington, D.C., and has since held various management roles that had him based in London, Paris, Cairo, Amsterdam, Zurich and Oslo. Guillaume’s new gig puts him back in Paris.

.....

## NBCU ADDS BLOCKGRAPH FOR DATA COLLECTION

NBCUniversal is partnering up with **Blockgraph** to help optimize first-party data activation within the media and entertainment industry. NBCU will use Blockgraph’s technology to enhance first-party data in marketing campaigns across the One Platform with a focus on data and privacy. In turn, it’ll help advertisers match first-party data sets across platforms for better data interoperability, more precise audiences and improved campaign performance.

.....

## DISH DEBUTS HOTEL PLATFORM

**DISH Business** is rolling out a new platform called OnStream, which delivers content to TV screens and mobile devices to create custom digital experiences for hotel management, staff and guests. It comes with a fully customizable interface and offers features such as streamlining linear TV and streaming content, adding digital check-out options and menus for on-site dining options. OnStream is powered by DISH Business technology that connects TVs to a hotel’s back-end system.

## PREMIER LEAGUE JOINS SPORTSTECH ACCELERATOR

**Comcast NBCUniversal's** SportsTech Accelerator is looking to bring more opportunities for international startups, and it's going to the global game to do so. The **English Premier League** joined the partner consortium for the Accelerator as strategic advisors to the startups in the program. The PL will also have the chance to be involved in the selection process of the Accelerator's fourth cohort and beyond. With the PL's U.S. broadcast rights belonging to **NBC Sports/Peacock** and **Sky** having the rights in the U.K., it's another professional league to test technologies within fan engagement, fantasy sports and betting, athlete performance and esports.

## RATINGS

The 16-game 2023 Men's College World Series was the most-watched MCWS on **ESPN** platforms on record. It averaged 1.65 million viewers across all platforms, a 48% jump compared to the 2022 tournament. The final series between LSU and Florida averaged 2.86 million viewers over the three games on ESPN and **ESPNU**, which is up 75% from last year's finals (two games). Game 1 on Saturday had 2.75 million viewers—the most-watched Game 1 on record for ESPN—and Sunday's Game 2 had 2.25 million viewers. The winner-take-all Game 3 on Monday was the most-watched MCWS contest on record for ESPN with 3.58 million viewers, peaking at 4.2 million. – The Ally 400 averaged a total audience delivery of 3.23 million viewers on **NBC**, **Peacock** and **NBC Sports** platforms. The race was the most-watched NASCAR Cup Series season opener in three years and was the most-watched sporting event for the weekend. – **Hallmark Channel's** "June Weddings" programming event wrapped up last weekend, and the network checked in as the most-watched entertainment cable net for the month in total day among households. For this past weekend, Hallmark was the most-watched across entertainment cable net in weekend prime among households, W18+, P18+ and total viewers. Hallmark reached 20 million unduplicated total viewers for the overall June Weddings slate.

## CARRIAGE

**OUTtv** and **Fuse Media's** FAST channel **OUTtv Proud** launched on **Pluto TV** in the U.S. The channel was already available on Pluto TV in Canada, and over the past four weeks it's seen an increase in total minutes by 34% compared to the prior four weeks.

## FIBER FRENZY

**Optimum's** fiber network is now live in Brownfield and Hereford, Texas. Residents can get in on symmetrical gigabit speeds, unlimited data, increased bandwidth and Smart WiFi, as well as the Optimum Mobile service. New customers who sign up for an internet and mobile bundle can be eligible for monthly savings.

## DOING GOOD

**AT&T** is expanding its initiative that spotlights women athletes and their adventures off the court. As part of the third iteration of the "She's Connected" series, the company is adding more programming and rolling out a new contest to recognize local women-owned small businesses that have an impact on their communities. The grand prize is \$20,000, a free year of AT&T service and devices and a chance to be showcased in a She's Connected episode. Nominations are open through August 31. This year, the series features WNBA players *A'ja Wilson* and *Arike Ogunbowale* and USWNT athletes *Kelley O'Hara* and *Mallory Swanson*.

## ON THE CIRCUIT

Registration for **The WICT Network** Leadership Conference is open for both in-person and virtual attendants. Set for September 18-19 at the New York Marriott Marquis, this year's theme is "Co-Create the Future" with a focus on leadership in a modern workforce governed by AI and an increased culture of accountability. Those who register now can still get the early bird pricing and save \$100.

## PROGRAMMING

**ESPN** will be the main home for Wimbledon in the U.S. once again. It'll have over 285 hours of live coverage across **ABC**, **ESPN**, **ESPN2**, **ESPN Deportes** and **ESPN+**. ESPN+ will have coverage of the qualifiers, which began Monday, and it'll also have feeds from multiple courts with featured matches. From July 3-7, ESPN will begin coverage at 6am each day. The middle weekend (July 8 and 9) will commence at 8am on ESPN before switching to ABC from 1-4pm. The ladies' semifinals start July 13 at 8am and the gentlemen's will follow July 14 at 8am—both on ESPN. The ladies' and gentlemen's championships will wrap up July 15 and 16, respectively, with both being on ESPN and starting at 9am.

## PEOPLE

**Newsmax** promoted *Jim Tremblay* to EVP/CRO of Sales after serving as SVP, Ad Sales. He takes over from *Sam Moser*, who's moving to EVP, Sales Strategy. Tremblay was with **Fox** ad sales for 19 years before joining Newsmax in Feb. 2020. At Fox, he held an array of sales management positions across its cable, broadcast and sports properties. – Former BuzzFeed Head of Development *Jonathan Noah* is headed to **Law&Crime** as its new Head of Partnerships and Development. Noah will establish new collaborations with other top true crime creators on social media as well as **YouTube**, and he'll help expand Law&Crime's original programming. Law&Crime is also promoting *Mara Soucie* from Executive-in-Charge to EVP, Productions. The former **Viacom/MTV Networks** leader will oversee the management of production operations in all third-party and on-network productions.

Think about that for a minute...

The Bells Are Ringing

Commentary by Steve Effros

No, not wedding bells, although there's been a marriage which I'll get to in a moment. These are alarm bells, and even though we are now entering what are supposed to be the summer doldrums, I'm seeing all sorts of things happening which cause me to suggest that it's going to be a very busy time, even if that means just getting ready for what's coming.

Let's first get the "marriage" out of the way. Entertainment and information distribution has clearly tied the knot with data distribution. What used to be predominantly a world of over-the-air television and cable television bundled, linear content has moved to a data distribution format (which can also be distributed over the air or via cables) we now call broadband.

The broadband world is very different, however. It allows for total non-linear distribution. "On demand." But we haven't figured out what a truly successful long-term business plan is for either the distributors or the producers. That's still a work in progress. Unfortunately, as usual, regulation has fallen woefully behind the curve. That's why the alarm bells are going off for me.

One example is the recent comment by the current FCC Chair, Jessica Rosenworcel, that she believes the Commission should be actively exploring new rules regarding "junk fees." The suggestion is that there must be an "all-in" price, a single number that customers should be given. Now there are two different issues I would immediately raise about this. The first is that this issue was fought many years ago by cities trying to hide the fees (i.e. taxes) they impose on cable customers. It's much easier to adopt a tax if those paying it are not made fully aware that the money is not going to the service provider, it's going to the government.

So it's no surprise that the government would like to hide that tax in the overall price. Notice that in virtually every other sale of goods on the internet the price published does not include "taxes and fees." They are added at "checkout."

The second problem is that it was acknowledged that the FCC doesn't have jurisdiction over broadband video distribution from "edge providers" such as Netflix, Google, Apple, etc. In

other words, these new rules would apply to only one of the competitors! Legally I think that's accurate. The FCC is way behind the curve because Congress, being essentially non-functional in this area, has not yet accounted for the marriage of information and broadband distribution. But shouldn't that argue for a focus on clearing up the inconsistency rather than forging ahead with skewed regulation?

The same thing is true with the battle over who and how we need to regulate, or "put guardrails" around data distribution, privacy, transparency, AI and the like. It makes no sense to apply those regulations to only one part of the complex privately built infrastructure enabling that communication. To be sure, there are lots of different entities wanting a part of that power, from the FCC to the FTC, NTIA, Commerce Department and many more. And maybe all of them should have the part that they have expertise in. But those decisions need to be made first, not piecemeal regulation of one or another part of the puzzle.

And speaking of multiple power centers, just look at the recent announcement about over \$40 billion assigned to promoting the construction of broadband throughout the country. Not only federal agencies but every state government will be involved. And there will be fierce competition for experienced workers to do all that new and lucrative funded work. Make darn sure your employees are happy, because there's going to be lots of competition for their skills in the near future!

As I said, the bells are ringing!



Steve

T:202-630-2099  
steve@effros.com

(Steve Effros was President of CATA for 23 years and is now an advisor and consultant to the cable industry. His views do not necessarily reflect the views of Cablefax.)



**WHERE AND WHEN**  
**July 30 - Aug. 2**  
**Minneapolis**

**FOR MORE INFO AND**  
**REGISTRATION**

[www.theindependentshow.org](http://www.theindependentshow.org)



