

Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

Golden Ticket: YouTube TV Ready for Sunday Ticket

For 29 years, the NFL's prized Sunday Ticket offering found its home on **DirectTV**. Now Sunday Ticket is entering a new, digital chapter with the package being exclusive on **YouTube** and **YouTube TV**. It reflects the league's foray into the digital space that was first catalyzed by **Prime Video** acquiring the rights to Thursday Night Football. YouTube VP, Product Management, Connected TV & Infrastructure Christian Oestlien gave us a preview of what to expect as Week 1 of the 2023 NFL gets fully underway this weekend.

What makes you convinced NFL Sunday Ticket will be a success on YouTube and YouTube TV?

We've been delivering a great NFL experience for the past six years with YouTube TV. And on YouTube, supporting major live sporting events is something we are very familiar with, as we've hosted the Paulistão, the biggest soccer tournament in Brazil, and streamed the Olympics and World Cup for viewers in multiple markets. Our work over the past several years to improve and enhance our experience has prepared us for the launch of NFL Sunday Ticket this year.

In your eyes, what are the most important aspects to focus on for Sunday Ticket as the season unfolds?

We want to deliver an experience that feels unique to YouTube without disrupting the core game. We have signature features, such as Multiview and Key Plays, that fans are excited

about, and we're also adding YouTube features that users know and love such as live chat and polling, with shopping integrations later this season. Our focus has been on finding ways to make this a more immersive experience for NFL fans, so they can go deeper into the game they love.

Sunday Ticket was previously with DirecTV for nearly 30 years. How do you envision YouTube and YouTube TV changing the way fans consume NFL content/Sunday Ticket?

We're thinking more about how to enhance the football-watching experience and how to offer an NFL fan the most comprehensive set of options to watch the content they want. We'll continue to build and add innovative product features, but what's even more unique about YouTube is the ability to get all the content you may want—whether it's live games, highlights, commentary, or original NFL programming, or even the vast amount of YouTube creator content on YouTube. This year, the NFL is providing YouTube creators exclusive access to select league footage from games and major events, and we're really excited to see what they do with access that's never been shared in this way before.

The multiview option gives viewers a selection of combinations but doesn't let them choose each specific game. Why is that, and are there plans to open that selection up in the future?

Our goal with multiview is to make the feature available to viewers with almost any connected TV device. To achieve this, we process the video feeds and stitch them together in the



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DECEMBER 6, 2023

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cloud to make multiview possible. During this NFL season, viewers will be able to choose from an extensive selection of 4-game, 3-game, and 2-game multiview combinations every Sunday. Over time, we'll think about how to add more capabilities to the multiview feature.

There have been a lot of deals and giveaways rolled out over the offseason. What's been the strategy for growing your early subscriber base, and will the frequency of these deals/giveaways lessen over the year?

We wanted to offer viewers this season as much choice as possible in how they wanted to sign up for NFL Sunday Ticket. YouTube and the NFL have a lot of relationships with a variety of partners and we often discuss new ways to work with each other. We don't have anything new to announce at this point, but the great thing about these partnerships is that it gives viewers more choice and access to different ways to sign up for NFL Sunday Ticket.

When the season wraps up, how will you gauge first-year success?

The number of subscriptions is an important metric, but not the only one. We really want to make sure we're building an offering that current NFL fans are excited about and want to come back for next season, and future NFL fans are enticed to watch for the first time. Ultimately, we want to get it right and deliver a truly unique YouTube NFL experience.

DIRECTV SUNDAY TICKET TALK RUFFLES SOME FEATHERS

The NFL is accusing DirecTV of deceptive advertising when it comes to NFL Sunday Ticket. It stems from its campaign featuring Chiefs tight end *Travis Kelce* saying the distributor gives viewers access to every game. It specifies in the fine print that those games are only available on DirecTV's Gemini streaming device and if a customer were to have a separate subscription to YouTube or YouTube TV. "YouTube and YouTube TV are the only place to go for fans at home wanting to subscribe to NFL Sunday Ticket. We are aware of consumer confusion resulting from advertising in the marketplace," *Jeff Miller*, NFL's EVP, Communications said in a statement. "The NFL wants its millions of fans to know where to get NFL Sunday Ticket and that we stand against deceptive advertising." DirecTV said that if consumers are confused it's because where to watch football is more fragmented than ever. "Our advertising is clear, and just as we've done for 30 years we'll continue to deliver access to the national, regional and local sports our customers want without having to switch inputs on their TV or leaving the DirecTV experience," a spokesperson said. DirecTV hasn't fully stepped away from NFL Sunday Ticket, either. It remains the

commercial rights holder and it announced Friday that it will be the package's exclusive provider in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The latter comes after a *Sports Business Journal* report revealed YouTube TV had informed the league it [wouldn't be able to make Sunday Ticket available](#) in the two territories until November at the earliest. YouTube TV had tried to prevent the NFL from allowing DirecTV to step in until the vMVPD was able to set up Sunday Ticket in those areas.

HEARST-DISH LATEST BLACKOUT

Perhaps we should start counting the number of consumers who can view programming instead of those who can't? **DISH** joined what we're dubbing Blackout September, with the loss of 37 **Hearst Television** broadcast channels in 27 markets around 2pm ET Friday. "Hearst is demanding tens of millions of dollars in rate increases that would affect customers, while it devalues its product by making programming available elsewhere, even as viewership declines," DISH said. Of course, Hearst has a different view: "We have made significant investments to deliver top tier programming to our viewers and DISH is seeking the right to carry our stations at below market rates, which is neither fair nor reasonable." It's probably not much comfort to impacted subs that they aren't alone headed into the first weekend of NFL football. **DirecTV** customers have been without 159 **Nexstar** stations since the beginning of July (and those in **White Knight Broadcasting** and **Mission Broadcasting** markets have been without those stations since last October). There's of course the **Charter-Disney** spat, which in addition to ESPN, includes the **ABC** stations in major markets like L.A., NYC, Philadelphia and Chicago. And DISH customers have been without **Cox Media** stations since November and White Knight and Mission since January.

NY GOVERNOR WADES INTO CHARTER-DISNEY DISPUTE

NY Governor *Kathy Hochul* on Friday directed the Department of Public Service to ensure **Charter** delivers refunds to customers who've experienced disruptions from its carriage dispute with **Disney**. She also urged Disney to provide programming while negotiations continue. "It's simple: if you pay your cable bill, you deserve to get the services you pay for," she said in a statement. "An ongoing corporate dispute is forcing customers to miss some of the highest profile televised events of the year – the least these companies can do is provide a refund. Disney and Charter must continue negotiating in good faith to ensure affordability and consumer choice. I also urge Disney to continue providing its programming under the terms of the prior agreement while negotia-

tions continue.” The Department of Public Service sent a letter to Charter asking for details on refunds. “We are encouraged by Charter’s CEO statements to investors that customers will be treated fairly and provided with appropriate refunds. However, at this time there is insufficient information about how such credits will be provided, and that is resulting in customer confusion and an increasing number of customer complaints to our call center,” wrote PSC Chair and department CEO *Rory Christian*.

CARRIAGE

Allen Media’s Local Now is partnering with global distributor **Banijay Rights** to bring six FAST channels to the Local Now platform: **Deal or No Deal US, Fear Factor, The Biggest Loser, Wipeout Xtra, Love Quest** and **McLeod’s Daughters**.

FIBER FRENZY

WOW! has commenced construction of its fiber network in Livingston, Genesee and Oakland Counties in Michigan. **WOW!** expects to add over 80,000 new homes in the state, which will bring the number of targeted homes passed to 260,000 as part of its greenfield expansion.

PEOPLE

Jennifer Hightower was promoted to EVP/CLO of **Cox Enterprises**, where she’ll lead the company’s legal function, serve as a corporate secretary supporting Cox’s board and be the lead legal advisor on policy and strategic initiatives. She reports to Chairman/CEO *Alex Taylor*. Hightower joined the Cox family in 1997 as Senior Counsel at **Cox Communications**. She switched to Cox Enterprises in 2020 where she was most recently EVP, General Counsel and Corporate Secretary.

ON THE CIRCUIT

Will Packer, founder and CEO of Will Packer Productions, will be a speaker at the 37th Annual **NAMIC** Conference, Sept. 19-20, NYC. He’ll be joined by **MSNBC** correspondent *Trymaine Lee* to headline the Sept. 20 general session. Packer has been involved with **NBCU’s** Global Talent Development & Inclusion group and its Executive Connect initiative, which provides year-long rotational internships for HBCU and Cal State University system students.

CABLEFAX DASHBOARD

Social Media Hits



Research

(Source: [Inscope 2023 TV Market Trends](#))

- 5% of U.S. cable/satellite households quit viewing on cable/satellite from Q1 to Q2 2023. That is slightly higher than the 4.5% quarterly average for quitting cable/satellite that occurred since Q3 2022.
- 9% of U.S. cable/satellite homes reduced their viewing of linear by 75% or more from Q2 2022 to Q2 2023, but didn't fully quit. While 8.4% had a drop of 50-75% in cable/satellite viewing time in Q2 2023 from Q2 2022.
- FAST viewing time increased by 70% in Q2 2023 compared to Q2 2022.

Up Ahead

SEPT. 14: [2023 Cablefax Most Powerful Women Nomination Deadline](#)

SEPT 18-19: [The WICT Network Leadership Conference](#); NYC

SEPT 19-20: [NAMIC 37th Annual Conference](#); NYC

SEPT 20: [The Walter Kaitz Dinner](#); NYC

SEPT 26-28: [Mobile World Congress](#), Vegas

Quotable

"Anna brings with her a wealth of telecommunications experience, a substantial record of public service, and a history of working to ensure the United States stays on the cutting edge of keeping us all connected. Her international expertise will be a real asset to the agency. I look forward to working with her to advance the agency's mission to ensure the benefits of modern communications reach everyone, everywhere and that the United States can continue to lead in the digital age."

- FCC Chairwoman Jessica Rosenworcel on Anna Gomez's confirmation by the U.S. Senate

