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STREET & SMITH'S
SportsBusiness
JOURNAL

SBJ/November 7-13, 2011/In Depth

We asked the experts

What's the one issue you will be following in the sports media marketplace over the next 12 months?

By **John Ourand**, Staff Writer

Published November 7, 2011, Page 20

College sports rights



"The next 12 months will continue to be a roller-coaster ride for Division I college sports. The reality is that college sports have never been more valuable as a media property, but as long as individual schools have the ability to jump from one conference to another, the stability of a conference — and its ability to maintain or secure lucrative television agreements — will be in jeopardy. The big may get bigger, but how many conferences will be able to duplicate the success of the Big Ten and the Pac-12, who secured lucrative rights deals and put themselves in a position to generate additional revenue and exposure by creating networks that make sense geographically because they are fueled by the passion and tradition of regional rivalries?"

— **Gil Kerr**, principal, **Kerr Media Ventures**

Stagnant economy's effect on ad rates and rights fees



"Ad sales and rights fees for major sports events have never been healthier despite an economy that has been very weak for a number of years and is expected to remain so for the foreseeable future. It's as though there has been a reverse correlation between the economy and the sports television marketplace. This phenomenon can possibly be attributed to healthy corporate earnings and large cash reserves of consumer goods and services companies despite the generally poor economy. But at some point, one would think that high unemployment, a prolonged housing slump and generally poor economic prospects would start to erode the sports television marketplace."

— **Joel Lulla**, president, **Joel Lulla LLC**

Launches of RSNs in Houston and Los Angeles

"For the first time in many years, new cable-operator-owned RSNs will launch in markets that have been dominated by Fox (or their predecessors) since the beginning of the cable era. These networks will face competition from the existing networks, but have the dominant, 'must have' programming already committed. With developed telco overbuilds in both



markets, the roll-outs will cover new ground. Plus, Time Warner Cable in L.A. will debut the first U.S. Spanish RSN.”

—*Ed Desser, president, Desser Sports Media*

Smart college content



“I’m looking for content about the humans and games, not exit fees and mega-conferences. There has been an explosion of hungry digital and linear players seeking original college news, information and opinion, from AOL, Bleacher Report, CBS, ESPN and IMG, to the new NBC, Silver Chalice, Turner and Yahoo!.”

— *Len DeLuca, Len DeLuca & Associates*

Will the sports market bubble burst?



“Ad rates for TV sports are rising. So, too, are cable carriage fees. The realignment of college conferences is fueled by dollars. Over the next 12 months, there appears to be no letdown as pricing continues to escalate unabated. At some point, though, there will be a ‘day of reckoning.’”

— *Brad Adgate, senior vice president of research, Horizon Media*

NFL TV rights



“I am following the future NFL TV rights and how the NFL ultimately decides to go to market with their future rights packages. This decision will not only have an impact for the NFL and their owners, players and current business partners, but it will also have a potentially enormous ripple effect across the sports media landscape and will surely alter the competitive dynamics between other properties trying to sell their media rights during this period. The NFL rights have the potential to substantially impact the entire \$100 billion-a-year ecosystem of (multichannel video programming distributors) and other forms of competitive distribution as well as the overall advertising marketplace.”

— *Chris Bevilacqua, Bevilacqua Media Co.*

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