

Time Warner Cable gets ESPN3.com in new deal

September 3 2010, By RYAN NAKASHIMA , AP Business Writer

(AP) -- Time Warner Cable Inc. customers will finally get access to the sports website ESPN3.com, even if they are not subscribers of the company's Internet service, according to a long-term deal with The Walt Disney Co. announced Thursday.

In the deal, 12.7 million of Time Warner's video subscribers and 2.4 million Bright House Networks video subscribers will get access to ESPN3.com without an extra charge. ESPN3.com offers full game videos, and recently it carried live World Cup matches that built huge audiences via computer screens in the workplace. About 7.4 million people tuned in to ESPN3.com at one point during the tournament, on average watching two hours each.

Time Warner Cable and Bright House had long been holdouts on ESPN3.com, which has been around in different forms since 2001. They said Disney's pattern of tying fees to the number of [Internet subscribers](#) was inappropriate, since not all its Internet customers wanted to pay extra to access a single website.

In conceding the deal terms on ESPN3.com, in exchange Disney cut its most extensive deal ever with the companies. They had not renegotiated since 2000, only agreeing to a three-year extension in 2007.

Among the expanded offerings, Time Warner is launching a new college football channel called "ESPN Goal Line" that gives fans a live peek at games around the nation on Saturdays, a similar offering to the NFL

Network's "NFL RedZone." The first program starts Saturday for sports tier subscribers. A similar service called "ESPN Buzzer Beater" will be offered for the college basketball season in January.

Disney also won cash payment for granting [Time Warner Cable](#) the right to retransmit signals from four ABC stations and also secured carriage of a new 24-hour channel called Disney Junior, a rebranding of its SOAPnet channel, when it launches in 2012.

Carriage of other channels such as Disney Channel, ABC Family, Disney XD and ESPN 3D was included in the wide-ranging agreement.

The deal came after the companies indicated Sunday that there wouldn't be a damaging signal interruption of the kind that cut several minutes off of ABC's Oscar telecast to millions of Cablevision subscribers in a fee dispute in March.

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