

Indians Unveil New Network: SportsTime Ohio

Written by {ga=consigliere}

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In today's press conference from Fastball Sports Productions President Jim Liberatore, several questions surrounding the Indians new TV network were answered.

The name of the new network will be "SportsTime Ohio" (STO), and 130 games will be broadcast on the channel with an additional 20 games on WKYC Channel 3. Eight spring training games will be broadcast on STO, with the first game on March 12th at 4:30.

The new network will include programming catered to Ohio sports fans, with the possibility of local high school games, college games and even professional games airing on the new channel. It was mentioned that they are talking to the MAC and some high school teams (St. Ed's) to broadcast games. There also will be Cleveland Browns programming during the season on the new channel.

While this was not alluded to by Liberatore for obvious reasons, there has been some speculation that the Indians are also trying to get Ohio State Buckeyes programming added to the network, namely the non-ABC or ESPN games which currently air on Channel 43 (UPN) in Cleveland.

Indians games will see a major improvement in production with two additional cameras being added to the current eight camera lineup, and all home games will be broadcast in high definition (HD). All 20 games scheduled to air on WKYC Channel 3 will be broadcast in HD, meaning a total of 83 games will get the HD treatment.

The announcing team returns intact with John Sanders, Rick Manning and Mike Hegan sharing duties in the booth. The big change is in the pre-game show, as Jim Donovan will handle pre-game duties and the show is expected to be revamped and be much improved. It wasn't mentioned, but Matt Underwood is expected to assist Donovan with pre-game responsibilities. Also, Donovan is expected to handle play-by-play duties for the on-air broadcasts on WKYC Channel 3.

In addition to the pre-game show, Donovan will host a half hour weekly show in-season on WKYC Channel 3 Monday's at 7:00pm, and the show will repeat on STO numerous times throughout the week. In the offseason, Donovan will still do the weekly half hour show, but it will only air on STO and focus more on the players and the offseason happenings.

There will be some minor league programming, but there are no plans to air any games. Speculation is the minor league content will be a wrap-up show with player features and news from the Indians minor league affiliates.

The current state of the TV and satellite deals was expanded upon by Liberatore. He mentioned that it was their own fault for getting off to a

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slow start with the TV deals, and that offers were sent out to cable providers two and a half weeks ago. Still, he is confident that they can get all the TV deals done except one, and he mentioned that 90% of the fans who saw Indians games previously will definitely see them by Opening Day. Speculation would seem to point the “one” cable company him not being confident in is Cox Cable.

For more information on the new TV deal, check out the full press release at the new official website for the new station: <http://www.sportstimeo.com/index.jsp>