Sun Belt Conference and ESPN announce multiyear agreement

ESPN is exclusive national cable and satellite provider

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100,000-plus local viewers see bowl win

NEW ORLEANS – The Sun Belt Conference and ESPN announced today a new agreement that extends the network's relationship with the conference through the 2019-20 academic year. The agreement, which will take effect beginning in the 2012-13 academic year, will expand the conference's national television exposure and makes ESPN the exclusive national cable and satellite provider of the Sun Belt Conference. "The Sun Belt Conference's relationship with ESPN is strong as the particulars of this agreement clearly show," said Sun Belt Conference Commissioner Wright Waters. "Our league benefits greatly from the exposure that ESPN provides and this new agreement will give us a greater opportunity to showcase our outstanding institutions and student-athletes." The new agreement will give Sun Belt Conference football a minimum of two games on either ESPN or ESPN2 and also a minimum of five games on ESPNU that will be scheduled for Thursday or Friday nights. Additionally, ESPN Regional Television will have the right to produced, distribute and syndicate up to five football games each year. ESPN, ESPN2, and ESPNU, the 24-hour college sports network, will also be granted additional opportunities to select games to air. This trio of networks will be granted a 12-day rolling window during the season to select additional games to televise. Games available for selection are after the third Saturday of the season. "We very much value our longstanding partnership with the Sun Belt Conference and gladly extend our exclusive relationship for another eight years. We have more ways than ever to showcase their institutions across a variety of platforms," said Burke Magnus, ESPN senior vice president, college sports programming. ESPN will also continue to air the Sun Belt Conference men's basketball championship game on the Tuesday prior to Selection Sunday. Sun Belt Conference men's basketball teams will make a minimum of four appearances annually on ESPN or ESPN2 during the regular season. Additionally, ESPN Regional Television maintains the right to produce, distribute and syndicate up to eight men's basketball games annually. Sun Belt Conference women's basketball will be featured on ESPNU as the league's women's basketball

championship game or one regular season games will be televised on the 24-hour college sports network. Additional opportunities exist for the Sun Belt Conference to have additional sport coverage and ESPN maintains first selection rights to all events. ESPN3.com will also maintain the right to exclusively produce and distribute games of their choosing. In addition any games that are produced locally (i.e. regional network or local station) may be aired on ESPN3.com and ESPN Full Court or ESPN GamePlan. ESPN3.com is a live multi-screen sports network that delivers thousands of live, global sports events annually. It is available in nearly 70 million homes at no additional cost to fans who receive their high-speed Internet connection or video subscription from an affiliated service provider. ESPN3.com has already contributed greatly to the number of games available to fans as 13 contests of the 2011 football slate are tabbed for the broadband network with the possibility of more to be added. The Sun Belt Conference became known as a leader in college sports broadcasting in 1979 by being the first conference to sign a long-term contract with the ESPN cable network. Since that time the Sun Belt Conference has had every men's basketball championship game televised live on ESPN – making it the longest partnership between ESPN and any collegiate athletic conference. While men's basketball was the catalyst for the Sun Belt Conference and ESPN's relationship during the early years of both the network and the league, the last decade has seen a number of new opportunities arrive for the Sun Belt Conference to showcase itself on the ESPN networks. "Being one of only 11 Bowl Championship Series (BCS) conferences has elevated the Sun Belt Conference on the national level," said Waters. "Each year we continue to set new records for television distribution and because of this deal and the league's expanding profile we will continue to see more and more of our teams compete on highest level in front of a national audience." **What they are saying about the Sun Belt Conference-ESPN Agreement**

Sun Belt Conference Executive Committee President and Troy Chancellor Dr. Jack Hawkins:

"The relationship our conference shares with ESPN provides an opportunity to showcase our student-athletes and our institutions --and this agreement is good news for our league and our fans. ESPN and the Sun Belt Conference have matured together and I am pleased that we are going to continue what has been a mutually beneficial relationship." **Middle Tennessee President Sidney McPhee:**

"We feel this is a win-win for the SBC and ESPN and are very much pleased that it will provide additional exposure for Middle Tennessee State University and our top-notch athletics programs," said Sidney A. McPhee, president of Middle Tennessee State University. "We appreciate the hard work by the conference and the network in making this a reality." **Sun Belt Conference Executive Committee Athletic Director Chair and Arkansas State AD Dr. Dean Lee**

"We are delighted that the relationship between ESPN and the Sun Belt Conference continues to blossom. I think that is a testament to the quality institutions and programs that comprise our league and how those programs have raised their competitive level to make themselves more attractive. We are excited about the opportunities and exposure this agreement will not only provide for Arkansas State, but for our entire conference." **Louisiana-Monroe Head Football Coach Todd Berry**

"I'm sure I represent all the other coaches when I say that the opportunity for exposure is so important in recruiting. The opportunity to showcase your program, university and conference to a more national audience is a wonderful thing for the Sun Belt Conference. The new partnership with ESPN shows the respect for the Sun Belt Conference is growing as is the Conference." **Florida Atlantic Head Men's Basketball Coach Mike Jarvis**

"This package represents a big step forward for the league in terms of national exposure and will continue to raise the profile of the conference and its members in the future. It is the dream of every college basketball player in the nation to be on ESPN and this agreement helps that dream move closer to reality for every player in the Sun Belt." **UALR Head Women's Basketball Coach Joe**

Foley

"Having exposure on ESPN is a great opportunity for every team in the conference to get national exposure. The exposure will help every team with recruiting and will allow the nation to see what a great women's basketball conference we play in.”

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