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This Week's News

## Tennis Channel bolsters Web site

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Tennis Channel has struck a multiyear technology partnership with NeuLion Inc. to power its online video content, and has agreed to a separate distribution deal with Yahoo! Sports for live coverage of French Open matches.

The NeuLion deal, which took effect last week with the start of the French Open, provides for a new, higher-resolution video player, social-networking components such as video sharing, and plans for e-commerce and auction functions.

Yahoo!, meanwhile, last week began pushing users seeking French Open content from its site to the video player at tennischannel.com. The portal previously partnered in 2007 with Tennis Channel primarily on highlights video and some live content. This time, it gained the one-click access to the network's full battery of live content for the French Open as a potential forerunner to a longer-term deal.

The two pacts follow Tennis Channel's formation of digital partnerships with Hulu, Sling Media and YouTube, among others, as well as the creation of official extensions on Facebook and Twitter.

"This is about us pushing out all of our video content in the most formidable way possible," said Robyn Miller, Tennis Channel senior vice president of marketing. "We're looking to go everywhere our fans are."

The deals have already begun to pay dividends: The network's May 25 traffic at tennischannel.com set a one-day company record. The video content will be initially supported by advertising, with both NeuLion and Tennis Channel selling inventory. For the future, there are developing plans to create subscription-based and pay-per-view online content.

For NeuLion, the new deal adds to a client portfolio that includes the NFL, NHL, Indy Racing League and dozens of major colleges.

"We're looking to drive three specific objectives here: improve distribution, particularly for outer-court matches that otherwise would not be shown anywhere in the United States; enhance the user experience; and improve monetization," said Chris Wagner, NeuLion co-founder and executive vice president. "Within that framework, we're after the creation of a whole new broadband strategy for the Tennis Channel."



The deals include an improved video player.

The latest Tennis Channel alliances arrive as the cable outlet continues to receive increased competition online from ESPN. That network's ESPN360.com service last month announced an expanded deal with

the All England Lawn and Tennis Club that, among other elements, doubles the amount of online video coverage it will produce from Wimbledon.

“What ESPN is doing is good for the sport,” Miller said. “It speaks to the increasing mainstream appeal of tennis, and we see that interest growing not only for the majors but throughout the year.”