

Reading Time: 9 minutes

I write this less than 3 days before the **real** start of Week 1 of the College Football Season. Yes, there's been some Week 0 games, and some of the Group of 6 teams start playing tomorrow night US time, but CFB as we really care about it starts Noon Sunday. And after weeks of me entering the phrase 'College Football on UK TV 2025' into my phone enough times that Safari gets the point after typing in 'Co', [it's been confirmed, that DAZN has stepped in to carry](#):

- Up to 25 College Football Games a week.
- ESPN College Gameday
- The entire College Football Playoff
- Up to 20 NCAAB games across men's and women's competitions a week and;
- 68 games across the men's and women's March Madness.

That's a lot, and for now, it's all free without having to have any additional packages. But, there's always a catch or two, so let's set out the scene.

What Won't Be Shown.

If you're a Big Ten fan like me, sorry. You won't be seeing much of the conference at all outside of halftime shows on ESPN games, especially when conference play starts, as ESPN has no Big Ten football rights so to speak. Back in 2022, the Big Ten signed a three way deal with FOX, CBS, and NBC to air their marquee games, with the rest ending up on FS1 / CBS Sports, Big Ten Network, or USA Network perhaps? This means that for every game where a Big Ten member is a **home team**, the games will air on one of those networks.

The same will apply to the Pac-2, so if you're an Oregon State or Wazzu fan, then sorry, you too are out of luck, as their games will be on CBS Sports / the CW in the US for the foreseeable future. And even though ESPN **does** own the rights to the majority of the Big 12 (Defence Optional) conference, they have this strange scenario where third tier rights can end up pretty much anywhere. Oklahoma put it on Pay Per View at least once, because they could when they were still in the Big 12.

Why is this the case? It seems that this is a sub-licensing deal by DAZN from ESPN. It explains why there's a mixture of College Football and College Basketball in here, as ESPN has an extensive NCAAB inventory, shows the women's March Madness, and has the international rights to the Men's March Madness (Which is why in previous years you saw different graphics and heard different announcers). Whilst TNT Sports (US) has two CFP games, these are actually sub-licensed from ESPN, and remain ESPN's property to sell elsewhere.

Sky Sports will most likely still show Notre Dame games, as the only Independent school actually making money off of a TV deal has its home games on NBC, owned by Comcast, who also now own Sky Sports.

What Will Be Shown (Most Likely)

Let's start at the top. ESPN College Gameday is an American institution at this point. Travelling from campus to campus, it's something which brings the true meaning of tailgating and getting ready for a Saturday in the Fall to life. Week 1 will be extra special, as Lee Corso retires from the crew, only missing a handful of games since 1987. I was still a thought in my birth father's brain back then! The only person with a resume anywhere near this close is Kirk Herbstreit, who love him or hate him has been on the set since 1993.

If you're an SEC fan, an ACC fan, or a Big 12 fan, then good news. You'll likely get a game a week from one of these conferences **at least**. With 25 games a week, you can assume that in the 4 broadcasting windows, you'll likely see between 2 - 4 games per window, covering what would be on ABC, ESPN, and ESPN 2. This means that each of these conferences will be well represented, with additional games coming from ESPN owned SEC / ACC Networks. As ESPN has full control of the SEC's media rights, expect to see a lot of Alabama, Texas, Florida, LSU, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Auburn, Texas A&M, Arkansas, South Carolina, Kentucky, Missouri, Vanderbilt (Anyone remember their upset over 'Bama last year?), Mississippi State, Ol' Miss, and Georgia.

In terms of what makes up the rest of the 25 games? This will likely be a mixture of The AAC, Sun Belt Conference, MACtion, and the odd Conference USA game. A lot of these will be weekday games, with MACtion typically being on Tuesdays or Wednesdays when conference play starts, Conference USA playing any day apart from Mondays, The AAC getting the Matt Barrie & Tom Luginbill treatment on Thursdays.

In terms of mix, especially as we get to conference play (Week 3/4 onwards), I'd argue that it'll be a 60-40 split between Saturday games and the rest of the week. In terms of championship games, the biggest loser in this mix for UK fans is the Big Ten, though if they had their way, conference games will be dead by 2026 in place of a 32 team playoff. This all assumes that DAZN are going to be nice to us, and not give us a load of FCS / DII games (Which ESPN shows a lot more of than you think).

For NCAAB, this doesn't even start for another 9 weeks, but as media rights amongst conferences is more convoluted, especially when you get to the Mid Major Conferences, expect to see a lot of names you wouldn't normally see on the Gridiron, in primetime, or both. The advantage DAZN has here over linear TV networks such as Sky / TNT Sports is that there's no actual limit to how many streams they can have simultaneously. Yes, there are technically 10 TNT Sports channels, but most of these get used about 10 times a year as overfill, and Sky has Sky Sports+ and not much else.

It's Free (For Now).

Yes. The College Football gods looked down at Aviva Stadium in Week 0, and decided that the UK must have the option to watch US college sports, and it must be for free!

This could be some short term marketing ploy to get eyeballs on DAZN, then start charging as we get into conference play and towards rivalry week. Afterall, DAZN does have a vested interest here, as they are the distributor of NFL Game Pass, allowing you to watch every NFL game except for the ones that Sky (But not Channel 5) show in the early afternoon and late afternoon kickoffs. The more people

that watch College Football, the more likely they realise that they can watch **most** of the NFL on the same platform (Or all, if you're like me a Colts fan. No way we're gonna be game of the week). There's a part of me thinking that there will be some form of CFB / NFL bundle at some point, making it cheaper to buy the two together than one alone **if** DAZN move to a pay model for college sports.

There's also a part of me thinking that this is just a genius strategy between the NFL, ESPN, and DAZN. Not only have ESPN launched their new Direct to Consumer (DTC) bundle this month, they have also inked a deal to buy a ton of NFL Media assets, in exchange for the NFL getting a 10% stake in ESPN. Meanwhile, whilst DAZN is at least known to people in the UK, and used more widely in Europe, if I were to ask 100 random Americans what DAZN was, I'd expect people to question if it's some new form of COVID or something.

When launching a DTC product, you need content, and lots of it. There's no point paying for something that you can still get through your cable provider, and this is something that WWE learned immediately when launching the WWE Network, which was for much of the media landscape a proof of concept for how a DTC model can work. Not only could you watch every PPV / PLE for a monthly subscription 6x cheaper than buying a single PPV, you could also watch WWF Smackdown from 1999, or heck WCW's Bash At The Beach 1996 when the NwO became a thing. As well as live content, you need an archive, and you also need as much live and archival content as you can to keep people motivated to pay the monthly subscription at quieter times of the year.

I'm **assuming** that ESPN and DAZN have done a myriad of sub-licensing deals which ESPN provides something to the UK, Europe and MENA at a very low resource cost for them, in exchange for DAZN exclusive / rights held content. As ESPN are already now fully in the streaming game, it can be as simple as just adding an output feed to DAZN, which isn't complicated. I was doing it from a Studio flat in Birmingham during COVID-19's Lockdown phase, sending feeds to a multitude of TV Networks & Online sources; so long as you have the right keys, the rest is just testing it.

If DAZN decide to actually charge, the easiest price point to consider is what ESPN Player used to cost in the UK, Europe and beyond, which is what essentially this deal is replacing. If memory serves me correctly, this was £80 a year, so £9.99 a month, or a season for £79.99 would be what I would consider to be the upper end of the price point, especially as ESPN player of course had a lot more content than what was announced in this deal. Either that, or it could be DAZN's first step in providing a year long NCAA service, as other sports carry on beyond January, or April.

Final Thoughts

This takes me back 10 years, when I would spend the weeks before a NASCAR / IndyCar season wondering who would actually provide coverage of the season. I in jest commented that Premier Sports would step in, as that's their thing to do. Wait until no-one else wants something, then snap it up cheap, but for once, something more reasonable is out there.

Even though I'm a B1G diehard, and every time I see their Conference Commercial I want to jump onto a plane and start a new life at a Big Ten University, I can live without their games live. B1G have always been great at getting highlights out, and honestly, even if DAZN do start charging, I'll still be saving monthly compared to the amount of headache tablets needed after 3.5 hours of Gus Johnson

and Joel Klatt! With the Power 2 going their own ways with broadcasting, we all knew that it would end up like this.

It didn't have to be this way though you know? Back when TNT/Discovery bought out BT Sport, Andrew Georgiou, president and managing director of WBD Sports Europe [is quoted as saying back in 2023](#).

"BT Sport and Eurosport customers [in the UK] will be able to go to exactly the same places they go today to see the same content," said Georgiou. "The channels will have the same electronic programming guide (EPG) numbers, and nothing changes from a content portfolio perspective. That will continue for a period of time ... Eurosport will remain the brand that the Olympics is produced under."

[BT's own press statement mentions TNT Sports and the NCAA](#), though this is of course largely linked to March Madness. TNT's coverage of NCAAF, or College Football as we like to call it has been limited at best.

It's ironic that CFB really came to the UK because of the post-Setanta Sports debacle, then leading to this random ESPN in the UK situation, then BT Sport, and TNT Sports / Discovery in the UK being about as boneheaded as they were with their NBA rights negotiations in the US. TNT properties (Inside The NBA) in the States will now be on ESPN, and ESPN Products have found refuge with it's new partner, like an RKO, out of nowhere.

Now please. Just let this last for longer than a year!

Peace, Rage And Love xx