TECH

This start-up's app lets anyone from pro athletes to kids in their dorm be a sports announcer

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KEY POINTS

- SportsCastr is a live streaming app that lets users announce games as they happen.
- Some professional athletes are using the app to practice for a media career when they're finished playing on the field.
- The app has raised about $3 million from investors including former NBA Commissioner David Stern and Syracuse University basketball coach Jim Boeheim.

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Sports broadcasting for the masses

If you've ever dreamed of being a sports commentator, it's never been easier to get your voice out to the public, in a high-quality professional way.

A new company called SportsCastr is allowing amateurs the chance to get behind the mic, broadcast games and offer their own sports commentary. Using a mobile phone, the SportsCastr app uses technology with green screens and graphics to give a professional broadcasting look and feel.

"We've created essentially a studio in an app so you can be in your dorm room or you could be in the locker room, and with one click you're live and we make you look great," said Kevin April, CEO of SportsCastr.

It's not just for amateurs. Professional athletes like New York Giants Safety Landon Collins are using SportsCastr to prepare for a media career after his playing years.

"I play in front 120,000 fans, but speaking in front of people I break down," Collins said. "So it took it took a lot of me to do that especially in front of like random people."

Collins, a 3-time Pro Bowl selection, says he's given lots of thought to life after football, and he'd love to be on camera.

"My mom always said I was a handsome young man and I have a face for the camera ... so that's what I want my role to be," said Collins who studied mass communications at the University of Alabama.

Landon Collins Tackles Broadcasting The Giants safety testing out his broadcasting skills for life after football.
Source: Sportscastr

Because so many other football players have broadcast ambitions, the NFL Players Association sees value in SportsCastr. The union invested a minority stake in the company. Other big-name investors include former NBA Commissioner David Stern, Syracuse University basketball coach Jim Boeheim and NBA player-turned broadcaster Steve Smith. April says the company has raised around $3 million so far.

The deal with the NFLPA "has given us complete access to not just current players but retired ones as well," said April.

The company is currently working with players to set up and create opportunities for when their careers end and to try and maximize their time on the field.

"There is a lot of synergy there and we are working very closely together," April said.

The deal with NFLPA allows players to lend their expertise to fans and given them a unique perspective or takeaway.

"I can tell you what happened, why this play was successful or why this person got beat, from the perspective of a defensive player," said Collins.

The Future of Sports Broadcasting? SportsCastr allows amateurs the ability to live broadcast during games and offer their commentary
Source: Sportscastr

SportsCastr has also signed recent deal with the WNBPA and data specialist STATS to provide the same real-time statistics used in normal televised games.

As traditional sports media faces more competition to keep viewers' attention, this could be a hint of how fans will watch sports in the future. The industry has already seen many companies experiment with giving viewers the choice in which stream they want to watch.

For example, during the NCAA basketball tournament, Turner Sports offers the same game in multiple ways, such as a stream where fans of each school can watch announces biased toward their own team.

ESPN has offered similar multi-channel commentator options for major events like the NCAA football championship game. Amazon has experimented with its Thursday Night Football stream, giving viewers a choice of commentators, including an all-women broadcasting team or foreign language streams that customize the viewing experience.

April said SportsCastr hopes to democratize the broadcast even more by providing users the tools to do so.

"The target is really any fan, athlete or anyone with an opinion on sports," said April. "What we believe is that we should get rid of gatekeepers that network television is telling you who you should listen to — that's antiquated."

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