

## **Stephanie Calabrese discusses HiCast Sports Network<sup>®</sup> and how they are Live-Streaming Youth and Amateur Sporting Events across the United States**



**Stephanie Calabrese**  
Chief Operations Officer & Co-Founder

**HiCast Sports Network<sup>®</sup>**

**Interview conducted by:**  
**Bud Wayne, Editorial Executive**  
**CEO CFO Magazine**

**CEO CFO:** Ms. Calabrese, as someone who has been a leader in digital media for over 25 years, being COO of HiCast Sports Network<sup>®</sup> must be very exciting for you.

**Ms. Calabrese:** Yes! I love what I do. Throughout my career I have always worked with technology startups. My business partner, Robert Stribling, came to me with the initial idea and it's been exciting to see our product and this business evolve from an idea on a napkin in a restaurant to the thriving business that it has become today.

**CEO CFO:** You are also a co-founder of HiCast. Take us back to the early days. Where did the idea for the business get its start?

**Ms. Calabrese:** Back in 2010, Robert and I each had children who attended the same school and were playing in different sports. His daughters were playing softball and basketball and his son was playing soccer. My son was playing travel baseball, while my daughter was traveling to baton twirling competitions. We lamented over the fact that we could not be in two or three places at the same time to watch our kids when they were playing in different sports. And how disappointing and frustrating it was to miss an important moment like a big hit or a great play.

Long before live-streaming was even a possibility, we talked about the idea of how amazing it would be if we could hang one camera that would capture an entire game. Then we, as parents, could each get access to that camera and grab the moments of our children that we were most interested to replay or save as memories. That was the initial conversation that sparked the idea for a solution.

Robert and I are both problem solvers but creative in different ways. Robert is an inventor and mechanically-minded. I'm a digital media and content creator with experience in interactive product design and development. We put our skill sets together and started experimenting with early prototypes for several years, then launched our first product in the iTunes App Store in 2017. In those early days we were covering just a handful of baseball venues. As we continued to grow and add more venues, we went on to rebuild our product from the ground up in 2022. We've been growing the business ever since.

**CEO CFO:** How did you decide which role each of you would play in the company; you as COO and Co-Founder, and Robert as CEO and Co-Founder of HiCast?

**Ms. Calabrese:** Robert and I have very complementary skill sets and we work on business strategy together. Rob was the primary investor, funding our concept from the beginning. He's a big picture idea guy, but also architects and leads all of our venue installations in the field and manages our finances. I am more operations-focused. I lead our venue sales and marketing, product development, partnerships, communications and the day-to-day management of our business.

**CEOFCO: What is your geographic reach today and do you see that changing over 2025?**

**Ms. Calabrese:** We have about 250 live-streams across 30 venues, across the United States, as far west as Colorado. However, we have subscribers from all over the world. I expect us to continue to expand our network geographically, with a primary focus in the United States.

**CEOFCO: What are some of the sports that you cover today and do you see that expanding over time?**

**Ms. Calabrese:** We started with baseball and softball, and that was a strategic reason. Number one, it was an outdoor installation, so we knew we had to come up with a technology solution to cover venues with equipment that would have to withstand a variety of weather conditions. Our venues in the Northeast are under snow during the winter. Our venues in the central part of the country get high winds. And here in the Southeast, our venues have to withstand hurricane season and lots of lightning. We started with baseball/softball to come up with a solid solution for outdoor coverage. Number two, it was a field of play we could cover with just one camera, making it an affordable investment. We give the user tools to zoom in and pan around the field as they like to focus on their athlete.

We also cover volleyball, basketball, pickleball, equestrian events, and this year, we have recently expanded our capability to cover rectangular surface sports, including soccer, football, and lacrosse. We are now using AI-powered cameras for those sports because that field of view is so wide. AI-powered cameras allow us to follow the play by auto zooming and panning for a closer view.

**"We offer a total managed solution, so our youth and amateur sports venue partners gain a powerful amenity to extend their live and video-on-demand viewership beyond the stands and increase their revenue potential through subscriptions and advertising. Our partnership enables them to stay focused on event programming, managing their facility, and making the in-park experience the best it can be while we focus on the digital fan experience." Stephanie Calabrese**

**CEOFCO: What are some of the complexities in operating such a business? How does it work? Are cameras already in place at the venues, do you provide the cameras and operate them?**

**Ms. Calabrese:** We partner with youth and amateur sports venues. A venue might be a privately-owned venue, such as the Ripken Baseball parks in Maryland, South Carolina, and Tennessee, or it could be a publicly-owned venue such as Tyger River Park in South Carolina. Some publicly-owned venues are run by privately-managed organizations. Each venue is unique. They vary in size, programming, power and technology infrastructure, etc.

We offer a total managed solution, so our youth and amateur sports venue partners gain a powerful amenity to extend their live and video-on-demand viewership beyond the stands and increase their revenue potential through subscriptions and advertising. Our partnership enables them to stay focused on event programming, managing their facility, and making the in-park experience the best it can be while we focus on the digital fan experience. When we partner with a venue, we come in and assess what it would take to install and manage our network. We'll assess coverage needs for each field of play, power and the internet, their programming, and also understand how they communicate with tournament organizers, teams and patrons. After assessing the venue, we put together a proposal that outlines our scope of work and services for installation and ongoing management of our service, costs and projected income from revenue share. The venue may pay for the upfront cost of our equipment and installation in some cases. In other cases, if the volume of play is substantive and meets our threshold, then we might share the cost of the initial investment. Once we've recouped our investment, then we begin sharing revenue back with our venue partners.

**CEOFCO: Is this totally technology driven or is there a human element with someone sitting in a control room?**

**Ms. Calabrese:** We offer a technology-driven solution. We built our video-streaming platform to automate the operations of our business as much as possible – from the scheduling of cameras, to generating real-time alerts on the

health of our network or performance charts for our venue partners, to managing user accounts and rewarding volunteer scorekeepers, to connecting sponsors with interested buyers. From the beginning, we built our technology platform to optimize the operations of our business, and to keep our quality of service as consistent as possible. This puts us in a great position to scale.

As for the view of the game, the user is in control. For most of our venues, we provide one wide-angle camera view and the user has the ability to zoom in and pan the view as they like to follow their athlete. Some of our baseball/softball venues also have a centerfield camera view, so the user can switch between views when they like by just swiping the view. For soccer, football and lacrosse, AI-powered cameras automate zooming and panning as the camera follows the action on the field.

**CEO CFO: Was this amazing use of technology a part of your original plans?**

**Ms. Calabrese:** Yes. Robert and I really built this business and our platform to take advantage of technology and to be as efficient and scalable as possible. As we continue to grow, we want to minimize the need to increase our overhead. We have automated tools in our platform that make camera scheduling quick and easy. We can auto-detect if there is a power outage at one of our venues, or if a camera gets hit and loses focus so we can adjust it as quickly as possible. We also have tools to make it easy for volunteers to provide scorekeeping and for our venues to access great highlights generated by users at their venue so they can promote these great plays and youth athletes on social media. We can manage all of this from our mobile phones, so the platform makes the day-to-day operations of the business very efficient.

**CEO CFO: For families separated across states and sometimes overseas, this must be real exciting for them. Would you tell us some of the reactions you get from say a grandfather who can finally watch his grandson or granddaughter play an important sports event?**

**Ms. Calabrese:** Oh yes, we hear these all of the time. At times I am able to visit venues and talk with users face-to-face, which is a great source of feedback and helps influence our enhancements to the product. We also hear from users through our support desk which we manage 7-days a week. Anytime a user cancels their subscription, we always ask for feedback about their experience.

I had a grandfather in Illinois reach out to us to share that he was watching a tournament at The Ripken Experience® Pigeon Forge, in Tennessee, share that he was thrilled to use our slow-motion feature to replay his grandson's hits and plays. We heard from a grandmother in Massachusetts, who was so excited to watch her grandson coach a team that was playing in the 13-year-old Babe Ruth World Series at Glen Allen Stadium in Virginia. So many parents travel for work and tune in to watch live or later on-demand in their hotel room. We love hearing from our users and we love seeing comments on our user highlights celebrating great hits and plays shared in social media.

**CEO CFO: Ease of use is also very important especially with seniors?**

**Ms. Calabrese:** Ease of use is so important to us and that is something that we continue to improve based on user feedback. We deploy updates to our product typically on a monthly basis and have an extensive list of feature enhancements in the works currently. Investing in our platform is a priority for us.

Our product is web-responsive, which means that it will work the same way on any device, so whether I am using my computer laptop, or my grandmother is using an older generation of an iPad or my daughter is user is using an Android device, our product features will function in the same way across all devices. This approach, versus having a web-based product + an iPhone app + an Android app makes it much more time and cost effective for us to develop and launch new features, and simplifies the user experience and communication with our support desk.

**CEO CFO: Do you have competition in this space, and if so what sets you apart?**

**Ms. Calabrese:** We do have competition in this space. What sets us apart from other live stream providers are two key differentiators:

1. Our robust platform and quality of service as a turn-key technology partner for top youth and amateur sports venues and organizations. We offer the most comprehensive solution for this market, making it easy for our partners to offer a powerful amenity and reliable support for end users 7-days a week. That level of service, particularly when emotions are

high for parents and grandparents attempting to watch their child play a game, is important for our venue partners. They can stay focused on what's critically important to them – the facility, programming and the in-person experience – while we take on the responsibility for providing the best digital viewing experience.

2. Our ability to support venues with monetization opportunities through revenue share on subscription sales and sponsorships/advertising. Offering revenue share for our venue partners helps them improve their facilities and programming for youth sports, which in turn attracts more tournaments and teams and helps lift the youth sports ecosystem. We have a robust advertising engine built into our platform that can serve digital video ads for local, regional and national sponsors. For venues or event organizers who are already working with sponsors, we can extend their offering by delivering targeted video advertisements with click throughs straight to the sponsor's website and detailed performance analytics.

**CEO/CFO: I would imagine putting this all together would be very expensive. Where did the capital come from initially, was any of it bootstrapped, and do you have the ability to continue to grow?**

**Ms. Calabrese:** We are self-funded and early on had a friends and family raise to help fuel our early product development and venue growth. For the past several years we have funded our growth through our own cash flow. Thankfully, Robert and I each have really broad skill sets too so we can wear several hats. This enables us to continue to invest in our platform and our technology to really make our business as efficient as possible, which makes it easier for us to scale. As we add more venues, as we add more users, scalability is really important to us, and to be able to do that without having to significantly increase our headcount is important. Staying efficient and keeping our costs down keeps us agile so we can fuel growth and make adjustments to our business.

**CEO/CFO: In closing, give us a glimpse into the future of HiCast, and tell us why you are so important to youth sports broadcasting?**

**Ms. Calabrese:** As far as our future, we are really excited about continued growth and providing the best platform and service we can to support our venue partners as they continue to grow. We're passionate about youth sports, and focused on making more games accessible to more people to help bring families and friends together – to celebrate the moments that matter and support the growth athletes gain in a team environment on a playing field. Beyond increasing access, we're focused on continuous improvement to the digital fan and athlete experience in collaboration with our venue partners and brands who can deliver value to families engaged in youth sports.

