

Big Surprise In KRON Sale Was the Buyer

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Wednesday, November 17, 1999

Young Broadcasting will be heavily in debt, bereft of any history in San Francisco and probably not on the best of terms with NBC.

Young Broadcasting this week stunned the TV industry by emerging as the winner in the sweepstakes to buy KRON in the Chronicle Publishing Co.'s fabulous going-out-of-business sale.

The purchase includes a 51 percent stake in BayTV, the local cable news and information channel.

That the sale figure is **\$823 million**, the most ever for a TV station, is the lighter part of the general astonishment. The bigger surprise was Young -- a station group in which, only three years ago, WBAY-TV in Green Bay looked like an awesomely muscled giant.

Conventional wisdom was that NBC would buy its biggest affiliate. And if not NBC, then maybe Rupert Murdoch and his Fox station group.

The KRON-NBC affiliation contract extends through 2001, and KRON executives have said that it's virtually unbreakable, even with the sale.

NBC had shocked many industry observers, and perhaps alienated KRON's owners, by its use of bully-boy tactics to carve out the station for itself.

NBC OFFERED \$700 MILLION

NBC reportedly also made a pre-emptive \$700 million offer for KRON and demanded a 30-day exclusive negotiating period.

That offer was rejected and, according to one well-connected source, NBC wasn't among the final bidders for the station.

But it might be too early to rule out NBC as a future owner of KRON.

More than 100,000 viewers were unable to watch the Winter Olympics because of an ownership battle between the NBC network and KRON-TV, that area's longtime NBC affiliate. NBC had aggressively sought to buy KRON when its previous owner put it up for sale. But NBC lost out in the bidding and, in retaliation, stripped KRON of its network affiliation and awarded it to a station whose signal did not cover the entire Bay area.