

Gaming shows a winner in Ohio, Illinois

Weekly state lottery drawings are done up as evening TV programs that are getting ratings, sales results

Ohio television stations are harvesting some of their biggest local ratings in years with what could be the ultimate audience-participation game show. The gimmick: Any Ohioan tuned in Thursday at 7:30 p.m. to the station that's televising *The Buckeye 300 Show* may see himself winning anywhere from \$20 to \$300,000 if he bought a 50-cent state-lottery ticket that week.

"After the first three weeks on the air" (the show kicked off last Feb. 27) "the rating in Cleveland was a 28 with a 48% share of the audience," boasts Ed Cervenak, station manager of WEWS-TV Cleveland. "And we scored that number against two of the top prime-access shows

in the country, *Hollywood Squares* and *Treasure Hunt*." He adds that the ratings have stayed at that level in Cleveland and have been duplicated in Cincinnati and Dayton.

Illinois's state-lottery commission, the other agency that has turned its weekly drawings into a game show, just got its 30-minute program (which runs Thursday at 7 p.m.) under way early last month. But a spokesman for WGN-TV Chicago, said that coincentuals taken for the May 8 telecast gave it a 12 rating and 25 share, good enough for a tie with that week's rerun of *The Waltons*.

Both the Ohio and Illinois lottery shows are done live with specially built sets at production costs of \$3,500 a week (WGN-TV Chicago) and \$4,000 a week (WEWS-TV Cleveland). The latter passes that weekly cost on to Don Marcus, owner of the ad agency that represents the Ohio Lottery Commission, whereas WGN-TV foots the \$3,500 itself. "We in effect package *The Buckeye 300 Show*," says Don Marcus, "and rent the facilities and crew of WEWS-TV." Mr. Marcus goes on to say that the agency recoups the production cost by selling the show to eight Ohio stations (at prices that reportedly range from the \$1,000 a week paid by WEWS-TV to the

\$200 a week by WSTV-TV Steubenville). These stations, in turn, get the right to sell all five commercial minutes in each half hour. One source says that WEWS-TV Cleveland charges \$600 for one 30-second spot on the show and that, with the ratings it's getting, sponsors are beating down the station's doors.

WGN-TV has sold all six of the commercial minutes on *The Illinois State Lottery Drawing* (a title that may be changed to something catchier, a station spokesman says) over the first 13 weeks to two sponsors: the Jewel supermarket chain (Adventures Inc., Chicago) and Greater Chicagoland Buick dealers (Post-Keyes-Gardner). Each of the two pays the station \$3,000 for three weekly minutes, according to a WGN-TV spokesman. Ken Muirson, an executive vice president of Lee King & Partners, the agency for the Illinois Lottery Commission, says that WSNS-TV, a UHF station in Chicago, will soon resume its weekly telecast (Friday at 7 p.m.) of the supplementary "Grand Slam" lottery drawing, which it ran from March 14 through May 9.

Both the WEWS-TV and WGN-TV shows have similar formats. As few as five and as many as 25 contestants qualify each week for the drawing that will net the winner



Three for the money. The newest hit in local program popularity is the lottery show, among which genre these three programs are blazing trails. Top: WEWS-TV Cleveland's *The Buckeye 300 Show*. Bottom left: WGN-TV Chicago's *Illinois State Lottery Drawing*. Bottom right: WARE(AM) Ware, Mass., broadcasting that state's lottery.