

CYCLING 1

Competition from agencies and pay-TV helps ASO claw back rights value

By Robin Jellis

Pay-television and agency interest in the Tour de France helped the Amaury Sport Organisation recover some of the value of its European rights in a new deal with the European Broadcasting Union, after a fall in the current cycle.

UK pay-television broadcasters BSkyB and BT Sport, Nordic and Eastern Europe broadcaster Modern Times Group, and the MP & Silva agency are thought to have approached ASO about a potential deal for the new cycle, from 2016.

This prompted ASO to begin renewal talks with long-term broadcast partner the EBU, for what is the biggest media rights deal in cycling. The EBU, the consortium of public-service broadcasters, agreed a four-year deal from 2016 to 2019, worth about €32.5m (\$44.2m) per year. The deal covers Europe excluding France, which is sold separately.

ASO earns about €30m per year from

European rights excluding France in the current cycle, 2012 to 2015. This is from separate deals with the EBU and ITV, the UK commercial broadcaster, which is an EBU member. ITV agreed deals directly with ASO in the previous two cycles, but is acquiring the rights via the EBU in the new cycle.

ASO earned about €34m in the previous cycle, 2009 to 2011, again in separate deals with the EBU and ITV.

The drop in 2012-15 was a result of the withdrawal of financial support for the EBU bid from ARD and ZDF, the German public-service broadcasters. ARD and ZDF have scaled back cycling coverage due to doping in the sport.

The EBU and ASO are long-term partners, and any move away from the consortium by ASO would have been a major surprise. The EBU's broadcasters

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PARALYMPIC GAMES

Rio on target to double London fees

By Frank Dunne

The International Paralympic Committee is on course to double the level of its international rights income for the Paralympic Games, following its landmark deal last week in the US with broadcaster NBCUniversal.

For the 2016 summer Games in Rio, that would mean income of about \$32m (€25m). This is based on the \$16m which the organising committee

of the London 2012 Games earned.

Alexis Schäfer, the marketing and commercial director of the International Paralympic Committee, declined to provide precise figures but said that for Sochi and Rio "we are on the way to doubling the value of the international rights. In the deals we are doing, we are making a minimum of a 30-per-cent

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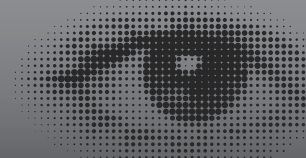
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Al Jazeera in pole position for handball World Championships

Qatari pay-television operator Al Jazeera is the favourite to secure the next global rights deal for the International Handball Federation World Championships, according to several sources close to the bidding.

Al Jazeera is thought to have made the strongest rights fee offer. Several other parties were interested in acquiring the rights, including the European Broadcasting Union and incumbent rights-holder Ufa Sports.

However, the rights have not yet been awarded, and are not expected to be until at least next month. The winner is widely expected to be announced at the IHF's congress in Doha, Qatar, on October 25 to 28.

The deal is expected to cover at least 2015 and 2017. There are two World Championships – one for men and one for women – in each of those years. Some reports say talks are underway with Al Jazeera for a longer deal, also covering 2019 and 2021.

It is expected that Al Jazeera would use one or both of the MP & Silva and Pitch International agencies to sell the rights on in territories where the broadcaster does not have a channel.

Ufa Sports is the current rights-holder, for 2011 and 2013, in a deal worth about €33m (\$45m). ■

Fox favourite to land Copa

Pay-television broadcaster Fox is expected to acquire all the rights for the Copa Libertadores and the Copa Sudamericana tournaments until 2022. The new arrangement would cut out the Brazil-based Traffic Sports agency which owns the ex-Americas rights for both tournaments until 2018.

The new deal would cover the four years from 2019 to 2022. Fox's international distribution arm Fox International Channels would exploit the ex-Americas rights while its pay-television broadcast operation would use

the content within the Americas. FIC is said to want the rights to add to its growing international rights portfolio.

Fox currently holds the Americas rights until 2022 as part of its deal with the joint venture TNT. TNT is owned by Fox (75 per cent) and the Argentinian agency Torneos y Competencias (25 per cent). TNT acquires the rights directly from Conmebol, South American football's governing body.

The closed nature of the rights sales process between Conmebol and TNT has proved to be highly controversial. The Uruguayan Tenfield agency was particularly scathing of the way Conmebol sold the rights.

Enzo Francescoli, executive director and manager of pan-regional pay-television broadcaster Gol TV, owned by the Tenfield agency, said that it had made bigger offers for the rights over the past couple of years which had been ignored by the governing body.

Conmebol's distribution of rights fees was also criticised by 20 South American clubs.

Local experts said Conmebol kept the "lion's share" of the revenue. In Europe, the clubs earn the majority of the revenues from club competitions, in a 75:25 split with Uefa, European football's governing body. One local expert said that the problem was that nobody knew how much Conmebol earned due to the "opaque" way in which it conducted its business. ■

SBS most likely contender

SBS-Discovery's intention in the bidding for Scandinavian rights for the Uefa Champions League is the big question hanging over the auction, local industry experts say.

Scandinavia is the first European market, and second market overall, in which Team Marketing, Uefa's sales agent, is selling the rights for the 2015-16 to 2017-18 cycle. The rights for the Europa League are also for sale, but the Champions League is the main prize in Scandinavia, where top

European football is extremely popular.

Uefa and Team will have tendered the rights this early because they expect a decent fee increase. They are thought to have a good relationship with current rights-holder Modern Times Group, and will have a good idea of what the incumbent is ready to offer.

MTG pays €195m (\$265m) over the three years from 2012-13 to 2014-15, in what is Scandinavia's biggest ever sports rights deal. It paid a 130-per-cent increase to renew its rights and fend off a strong bid from Bonnier/TV4 Group.

MTG is certain to bid strongly to retain what are core rights for its free-to-air, basic-tier and pay-television channels. There is considerable doubt over the appetite of Bonnier/TV4 Group, as it is trying to sell its pay-television business C More Entertainment, which has had poor recent financial results.

SBS-Discovery announced its presence as a re-emergent player in the Scandinavian sports-rights market with a pan-regional deal for the European Qualifiers in July (*TV Sports Markets* 17:14). This was a big statement of intent by new backer Discovery International, which took over the SBS Nordic basic-tier channels last December.

Even if SBS-Discovery does bid, it is unlikely to challenge MTG for the entire package as it does not have dedicated sports channels, which are generally used to show second and third-pick matches. A bid for first-pick matches only, which are generally shown on free-to-air or basic-tier channels, appears most likely.

Free-to-air and pay-television broadcaster TV2 is likely to bid strongly in Norway only.

A couple of local sources said the timing of the auction favours MTG, due to the impending sale of C More, and SBS-Discovery still finding its feet under its new ownership structure.

First-round bids are due to be submitted by October 10. ■

CYCLING 1

Pay-TV interest helps ASO to claw back value of the Tour

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are still prepared to offer a good rights fee, as well as hours of free-to-air coverage on leading channels in multiple markets.

Pay-television broadcasters in some lucrative markets, particularly the UK and Scandinavia, where the sport is becoming more popular, are increasingly interested in cycling. The 2012-15 deal was also agreed in the face of interest from pay-television broadcasters, including Sky Deutschland in Germany, NTV Plus in Russia and MTG (*TV Sports Markets* 15:6). One attraction for pay-television is that cycling offers hours of content in midweek daytimes, when broadcasters are generally short of high quality live sport.

ASO is understood to have been prepared to consider pay-television offers for the new cycle. Some experts say pay-television coverage would be good for the sport (see box).

UK and Nordics keen

UK pay-television interest in the ASO rights was sharpened by the emergence of BT to challenge market leader BSkyB. However, one source said BT's interest would have been curbed by the fact that Sky runs and sponsors one of the top cycling teams, Team Sky, whose riders have won the last two editions of the Tour de France. Had BT won the rights, it would have had to broadcast hours of coverage of riders emblazoned with its rival's branding.

In a sign of MTG's increasing interest in cycling, it last week acquired the rights in Scandinavia and the Baltics to the 2013 Union Cycliste Internationale Road World Championships. The rights in Denmark and Norway were previously held by the commercial broadcasters TV2 Denmark and TV2 Norway.

ARD and ZDF stay away

Doping in cycling remains a major issue for ARD and ZDF. It is understood the broadcasters consider ASO to have done

Embracing pay-TV coverage 'could benefit cycling'

The Amaury Sport Organisation's recent deal with the European Broadcasting Union confirms its commitment to free-to-air coverage of the Tour de France through to 2019. The strategy contrasts with the more flexible approach being taken by RCS Sport, the organisers of Italy's Giro d'Italia.

ASO has traditionally favoured free-to-air coverage of the Tour over pay-television because the big audiences help cycling teams generate sponsorship revenue. The teams do not receive a cut of ASO's media-rights revenue, so their sponsorship income is crucial.

When RCS appointed the IMG Media agency last year to replace Rai Trade as the international rights distributor for the Giro, from 2013 to 2020, IMG was given greater freedom in deciding where to place the rights.

Rai Trade had been under orders to secure free-to-air coverage wherever possible. Privately, the agency complained that this had capped its earnings. Now, IMG looks at what kind of deal makes most sense in each market and it is thought to have switched to pay-television in some.

"The teams have not reacted too badly to the Giro d'Italia going on pay-TV;

they have accepted it," one source close to the Giro said. "I'm not so sure that teams use the Tour as the number one window [for sponsorship exposure] – it's ultimately a three-week event over an entire calendar."

He said it was simplistic to assume that sponsors would not accept the transition to pay-television. The key was how the broadcaster could offer sponsors a platform to activate their sponsorship, rather than simply accumulating eyeballs.

Pay-television broadcasters could help sponsors, he said, by jointly working on mobile platforms and interactive features for fans. And pay-television broadcasters were more likely than free-to-air broadcasters to improve coverage of the sport.

"It is one of those sports that lends itself to interactivity and statistics, and these kind of investments are typical of pay-television, which offers the viewer a differential, not just the typical split-screen coverage," he said.

Cycling teams could help, he added, by giving broadcasters new camera positions, audio feeds from riders and teams, and better access to riders, like behind-the-scenes interviews. ■

a lot to tackle the issue. But, "they feel that doping persists," one German industry insider said. "There are still many cases, perhaps not in the 2013 Tour de France, but the Lance Armstrong affair is still quite fresh.

"ARD does not believe in cycling, it does not think there is enough control. The cyclists are even faster than before, which makes it difficult to understand that they are clean. I don't think ARD will want to show the Tour for the foreseeable future."

The broadcasters would be willing to reconsider their stance if a clearer structure for anti-doping was in place, he said, including more scrutiny of the medical staff that takes care of riders.

ARD and ZDF still show highlights of the Tour, acquired via the EBU, but no longer show live coverage.

Interest in cycling in Germany is strong. German riders secured six stage wins out of the 21 in the 2013 Tour de France. Marcel Kittel won four stages, and André Greipel and Tony Martin won one each.

Current deal

It is understood that Swedish public-service broadcaster SVT may be added to the list of EBU guarantors in the new cycle, although negotiations are still ongoing within the consortium.

The guarantors of the current deal are thought to include:

- Pan-regional sports broadcaster Eurosport
- Norwegian commercial broadcaster TV2
- Danish commercial broadcaster TV2
- Italian public-service broadcaster Rai
- Spanish public-service broadcaster TVE
- Dutch public-service broadcaster NOS

- Belgian public-service broadcasters VRT and RTBF.

In the new deal, ITV is also a guarantor. The new deal includes rights to ASO's other cycle races, including: Paris-Roubaix, Liège-Bastogne-Liège, Flèche Wallonne, Paris-Tours, Paris-Nice, the Critérium du Dauphiné, and the Critérium International.

Long-term deals

The EBU deal is the latest in a series of long-term deals agreed by ASO. In May, ASO agreed a five-year deal for its domestic rights with French public-

service broadcaster France Télévisions, from 2016 to 2020, worth about €30m per year (*TV Sports Markets* 17:8).

In June 2012, it agreed a 10-year deal, from 2014 to 2023, with US cable channel NBC Sports Network. In January this year, ASO agreed a six-year deal, from 2014 to 2019, with Canadian pay-television broadcaster Sportsnet, and in June, a 10-year deal, from 2014 to 2023, with Australian public-service broadcaster SBS.

It is understood that this is not part of a plan to sell ASO, as some have speculated, but rather a case of taking

opportunities that offer financial security. As an executive from another agency put it: "Everyone looks at the world economy with some degree of concern. They had a good offer from NBC, and again now from the EBU – they have secured the largest part of their international value for the foreseeable future."

In April, ASO's parent company, Éditions Philippe Amaury, bought back a 25-per-cent stake in the organisation from media conglomerate Lagardère for €91.4m. It now owns 100 per cent of ASO. ■

PARALYMPIC GAMES

NBC deal is funded by corporate sponsor commitments

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increase, and in some it's much more."

The deal with NBC was followed a few days later by a deal with a consortium of broadcasters in Russia for the domestic rights to Sochi (see *Sports Clips*).

These followed three other two-Games deals: in the UK, with commercial broadcaster Channel 4, worth about £7m (€8.6m/\$11m); in the rest of Europe, with the European Broadcasting Union; and in Australia, with the Australian Paralympic Committee, reportedly worth A\$400,000 (€283,000/\$374,000).

The IPC is also close to finalising deals in Latin America, South Africa and Japan.

The deal with NBC represents one of the largest percentage increases, albeit from a very low base. For London 2012, a deal with NBC was cobbled together at the last minute when the US Olympic Committee had to step in to buy the rights due to a lack of interest from broadcasters. NBC are thought to have got the rights either for free or for a nominal fee. The new deal is thought to be worth several hundred thousand dollars.

The satisfaction for the IPC and the Paralympic movement, however, goes far beyond the rights-fee increase.

The US has long been identified as a critical market for building the Games and NBC was heavily criticised by the IPC and by disability groups across the US for its lack of commitment to London, when it showed only 5.5 hours of coverage. In its new deal it is showing 116 hours across the two Games – 66 from Rio and 50 from Sochi. The broadcaster has yet to decide how much of its coverage will be live.

NBC's conversion

In the wake of a highly successful Paralympic Games in London, one of the IPC's top priorities was getting NBC to change its mind about the value of covering the Games. In a meeting in December with Gary Zenkel, president of NBC Olympics, it found that the broadcaster had already done so.

"The vast majority of the conversation was about looking forward," Schäfer told *TV Sports Markets*. "Looking at Sochi, at Rio, at how we can build the Paralympic Games in the United States. It was a very positive and productive conversation. We never had the feeling that we really had to sell it to them. They said that they wanted to be the home for the Paralympic Games and would like to learn how to build an audience for the Games."

There are several reasons why NBC has made such a dramatic change of strategy regarding the Paralympic Games.

First, any concerns it may have had about selling the airtime around Sochi and Rio were resolved when the USOC

corporate sponsors – BMW, BP, Citi, Liberty Mutual and Procter & Gamble – committed to invest in a deal which gives them exclusive rights to advertise across the two Games.

In defending itself against criticism over its limited commitment to 2012, NBC had complained of "sponsor fatigue" – sponsors and advertisers had spent so much of their budgets on the Olympic Games, also broadcast in the US by NBC, that they had limited appetite for another major event a few weeks later.

Second, doubts about the commercial potential of the Games were assuaged by the high ratings of other broadcasters for 2012, in particular Channel 4. The UK broadcaster enjoyed big audiences across the event, topped by 8.14m, a share of 39.6 per cent, for the opening ceremony.

Schäfer said that much of the initial conversation with NBC in the wake of 2012 was about how Channel 4 had used the 2012 Games.

"There is a difference between a public broadcaster doing something," he said, "as there will always be a sense that they are doing it because it comes under a public-service remit, rather than from a business perspective. What Channel 4 showed is that it can work from all aspects."

Stung by criticism

US sports rights consultant and former president of CBS Sports, Neal Pilson, said that there were other factors behind NBC's new-found enthusiasm.

The broadcaster wanted content for its cable and satellite sports channel,

the NBC Sports Network, which launched last year and is now in 80m homes. He pointed out that most of the coverage would be on the channel. For Sochi, for example, 46.5 hours will be on the sports channel, but only 3.5 hours on the main network.

He said that interest in parasport in the US was on the increase generally. Press coverage was more positive than it had ever been and even potentially negative situations like the murder trial involving South African sprinter Oscar Pistorius had brought parasport to people's attention.

He added that NBC had also been stung by the level of criticism it had received over 2012, including that from

some of its closest partners, and that the broadcaster had now realised that "the Paralympics is basically good TV," which is also a perfect fit for its human interest approach to sports broadcasting.

Pilson said that had the IPC taken the rights to the open market, they would not have got a better deal. NBC was "the most appropriate broadcaster, given that it is already the Olympic broadcaster in the US, and probably the only one that would commit its assets, talent and production capacity to the event."

Schäfer said that one of the reasons why the IPC was keen to find a deal with NBC was because of NBC's role as the broadcaster of the Olympic Games in the US. NBC has the rights through to 2020.

The NBC-USOC partnership has guaranteed substantial cross promotion between the Olympics and the Paralympics. USOC has a wide range of activities – such as media summits and Road to Sochi events – which will now feature a Paralympic component.

"When it comes to the time of the Games, NBC will take over," he said. "There are very explicit and strong cross-promotional elements in the deal we agreed to promote the Paralympics in the build-up to the Olympic Games, during the Olympic Games – including during prime time – and right afterwards."

[www.fox.com](#) For the full interview with Alexis Schäfer visit our website. ■

TV AUSTRALIA

Fox losses to the networks start to look like a trend

By Dan Horlock

Australian network Ten's acquisition of the rights to the Champions League Twenty20 cricket tournament this month was the eighth sports rights property to move from pay-television to free-to-air television over the past four months.

The high number of deals in such a short space of time appears to point towards a trend rather than a random cluster. Since June, rights-holders in tennis, rugby league, golf and cricket have made the switch.

"You're seeing a phenomenon. Unless pay-TV can respond appropriately it will change the shape of sport in Australia," Ten's former chief operating officer, Jon Marquard, told *TV Sports Markets*.

There are two factors driving the trend. First, the television market is close to being fully digitised, with the analogue signal set to be switched off in December. Second, the relaxation of the anti-siphoning law last year meant that networks can show "regionally-iconic or nationally significant events" on their digital channels for the first time.

The other properties that have

Ten picks up Champions League T20 for a song

Network Ten this month acquired the rights to the 2013 Champions League Twenty20 competition for a nominal amount. With no competition in the market, rights-holder Fox International Channels wanted to ensure it had some exposure in Australia for the tournament which began on September 17 and ends on October 6.

FIC holds the global rights to the competition for another five years. It has the rights in a 10-year deal until 2018, worth US\$975m (€717m).

Generating interest around the 2013 CLT20 is a challenge, as most games start post-midnight Australian time due to the time difference between India, where the tournament is being hosted, and Australia.

Ten's former chief operating officer, Jon Marquard, who initiated the deal,

switched exclusively to free-to-air television are: the English Cricket Board rights; Cricket Australia rights, including the Ryobi Cup and the T20 tournament the Big Bash; tennis's Australian Open; the Rugby League World Cup; and the Australian Masters and Perth International golf tournaments.

Pay-television broadcaster Fox Sports previously showed these events either

said, however, that the competition was more popular in Australia than the world's most recognised T20 competition, the Indian Premier League, for three reasons.

First, the CLT20 has had continuous television coverage on Fox Sports. Second, Australian teams compete in it. Third, an Australian team, the Sydney Sixers, won the 2012 edition. The IPL is not shown on Australian television despite the participation of Australian players.

Marquard said that the competition was a good way to lead into Ten's coverage of Australia's key domestic T20 competition, the Big Bash, which begins later in the year. In June, Ten acquired the rights to the Big Bash in a five-year deal, from 2013-14 to 2017-18, for about A\$100m (€70m/US\$93m). ■

exclusively or shared coverage with one of the networks.

Marquard said the cumulative effect of these sports events no longer being shown on pay-television could erode subscriber numbers at leading pay-television broadcaster Foxtel, which carries Fox Sports.

Marquard's view was backed by Ken Shipp, head of sport at public-service

broadcaster SBS. Shipp said that while at the moment the trend applied to second- and third-tier properties, it was a “definite prospect” that Australia’s biggest sports could be shown exclusively on free-to-air television in the coming years.

“The evolution of digital multi-channels will allow the market to get to a point where commercial broadcasters can compete with Fox financially for the top rights. As time goes by that will become more likely,” he said.

Rise of the digital channel

The ability to spread coverage across multiple channels is making top sport affordable again for the networks. The difference between Australia and many other major television markets is that the secondary digital channels of the main broadcasters are reaching massive audiences.

In July, the Nine network exploited the rights to the recent Ashes cricket series on its digital-terrestrial channel GEM. On the second day of the first Test, the channel achieved a record digital channel average audience of 665,000 and a 15-per-cent audience share. This was only behind Nine and Seven’s main channels, which had a 23.2-per-cent and a 17.3-per-cent audience share respectively.

In June, Fox Sports lost the pay-television rights to the Australian Open to the Seven network from 2015 to 2019. The fact Seven could show matches on its other digital-terrestrial channels, 7two and 7mate, was key to the broadcaster securing the exclusive rights, local experts said.

Seven’s deal with Tennis Australia is reported to be worth about A\$40m (€28m/US\$37.4m) per year. The fee is almost double the A\$21m paid in the current deal.

Fox’s focus

The loss of a number of second-tier sports properties suggests that Fox is placing greater importance on continuing to hold a smaller number of certain subscription drivers, such as the National Rugby League and Aussie Rules Australian Football League – the country’s most popular sports. Fox has coverage of both but will face greater competition than before when AFL and NRL contracts

expire in 2016 and 2017 respectively.

Some local experts reject the notion of the renaissance of commercial television. They say that, with few exceptions, the networks are merely picking up the rights that Fox is no longer prioritising.

“The only important rights Fox has lost were for Cricket Australia and since then it has turned its back on the sport,” one expert said. This accounted for the fact it did not bid for the English Cricket Board rights or the CLT20. ■

TV FRANCE

MCS adds French football and ESPN America rights

By Robin Jellis

French basic-tier sports broadcaster Ma Chaîne Sport acquired French football and North American sports rights earlier this month in deals with a combined value of around €1m (\$1.4m) per year in rights fees and production costs.

MCS bought rights to the third tier of French football, the Championnat National, for three years, from 2013-14 to 2015-16. The rights are free for the first year, and then about €100,000 in each of the remaining two seasons.

The deal was agreed with the French football federation, the Fédération Française de Football. The federation tendered the rights in June, and was initially only looking for a one-year deal.

MCS will cover production for all matches, which will cost between €600,000 and €800,000 each season. Each match is produced in high definition using six cameras.

National league matches were previously shown online by the federation, on its FFF TV service, and were free to watch. They were also available on video-sharing websites Dailymotion and YouTube, and on the website of French newspaper *L’Équipe*. The federation monetised the content via advertising.

MCS, which holds the rights to several international football competitions, targeted the National as it wanted some domestic football rights, its chief executive,

Nicolas Rotkoff, told *TV Sports Markets*.

“We have a lot of international football like the Argentinian, the Dutch and the Portuguese leagues, but we needed some local football, and we feel that the National competition is good, and is close to Ligue 2,” he said. “There are many big cities with teams in the division like Paris and Strasbourg, so there is big potential for the league.”

MCS will show a minimum of 20 games per season, and may show games in multiplex towards the end of the season. Multiplex coverage involves multiple matches being made available via one channel. Live matches will be on Friday evenings at 8.30pm local time. The rights also include a weekly highlights show on Mondays. Former France manager Raymond Domenech is a commentator for the broadcaster.

NCAA rights

MCS also secured rights to NCAA American college football, basketball and boxing in a deal with pay-television broadcaster ESPN. The content was previously used on the ESPN America channel, which was closed in July. The rights are for three years, until the end of 2016. MCS is thought to be paying just over €100,000 per year.

MCS was also offered NCAA baseball rights, but chose not to take them because baseball is not very popular in France, and it felt the other NCAA content provided sufficient volume.

The broadcaster considered the NCAA events attractive because they are high quality, HD productions, feature potential future NBA and NFL stars, and the matches are played in packed stadiums.

Each season, MCS will show about 60 basketball games, including March Madness and the Final Four, between 20 and 30 American football games, and between 30 and 40 boxing matches. The boxing coverage, which began in August, includes a weekly magazine programme. MCS will begin broadcasting the basketball and American football in October when the respective seasons begin.

Coverage will be on MCS, the broadcaster’s main channel, which is available on the CanalSat and Numericable pay-television platforms. ■

CYCLING 2

SweetSpot to build on Tour of Britain 'watershed' year

By Frank Dunne

SweetSpot, the organiser and commercial rights-holder of the Tour of Britain, is hoping to secure significant fees for UK rights to the event for the first time, and is targeting a large increase in the amount of live coverage abroad over the next five years.

The company, which has organised the Tour since 2004, this summer beat some powerful rival bidders to retain its contract as event rights-holder. These included the IMG, Infront Sports & Media and Fast Track agencies and Tour de France organiser the Amaury Sport Organisation.

In its new five-year contract with British Cycling, the sport's UK governing body, improving media income and exposure will be a priority, Hugh Roberts, the owner of the SweetSpot Group, told *TV Sports Markets*.

The UK rights for the 2013 event, won last week by Team Sky rider Bradley Wiggins, were acquired by ITV4, the digital-terrestrial channel of the commercial broadcaster and British Eurosport, the UK-oriented arm of the pan-European sports broadcaster.

"We are negotiating with all the main [UK] broadcasters and luckily for us there are one or two new players, like BT, who have come on stream," Roberts said.

He said the event had just reached the stage where it could begin demanding a substantial rights fee. "The event has reached maturity and this year was something of a watershed. I don't think that there will be a team in the world that will not want to ride in the Tour of Britain in the years to come," he added.

Until now, SweetSpot has concluded one-year deals. Roberts declined to discuss any of the financial arrangements surrounding the tour but UK industry insiders say that any rights fees paid by ITV and Eurosport would be nominal, with most of their investment tied up in production costs for the race estimated to

be about €200,000 (\$272,000).

For the UK, ITV and Eurosport will be given the first right to make proposals covering the next five years, but Roberts said SweetSpot would "reserve the right to talk to any of the other broadcasters who have come and kicked our tyres in the last year or two."

The international rights have been sold for the last three years, from 2011 to 2013, by the MP & Silva agency. The deal is thought to be a revenue share, with no minimum guarantee.

SweetSpot is studying three options for the international rights. These are: (1) renew with MP & Silva; (2) put the rights out to tender; (3) take the rights in house. MP & Silva has secured distribution in 130 countries, much of it live. There are, however, compelling arguments for considering the in-house route, Roberts said.

"With the diversification of media, which is spread more thinly, more niche, we need to work more closely with our stakeholders than in the past about what goes into the TV programmes – to take a little more ownership of the whole way that the content is both distributed and broadcast."

One of the problems for an international agency is that the event is arguably still at the stage where it needs exposure more than it needs rights fees. The event is also heavily funded by sponsorship, so securing coverage on national channels, even without a rights fee, has a great value. Monetising exposure-driven sales has always been difficult for agencies.

Roberts said that securing "as many eyeballs as possible" would remain a priority. "In everything we have done, we have never treated the financial side of it as the be all and end all. In the UK, we could have gone to a cable or satellite channel and got a slightly bigger fee but a smaller audience. We resisted that temptation. Internationally too, we don't want the broadcaster to be a narrow one in a given country. We want it to be the largest broadcaster that we can possibly get."

Status

One of the key challenges facing the Tour in the next five years is to convince the sport's governing body, the Union Cycliste Internationale, to raise the status of the

race to 2HC, which would make it more likely that the top riders from around the world would take part, thus boosting interest and driving commercial revenues.

Roberts said that SweetSpot had been trying for several years to achieve 2HC status and that the reasons given so far by the UCI in refusing it were "red herrings" concerning things like the number of transfer days – days when the riders are not racing but merely moving from one location to another.

He said that with British Cycling now "showing more interest" in the Tour, the UK governing body might do more to persuade the UCI. Many in the sport believe that if British Cycling president Brian Cookson is elected as the new president of UCI – in today's vote in Florence – it could help the UK tour to improve its status. "Maybe he'll think that's favouritism," Roberts said. "But you would think that it wouldn't hurt [to have a British president]."

Live audience up

The total live audience for the Tour of Britain this year was up by over 14 per cent on last season. The total average live audience across the eight days on ITV4 and British Eurosport was 232,000. Last season, when ITV4 was the only UK broadcaster, the average audience was 203,000.

The increase was surprising given that last season the Tour had been preceded by the Olympic Games in London and the victory of Wiggins in the Tour de France, which together had created an unprecedented level of anticipation for the event.

ITV's highlights coverage dropped by 28 per cent, from an average of 369,000 last year to 265,000. This was closer to the 2011 figure of 254,000.

Roberts said that ITV's highlights coverage had been hit by variations in the scheduling. "We were jumping around between 7.30pm and 10.30pm, which doesn't make for building an audience. The audience builds as the race goes on – we are like a sporting soap opera, played out over eight days; as the anticipation builds more people stay on it."

[www. For the full interview with Hugh Roberts visit our website.](#) ■

HANDBALL

Silva puts finishing touches to 2013-14 Champions League

By Kevin McCullagh

Deals for the handball Champions League in Poland and Germany agreed in the last month were the final major deals to be put in place for the 2013-14 season.

Eurosport renewed its rights in Germany, one of the biggest markets for the property, in a deal thought to be worth around €1m (\$1.4m) per season.

The deal covers the men's Champions League in 2013-14 only. Eurosport will show live coverage of most matches played by German clubs. It has non-exclusive rights for the Final Four end-of-season competition, leaving the door open for another broadcaster to also acquire the rights.

Pay-television operator NC Plus outbid incumbent rights-holder Polsat to take the rights in Poland. The deal covers both the men's and women's Champions Leagues for two seasons, 2013-14 and 2014-15.

The MP & Silva agency, the European Handball Federation's global media rights sales agent, brokered the deals. MP & Silva has a deal to sell the rights from 2013-14 to 2019-20.

In Germany, basic-tier and pay-television sports broadcaster Sport1 is also understood to have been interested in acquiring the rights. Germany has five teams in the men's Champions League this season and two in the women's Champions League.

EHF and MP & Silva are thought to have agreed only a one-year deal in Germany in anticipation of increased competition for the rights from next season. Competition in the market is expected to increase when commercial broadcast group ProSiebenSat.1 launches a new sports pay-television channel next year.

Local sources this week said that another player was expected to enter the market in the next 12 months. There have been persistent rumours that Al Jazeera is considering entering Germany. MP & Silva has a close relationship with the

Qatari pay-television broadcaster.

In Poland, NC Plus and Polsat are engaged in a battle for pay-television subscribers. NC Plus is positioning itself as the service for 'premium' sport, as opposed to Polsat's focus on smaller, domestic properties. NC Plus has 2.3m subscribers. Lower-cost Polsat has 3.5m.

NC Plus had a tough start to life following the merger which created it in March 2013. The brand was formed from the merging of the N and Cyfra Plus pay-television services. Customers complained about the high price of its packages, and about being automatically migrated to new packages.

Rights for the handball Champions League in Denmark, the competition's second major market alongside Germany, come on the market again in 2014-15. They are currently held by public-service broadcaster DR, in a deal that began in 2011-12. DR sublicenses rights for some matches each season to pay-television broadcaster Modern Times Group. ■

TV SPAIN

Signs of life in crisis-hit market as Mediapro cashes in

By Dan Horlock

Spanish commercial broadcaster Atresmedia, formerly known as Grupo Antena 3, this month acquired a free-to-air package of domestic football rights from the Mediapro agency in a two-season deal worth €4m (\$5.4m) per season.

The free-to-air package consisted of non-exclusive second division and exclusive Copa del Rey rights covering the seasons 2013-14 and 2014-15. The Copa rights account for the majority of the value. Atresmedia will show live 12 cup matches on its channels, La Sexta and Antena 3. This will include two live matches per round until the final, which is shown exclusively live on state broadcaster TVE.

Last season, Mediapro could not find a buyer for the Copa rights until the later rounds. The agency eventually sold the rights to commercial broadcaster Mediaset in a deal worth just under €2m.

The deal covered only five matches.

The agency said at the time of last year's deal that rather than sell the rights below market value it would exploit them on digital-terrestrial channel Marca TV. The agency showed the early rounds of the competition on Marca TV, which closed at the end of July.

Mediapro managing director Gerard Romy told *TV Sports Markets* this week: "Last season we did a deal at the last minute for the Copa. This season we have sold the rights for two years from the beginning of the competition at a much better rate."

Mediapro is still in the market selling packages of rights to the second division and highlights of the first division. It is understood to be close to agreeing a deal with public-service broadcaster TVE.

Channel ambitions

Mediapro is hoping to launch a new sports channel next year following the closure of channel Marca TV. In February, Romy denied persistent reports that the channel was facing closure. It closed in July. "I didn't know the government was going to start closing channels," he said this week.

In March, the Spanish government annulled nine broadcast licences, including Marca TV's, awarded in 2010. The Spanish Supreme Court ruled that the licences were invalid as they were awarded without a public auction. The situation should be resolved at the turn of the year when the government is expected to reassign the frequencies.

The agency needs a new outlet for a lot of the sports rights it used to exploit via Marca TV. Romy added: "Marca TV could survive with a market share of 1.5 per cent and the expenses it had, and when the market picks up it could have made decent profits. It's why we want to launch another channel."

Marca TV was owned by the joint venture Unidad Editorial and founded in 2010. Mediapro owned a minority stake in the channel, handling production, advertising and content. RCS owned the licence as well as the brand name, as part of its ownership of the Spanish newspaper *Marca*.

[www.romy.com](#) For the full interview with Gerard Romy visit our website. ■

SPORTS CLIPS: News from TVSM Daily from September 12 to September 25**MEDIA RIGHTS 1****Football: Premier League, French leagues, African leagues and more**

- **Football:** Sports data and betting services company Sportradar acquired rights for the French Ligue 1 and Ligue 2, the French Coupe de la Ligue and North America's Major League Soccer in a deal with the MP & Silva agency. They will be used on Sportradar's Betradar Live Channel service, which provides live sport feeds accompanied by statistics for betting websites. Live Channel will show a minimum of 125 Ligue 1 matches during the 2013-14 season.
- **Football:** Ghanaian free-to-air television channel Viasat 1, which is owned by Modern Times Group, acquired rights for the English Premier League. Viasat 1 will show live coverage of one match every Saturday and a weekly highlights programme for the duration of the 2013-14 season.
- **Football:** Tunisian public-service broadcaster Télévision Tunisienne agreed a three-year deal, from 2013-14 to 2015-16, with the Tunisian Football Federation. The broadcaster will show six domestic Ligue 1 games per week along with the domestic cup and friendly games featuring the Tunisia national team. The broadcaster will be allowed to sublicense Ligue 1 game rights to foreign broadcasters as long as the deals are approved by the federation.
- **Football:** African pay-television broadcaster SuperSport agreed a three-year deal, from 2013-14 to 2015-16, with the Ghana Football Association, for rights to the Ghana Premier League and the domestic FA Cup competition. SuperSport will produce coverage of the matches. Local media said the rights fee was an increase on the \$1.05m (€770,000) paid over the previous three seasons by Ghanaian agency Optimum Management Prime.
- **Football:** French basic-tier sports broadcaster Ma Chaîne Sport acquired rights for 20 matches per season from the Championnat National, the French third division, from 2013-14 to 2015-16 (page 6).
- **Football:** French pay-television broadcaster beIN Sport acquired rights for the Uefa Women's Champions League. BeIN Sport will broadcast games featuring French teams Olympique Lyonnais and Paris Saint-Germain, along with some additional matches, for the duration of the 2012-13 season.
- **Football:** Brazilian pay-television broadcaster Fox Sports Brasil acquired exclusive rights for the inaugural season of the Brazilian Football Confederation's new women's league, which started on September 18.

SINCE LAST TIME

- CVC Capital Partners, the private equity company, linked up with sovereign wealth funds Mumtalakat of Bahrain and the Abu Dhabi Investment Authority to submit a bid for the IMG agency. CVC would control 60 per cent of the agency, while Mumtalakat and ADIA would each control 20 per cent. Investment vehicles KKR and New Mountain Capital are expected to table a joint bid. Talent management company Creative Artists Agency, private equity company Colony Capital and Mukesh Ambani, the chairman of Indian conglomerate Reliance Industries, are also interested in acquiring the agency. Private equity firm Providence Equity Partners pulled out of the running following its acquisition of a majority stake in rival agency Learfield Communications.
- An unnamed source at US pay-television broadcaster Fox Sports said it would "not countenance" a Qatari 2022 Fifa World Cup staged between October and December, according to UK newspaper the *Mail on Sunday*. Fox acquired US rights to the 2018 and 2022 World Cups in October 2011. A spokesman for the company said: "Fox Sports bought the World Cup rights with the understanding they would be in the summer, as they have been since the 1930s." Fifa's executive committee meets on October 3-4 to discuss switching the event to a winter date.
- The junior middleweight unification boxing bout between Floyd Mayweather Junior and Saúl Álvarez on September 14 broke the record for the highest grossing pay-per-view fight of all

time, generating \$150m (€110.3m) through 2.2m buys on US pay-per-view broadcaster Showtime. The figure broke the record set by Mayweather's points victory against Oscar De La Hoya in 2007, which generated \$136m from an all-time record 2.48m pay-per-view buys.

MEDIA INTERNATIONAL

- Eurosport will show a programming block on pay-television in the US for the first time under an arrangement with media and entertainment company Discovery Communications, which is a stakeholder in the sports broadcaster. Discovery's pay-television channel Velocity will show a new motorsports highlights programming block called 'Eurosport on Velocity' every Saturday afternoon, starting on September 28.
- US media and production company Terra Firma Media Group will launch Emerging Sports Network, a subscription-based online broadcast platform dedicated to niche sports, in February 2014. In addition to live coverage of 20 events that will be produced by EmergingSports.tv in 2014, the channel will show a weekly news programme and 10 feature shows focusing on individual athletes.
- Specialist international equestrian sports and lifestyle television channel Horse & Country TV will launch in Sweden in October. Under a carriage deal with Swedish cable operator Com Hem, Horse & Country TV will be adapted for the Swedish market. The channel will be offered as part of Com Hem's new TiVo Plus and TiVo Max packages.

SPORTS CLIPS: News from TVSM Daily from September 12 to September 25**MEDIA RIGHTS 2****American football, basketball, cycling, handball, ice hockey and more**

- **American Football:** The NFL struck a multi-year deal with digital sports video news agency SendtoNews for rights in Canada. SendtoNews will distribute NFL highlights to the websites of local and national newspapers and publishers across the country.
- **Basketball:** Spanish pay-television operator Canal Plus acquired rights for the Euroleague club competition for three seasons, from 2013-14 to 2015-16. Canal Plus will show exclusive live coverage of games featuring Spanish teams Real Madrid, Unicaja Malaga, FC Barcelona and Laboral Kutxa Vitoria this season.
- **Basketball:** The Italian Lega Basket agreed rights deals with state broadcaster Rai and the MP & Silva agency. Rai was awarded a two-year contract, covering the 2013-14 and 2014-15 top-tier Serie A seasons. The package includes the first choice of games during the regular season and rights to the playoffs. MP & Silva acquired the league's overseas rights for three years, from 2013-14 to 2015-16.
- **Basketball:** British Eurosport, the UK arm of pan-regional broadcaster Eurosport, acquired rights for the 2013-14 season of the British Basketball League. The deal includes cross-platform rights for 26 weekly magazine programmes.
- **Basketball:** News10, a regional affiliate channel of the ABC network in the US, acquired local rights for games featuring the NBA's Sacramento Kings. News10 will show coverage of 11 games featuring the Kings during the 2013-14 season.
- **Boxing:** US pay-television broadcaster Fox Sports signed a multi-platform agreement with the World Boxing Council for the rights to the new World Cup of Professional Boxing. Fox Sports acquired exclusive rights in the US and the Caribbean. Coverage in the US will be available on pay-television channels Fox Sports 1, Fox Sports 2 and Fox Deportes. In the Caribbean, the coverage will be on Fox Sports 2 and Fox Deportes. The deal includes non-exclusive rights in the Dominican Republic and Cuba, as well as rights for live streaming, on-demand and highlights clips via online and mobile platforms.
- **Climbing:** The International Federation of Sport Climbing agreed a four-year deal, from 2013-14 to 2016-17, with the Broadreach Media agency for the distribution of its television and new media rights in Asia, Africa, the Americas, Oceania and Russia. The rights will cover the Boulder, Speed and Lead Climbing World Cup Series plus the biennial World Championship and annual Youth World Championships.
- **Cricket:** Australian commercial broadcaster Network Ten acquired rights for the 2013 Champions League Twenty20. Ten and its digital sports channel One will provide coverage of 23 matches. All matches will also be streamed live via the broadcaster's website (page 5).
- **Cricket:** The Nine Network acquired rights in Australia for the 2013 edition of the domestic one day competition the Ryobi Cup from Cricket Australia. The governing body is underwriting Nine's A\$800,000 (€560,000/\$747,000) production costs to ensure the competition receives free-to-air coverage. Nine's free-to-air digital-television channel GEM will show all 20 matches during the month-long tournament, which begins on September 29 (page 5).
- **Cycling:** Online video platform BTB TV agreed a rights and production deal with the USA Cycling national governing body. BTB TV will produce coverage of top cyclo-cross races in the US, including all top-tier Pro CX events.
- **Handball:** Pan-regional sports broadcaster Eurosport agreed a rights deal in Germany with EHF Marketing, the commercial arm of the European Handball Federation, for German clubs' games from the EHF men's Champions League in 2013-14 season (page 8).
- **Ice Hockey:** The CBS Sports Network pay-television channel, which is run by US network CBS, acquired rights for two games from the Atlantic Hockey Association. CBS Sports Network will show live coverage of the Air Force v Army on January 10 and RIT v Niagara on January 24.
- Thailand's national broadcast regulator, the National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission, defended in court its 'must carry' rule that dictates that all 64 matches of the 2014 Fifa World Cup must be shown on free-to-air television. Commission chairman Natee Sukonrat appeared at the Administrative Court to testify in a case brought by pay-television broadcaster RS International, a subsidiary of Thai music and entertainment company RS, which acquired exclusive rights for the tournament and is opposing the rule.
- Satellite pay-television broadcaster Cable Thai Holdings, which has rights in Thailand to English Premier League football, launched legal action against technology company Apple for permitting the sale of mobile applications from other media companies that allow consumers to view Premier League games. CTH filed lawsuits against Apple Inc, Apple South Asia (Thailand) and Gene D Levoff, the authorised director of Apple South Asia (Thailand), with the Thai Central Intellectual Property and International Trade Court. CTH is demanding compensation of B100m (€2.4m/\$3.1m). It is also suing the developer of the Sport Channel mobile app, which provides streams of sports channels.
- Pay-television broadcaster Star India introduced subscription-based live streaming of cricket and football events via its Starsports.com website. A day pass costs Rs50 (€0.60/\$0.80). A monthly pass is Rs500.

SPORTS CLIPS: News from TVSM Daily from September 12 to September 25**MEDIA RIGHTS 3****Kickboxing, MMA, netball, Paralympics, tennis, US college sport and more**

- **Kickboxing:** Professional martial arts organisation and television content supplier Glory Sports International acquired rights for the archive programming from the K-1 series, following the bankruptcy of FEG, K-1's former promoter. The content includes footage of K-1 Grand Prix Finals from 1993 to 2006.
- **Mixed Martial Arts:** Pan-regional pay-television broadcaster Fox Sports Latin America agreed a multi-year deal with the Bellator MMA organisation. The agreement covers exclusive rights in more than 50m households across the continent, excluding Brazil. The deal starts in October, and runs until at least the end of 2015. Fox will show live coverage of more than 25 events in 2015. The agreement includes online rights and the magazine programme Bellator 360.
- **Mixed Martial Arts:** Internet company Yahoo struck a deal to provide coverage of Asian series the One Fighting Championship on its websites in South East Asia, including Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Vietnam. The content will include interviews, highlights and news.
- **Netball:** UK pay-television broadcaster BSkyB acquired rights for England Netball's Superleague club competition and all England national team home games. The deal will run for three years, from 2013-14 to 2015-16.
- **Paralympic Games:** US network NBC and the US Olympic Committee acquired rights for the Sochi 2014 and Rio 2016 Paralympic Games (page 1). USOC will provide live coverage of all events and ceremonies via the TeamUSA.org website.
- **Paralympic Games:** Russian state broadcaster VGTRK acquired rights for the Sochi 2014 Winter Paralympic Games under a deal between the event's local organising committee and Panorama, a production and rights company set up by Russia's leading broadcasters (page 1). As part of the deal, which was supported by the International Paralympic Committee, business news channel RBC TV will show coverage of the build-up to the event, including a 10-episode series of 10-minute 'diaries' following the torch relay. Panorama will also provide technical production support for the Games' international television signal.
- **Tennis:** ESPN agreed a "long-term" deal with the ATP World Tour that will allow the US pay-television broadcaster to show more hours of live coverage than in its current deal, which began in 2011. The deal means ESPN will show more than 44 hours of television coverage per year from three important tournaments – the BNP Paribas Open in Indian Wells, California, the Sony Open in Miami, and the ATP World Tour Finals, which are in London until 2015. The deal includes the men's and women's finals from the Sony Open, which were previously shown by the CBS network.
- Online streaming platform ESPN3 will increase its coverage of ATP World Tour Masters 1000 and 500 tournaments to 1,200 hours of live action per year, up from 800 hours.
- **US College Sport:** French basic-tier sports broadcaster Ma Chaîne Sport acquired rights for NCAA basketball including March Madness in a three-year deal, from 2013-14 to 2015-16 (page 6).
- **US College Sport:** The US Big Ten Conference confirmed that at least 70 games from its inaugural season of men's ice hockey would be broadcast on television. A national package of 34 games will be shown on the Big Ten Network cable-television channel, pay-television broadcaster ESPN's college sports channel ESPNU and the ESPNNews platform. An additional 36 games will be shown on the regional affiliate channels of the Fox Sports division of the Fox network.
- **Various:** The Red Bull Media House agreed rights deals in Russia with pay-television channel Russian Extreme TV and the IVL.ru website. Russian Extreme TV acquired rights for the X-Fighters freestyle motocross competition, the Crashed Ice speed skating event and the Cliff Diving series. IVL.ru will offer free-to-view archive footage of 54 Red Bull Media House events and series via online, mobile, internet-connected television and games console platforms.

MEDIA RIGHTS NEGOTIATIONS

- Italian pay-television broadcaster Sky Italia told Italian Serie A football clubs that it would be willing to pay more than it does at present for their domestic rights if it gets a higher degree of exclusivity in the next cycle, 2015-16 to 2017-18. Serie A clubs met the league's current main domestic broadcasters, Sky Italia and commercial broadcaster Mediaset, along with the MP & Silva agency, which sells the league's international rights, to discuss domestic and overseas media rights strategy. Sky shares live Serie A rights with Mediaset in the current cycle.
- Uefa, football's European governing body, invited bids for the media rights in Denmark, Norway and Sweden to the Uefa Champions League, Europa League and Super Cup club competitions in 2015-16 to 2017-18. Four editions of the Super Cup are covered, from 2015 to 2018 (page 2).
- France's Ligue Nationale de Rugby, which runs the domestic Top 14 club rugby union competition, launched a consultation period for the renegotiation of its media rights. The LNR is considering activating a cancellation clause in its five-year deal, from 2011-12 to 2015-16, with pay-television broadcaster Canal Plus. The organisation believes that it can negotiate a more lucrative rights deal. A decision on whether it will cancel the deal is likely to be made either at meetings scheduled on October 14-15 or December 2-3.

SPORTS CLIPS: News from TVSM Daily from September 12 to September 25

- The award of the 2020 Olympic Games hosting rights to the Japanese city of Tokyo led to Australian commercial broadcasters Seven, Nine and Ten re-entering the race for the next cycle of Olympic rights. Tokyo is a good time zone for Australian television audiences.
- The Gaelic Athletic Association, the governing body in Ireland for Gaelic sports, is looking at new services to provide coverage for fans outside Ireland in its next rights cycle, from 2014-15. GAA director general Paraic Duffy said that one of the priorities for the GAA in the next cycle of rights sales was to make its games more easily accessible to people all over the world, particularly in North America.
- UK pay-television broadcaster BSkyB was appointed as the exclusive sales agent for horse racing pay-television channel Racing UK's commercial television service. Sky will sell Racing UK's commercial television service, that combine Racing UK and rival pay-television channel At The Races, covering every race in the UK and Republic of Ireland, to pubs and other commercial premises.
- The National Rugby League, the top rugby league competition in Australia, said that it would work more closely with broadcast partners on match scheduling in 2014 after a fall in television viewing figures in 2013. Average audiences for commercial broadcaster Nine and pay-television broadcaster Fox Sports fell by 3.8 per cent and 8.5 per cent respectively.
- Media investment management company GroupM launched an Australian sports rights and sponsorship division. GroupM signed up the Football Federation Australia as its first client.
- The 2013 Ice Hockey World Championship had a record cumulative television audience of 975.2m, according to a study by research company X-Media Sports Consulting on behalf of Infront Sports & Media, the media and marketing agency of the International Ice Hockey Federation. This was a four-per-cent increase on the 2012 championship, and marked the fifth year in a row that the competition has registered an increase in viewing figures.
- The IMG Sport Video Archive, a division of the IMG agency, was selected by the International Rugby Board to be the official archive partner of the Rugby World Cup in a seven-year deal that will run until the end of 2020. The platform will provide access to full-length coverage and highlights of all 281 matches to date, plus the matches from the 2015 and 2019 World Cups.
- The International Tennis Federation, the sport's world governing body, re-launched online streaming service DavisCup.tv, which provides live coverage of the Davis Cup men's national team tournament. For the first time, the website showed live coverage of all 10 World Group semi-finals and play-off ties, from September 13-15.

ALSO SINCE LAST TIME

- US pay-television broadcaster Fox Sports announced a six-month partnership with Facebook that will allow data and comments from the social networking website to appear on screen during Fox's live coverage of NFL and college American football, and football.
- Eurovision, the production division of the European Broadcasting Union, the consortium of free-to-air broadcasters, was named the host broadcaster of the 2015 Alpine World Ski Championships in the US resorts of Vail and Beaver Creek. The deal was agreed with the championships' local organising committee.
- Spanish Liga club Athletic Bilbao and the Mediapro agency reached a deal to settle a long-running dispute over a media rights agreement. Mediapro agreed to pay €11.5m (\$15.6m), which was owed to the club under a rights contract between the two parties that expired on June 30, 2012.
- The Ligue de Football Professionnel, the French football league, will receive an additional €1 (\$1.36) per month per subscriber from beIN Sport when the French pay-television broadcaster reaches the 1.5m subscriber mark. BeIN Sport currently has about 1.47m subscribers.

EDITORIAL

Editor	Frank Dunne @frankdunneTVSM
Deputy Editor	Kevin McCullagh @kevinmccullagh
Senior Reporter	Dan Horlock @DanHorlock
Reporter	Robin Jellis @robinjellis
Telephone	+44 (0) 20 7954 3506
Fax	+44 (0) 20 7954 3511
Email	tvsm@tvsportsmarkets.com

DESIGN & PRODUCTION

Designer	Stewart Henson
----------	----------------

SALES & COMMERCIAL

Telephone	+44 (0) 20 7954 3483
Email	sales@tvsportsmarkets.com
Paul Santos	Head of Sales & Commercial paul.santos@tvsportsmarkets.com
Scott Longhurst	Account Manager scott.longhurst@tvsportsmarkets.com

TV Sports Markets

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