

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE 1

Uefa takes big steps towards fee target with BT and SuperSport deals

By Kevin McCullagh

Four deals into the Champions League and Europa League media-rights sales cycle for 2015-16 to 2017-18, Uefa has already generated fees worth more than 50 per cent of their total media rights income in the current cycle.

Two deals in the last fortnight with pay-television broadcasters provided the biggest increases to date. The standout deal was BT Sport's €1.1bn (\$1.5bn), three-year agreement in the UK for exclusive live rights for both properties, increasing Uefa's fee in the market by just over 100 per cent.

SuperSport paid an increase of more than 40 per cent for exclusive live and highlights rights in sub-Saharan Africa (see story on page 3).

These followed deals in August with pay-television operator Al Jazeera, covering the Middle East and North Africa, and in October with commercial and pay-television operator Modern

Times Group, covering Scandinavia.

The four are worth €1.8bn over the three years, equivalent to 51 per cent of the €3.5bn generated in the 2012-13 to 2014-15 cycle. The four territories accounted for about 30 per cent of the total in the current cycle.

Uefa looks well on course to hit its target of a 20-per-cent increase in commercial – media and sponsorship rights – revenue for the Champions League in the new cycle. The sales process is carried out by Uefa's agent Team Marketing.

The BT deal marks Uefa's second shift towards pay-television coverage for the Champions League in Europe, in both cases prompted by competition between two well-funded pay-television operators.

Traditionally, the tournament has had at least one live match per week on

Continued on page 2 ►

SERIE A

Infront has to gamble on fee growth

By Frank Dunne

The 20 clubs of Italy's Serie A have handed the Infront Sports & Media agency, and its private equity owners Bridgepoint Capital, a dilemma with potentially far-reaching consequences.

Under the terms of a proposal made by the clubs this week to Infront for the renewal of the agency's contract as media adviser to Serie A, the agency still stands to gain a substantial reward if it hits its

targets, something close to the €35m (\$47m) per season it currently earns.

But it has to provide a higher minimum guarantee – €100m more per season than at present in the first three years, €250m more per season in the second three – to earn those rewards. And the consequences of failure are now much more clearly defined.

Continued on page 6 ►

CONTENTS

1-4 BT is a new entry player in the UK, SuperSport is the dominant player in Africa. Both had good reasons to pay Uefa a premium for the Champions League

1,6 International rights growth could hold the key to Infront dilemma


4 TF1 deal keeps IRB on course for 'richest World Cup ever'

5 BeIN Sport nabs Wimbledon in France but has to settle for a share of ATP with Canal Plus

7 Canoc brings sponsor-driven rights strategy to 2016 Olympic Games in the Caribbean

8 América Móvil close to sub-licensing deals with pay-TV in Latin America for the Olympics

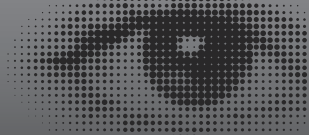
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CHAMPIONS LEAGUE 1

Uefa takes big step towards target with massive BT deal

Continued from page 1 ►

free-to-air television in Europe's big five markets. Live coverage in the UK will now be limited to the final plus one match per season for each competing British club, from the English Premier League and Scottish Premiership.

A similar shift happened in France in the current cycle, where the live rights are split between beIN Sport and Canal Plus, and only the final is free-to-air.

Some industry observers say the competition is so well established that it will not be damaged by the moves. Others say there is a risk the tournament could be weakened by the lower visibility, particularly on a young platform like BT's. BT Sport is in around 4m UK households. Rival BSkyB's Sky Sports channels are understood to have 6m-6.5m subscribers.

Uefa does not accept, however, that there has been an underlying shift in its sales strategy. One source close to the governing body said that because BT would be making matches available free, there had been "no change in Uefa's basic principle" on free-to-air coverage. He said: "Uefa still seeks the best combination of financial offer and commitments to competition coverage from the bids that it receives. Simply put, BT, very clearly, provided the best combined pay/free-to-air/financial solution for the UK."

Bigger battles to come

Industry experts have compared BT's acquisition to Sky's early moves in the UK pay-television market – expensive, aggressive and a deal that will take years for its success to be measured.

The deal is considered to have made a BT Sport subscription much more compelling, and to have significantly weakened Sky's offering. However, it is also considered a far-from-decisive battle in the war between the two. Two upcoming hurdles for BT Sport were mentioned by several sources as being more significant:

What BT is getting for €1.1bn

BT acquired exclusive live rights and non-exclusive highlights covering all 350 Champions League and Europa League games per season from 2015-16 to 2017-18:

- 145 live Champions League games, plus highlights
- 205 live Europa League games, plus highlights.

Games in the group stages of each tournament start at the same time, so match nights provide a more meaningful benchmark. The breakdown here is:

- 33 Champions League match nights per season
- 15 Europa League match nights per season.

The €367m BT is paying per season

equates to €7.6m per match night across the Champions League and Europa League.

Based upon tournament structures and qualification places for British teams remaining the same, this means:

- About 38 British team games per season in the Champions League
- About 35 British team games per season in the Europa League.

BT has also committed to showing on free-to-air television at least one live match per season of each British team, and the final of each tournament.

BT has also acquired rights for the annual Super Cup match between the winners of the Champions League and the winners of the Europa League.

1. The next Premier League rights auction, at which BT is considered to need to secure a much stronger rights package if it is to really challenge Sky

2. The appetite for investment in BT Sport by the telco's conservative shareholders. As one industry insider put it, "everyone says that BT has deep pockets, but the reason it has deep pockets is that it has very careful shareholders."

Some analysts expect the Champions League acquisition to push BT Sport's running costs to over €1.2bn per year. If BT's shareholders are to continue investing in it, they will need to see that the service is doing the job it was designed for – increasing subscribers and lowering churn for the company's triple play – home telephone, broadband and pay-television – products, at a manageable cost.

Sky suggested last week that BT had overpaid for the Champions League rights, saying that BT chose to pay far in excess of Sky's valuation. Most experts said the big fee could be at least partly justified by the large strategic value for BT in establishing a foothold in the marketplace. "If you are the underdog, the new kid on the block, you have to pay over the odds to get in the game," one former pay-television executive said.

Pay-TV impact

The Champions and Europa Leagues are far behind the Premier League in their

ability to drive UK pay-television subscriptions. This is due to the limited number of British clubs that will compete, and relatively small number of matches per season they play (see panel).

But the Champions League is still considered to be one of the three most valuable pay-television properties in the UK, along with the Premier League and England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) content. The Champions League has a big prestige factor as the world's highest-quality football tournament.

As one source put it: "The Premier League is your big subscription-driver. The Champions League is a super-prestige product. The ECB is a unique audience driver at a specific period of the year." ECB rights provide strong content during the summer months.

BT is getting more exclusivity over the Champions League and Europa League than any UK pay-television operator has ever had. Since the Champions League began, commercial broadcaster ITV has had at least one live match per week.

Another advantage of Champions and Europa League rights is that they provide strong content midweek, usually a quiet time for sport. The coverage is prized by pubs and commercial premises, which are also generally quieter midweek than at weekends. BT is seeking to steal some of Sky's share of the lucrative commercial premises' subscriptions market.

Bidding

BT secured the deal with its first-round bid of €1.1bn, or €367m per season. The other bidders, Sky and ITV, were taken by surprise by the strength of BT's offer. Informed sources say that BT did not want to risk going to a second round, where it feared Sky would get the upper hand.

Dovetailing bids – covering all the content on offer – from Sky and ITV are understood to have been worth less than €833m across the three years, meaning BT outbid the incumbents by over €267m.

The tournaments have a combined value of €527m in the current cycle. For the Champions League, Sky pays €285m over three years, and ITV €185m. Uefa

earns €57m over three years from the Europa League, for which ITV and BT are the rights-holders. BT took over the rights this season from pay-television broadcaster ESPN.

Uefa suffered a 10-per-cent cut in the value of the Champions League rights in the current cycle.

Blow to ITV

Losing the Champions League rights hugely weakens ITV's sports offering, but this may be more of a blow to its ego and reputation than its business, industry observers said this week.

ITV's only remaining premium sports property is England team qualifiers for Euro 2016 and the 2018 World Cup, and

friendlies. It also has a strong set of second-tier rights including French Open tennis and Tour de France cycling.

Losing the Champions League is expected to hurt its income from brands that focus their advertising spend around sport. But some say the effect will be limited due to the relatively small amount of content in the Champions League deal – it currently accounts for 0.3 per cent of ITV's 6,500 annual broadcast hours.

The broadcaster is also expected to agree a deal with Uefa for the remaining packages of rights on the UK market, covering non-exclusive Champions League and Europa League highlights. BT will be the other non-exclusive highlights rights-holder. ■

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE 2

SuperSport pays a premium to check StarTimes growth

By Frank Dunne

African pay-television operator SuperSport increased its spending on the rights to the Uefa Champions League and Europa League by almost 45 per cent to ensure that it got all rights, both free-to-air and pay-television, for sub-Saharan Africa.

SuperSport, which is owned by South African media group Naspers, is thought to be paying \$130m (£97m) per season for English- and Portuguese-language rights across sub-Saharan Africa. The deal is for three years, from 2015-16 to 2017-18.

In its current three-year deal, SuperSport holds pay-television rights only, for which it is thought to have paid about \$90m per season. StarTimes, the Chinese digital-terrestrial operator, acquired the free-to-air rights in all territories except South Africa for about \$6m-\$8m per season. The free-to-air rights in South Africa were acquired by commercial broadcaster E.tv for about \$1m per season.

The overall increase for Uefa on a like-for-like basis is about 30 per cent, from about \$100m per season to \$130m per season.

Most local experts see the deal as being

driven by SuperSport's desire to curb the expansion of StarTimes. Opinion differs as to whether the deal was purely defensive – to avoid erosion in SuperSport's subscriber base of 6.8m – or designed to go after some of the 2.6m subscribers to StarTimes' digital-terrestrial channel bouquets. Either way, it is a game being played out by two media groups, Naspers and StarTimes, which both have interests in Africa and China.

Knock-out bid

SuperSport was determined to acquire all rights this time and won with a knockout first-round bid. StarTimes was its only competitor. The Beijing-based broadcaster also bid for all rights but its bid is thought to have been well below SuperSport's. StarTimes also bid for all rights last time, with one source saying that it offered between \$60m and \$70m per season.

StarTimes has grown rapidly since its launch in Africa in 2007. It has 2.6m subscribers to channel bouquets offered via digital-terrestrial networks which it constructs and builds set-top boxes for. In June this year, the Democratic Republic of the Congo became its 10th African market. The company has broadcasting licences in a further six African countries.

More pertinently, perhaps, it is now making a move into the satellite market. In April, it acquired a 20-per-cent stake in struggling South African pay-television operator On Digital Media, which owns

the Top TV platform. According to local reports, due to a simultaneous dilution of the shares in ODM, this effectively gave StarTimes a 65-per-cent controlling stake in the platform. StarTimes relaunched the platform, which has about 200,000 subscribers, as StarSat this month.

In September, StarTimes agreed a 10-year deal with satellite provider SES to transmit its channels via satellite across the continent from last month.

Against such a background, SuperSport's investment might look purely defensive. However, one local pay-television expert said SuperSport did not see StarTimes as a threat to its subscriber base because of the different positioning of the respective content offerings.

SuperSport offers a wide range of premium sport and entertainment at what are high prices for the continent. StarTimes has far lower entry points, with far less premium content, and limited premium sport.

"The rate of growth of SuperSport's subscriber base has slowed a little in the last couple of years. There may be saturation at the top price points. In order to continue their expansion they need to target some of the lower-income African families that StarTimes is appealing to," the expert said.

Too soon for Fox

Sports channel operator Setanta Africa, which was recently taken over by Rupert

Murdoch's 21st Century Fox, did not bid.

Local experts said Setanta undoubtedly now had the resources to have matched SuperSport, and would be a major threat the next time the rights come to market. But the tender came too soon after the Fox takeover. Winning the deal would have required Fox to restructure the whole business and renegotiate carriage fees with all of its distributors.

To handle the volume of matches across the two competitions, Setanta would have had to launch new channels. This would have meant requiring distributors to increase their carriage fees. Many of the smaller cable and satellite platforms would probably struggle to do so. Even with those that could afford to, it would have been a difficult and possibly antagonistic negotiation for Fox so early in its time in the African market.

Safe partner

Although StarTimes made a strong bid, which Uefa took very seriously, SuperSport is also a safe choice in a risky market, with a record of new-entry players making winning bids which they cannot sustain.

In 2010, HiTV was forced to hand back the Nigerian rights to the two Uefa competitions, after agreeing to pay \$30m per season to acquire them – 10 times what SuperSport had paid in the previous deal. SuperSport took over the contract.

One local expert said: "SuperSport is a reliable partner. Given its market power, it could probably force rights fees down but it pays a fair market rate and always makes its payments. And it has bailed rights-holders out on more than one occasion. These things all weigh in its favour."

Free-to-air

SuperSport will show four live Champions League matches each match night, as well as highlights. It will also show four Europa League games per kick-off slot, and highlights.

The company also has to ensure free-to-air coverage throughout the region. For the Champions League, this will include one first-pick Wednesday match and highlights. For the Europa League, it must ensure that one first-pick game and one highlights programme are on free-to-air television each week.

It will sell on the free-to-air rights on a market-by-market basis. It is not expected to make a huge margin in these deals but having sought-after rights puts it in a good position from a political perspective with the continent's major broadcasters, according to one expert. ■

RUGBY UNION

France keeps 2015 on course to be richest World Cup

By Robin Jellis

The increase in rights fee which the International Rugby Board has secured in France for the 2015 World Cup can be interpreted in two ways. In percentage terms, given the eight years which will have elapsed since the last World Cup in the same time zone, it looks modest. Given the current market conditions, however, any increase at all is arguably an achievement.

Commercial broadcaster and incumbent rights-holder TF1 last week agreed to pay about €50m (\$67m) for the tournament, which will be hosted in England and Wales in September and October 2015.

The broadcaster had paid €75m in a deal covering the 2007 tournament in France and the 2011 tournament in New Zealand, of which about €45m is thought to have been for France – the most meaningful benchmark for the new deal.

A €5m increase can be looked on as a positive result for three reasons. First, a significant chunk of the value of the rights fee in 2007 was linked to the fact that

France was the event host. Second, since TF1 signed its last deal, the French advertising market has crashed and the broadcaster has been forcing down rights fees for sport wherever possible. Third, there was little competition for the rights. State broadcaster France Télévisions, TF1's main rival for rugby, did not bid.

The IRB and TF1 were both keen to renew – the IRB to continue working with a trusted partner, and TF1 to keep hold of one of its core sports properties. The IRB, however, failed to agree a deal for the 2019 tournament to be held in Japan. TF1 bid for 2015 and 2019, but its bid for the latter was rejected as too low. The rights will be sold after the 2015 tournament.

The rights are sold by Rugby World Cup Limited, the tournament organisers and a wholly-owned subsidiary of the IRB. RWCL is advised on its global media rights sales by the IMG Media agency.

No pay-TV interest

RWCL approached TF1 about a renewal more than a year ago, trying to take advantage of the competition in the market following the emergence of pay-television broadcaster beIN Sport.

Only the semi-final and final must be shown on free-to-air television in France under listed events legislation, so a

pay-television broadcaster could show the majority of the tournament. However, the six-week event is not seen as a subscription driver and bids from pay-television broadcasters failed to materialise.

TF1 was keen to renew as the World Cup provides it with big audiences. It had 17.8m viewers for the 2011 final, an audience share of 87 per cent. The 2007 semi-final between England and France provided 20m viewers.

In 2011, TF1 agreed sublicensing deals with pay-television broadcaster Canal Plus and France Télévisions covering 28 matches for a fee of €13m (*TV Sports Markets* 16:19). Both broadcasters simulcast each of the 28 matches.

Under the new deal, TF1 has the right, but not the obligation, to sublicense 24 of its 48 matches. It is thought likely that TF1 will sublicense matches to the same two broadcasters as in 2011.

The IRB is not thought to have considered the possibility of splitting its rights into packages and selling them separately, instead favouring a gatekeeper style deal.

In 2011, as host broadcaster, TF1 also covered the production costs to the 20 matches which it showed. One rugby expert estimated these at between €80,000 and €100,000 per match, or up to about €2m in total.

Japan 2019

The IRB will put the rights for the 2019 World Cup on the market again in early 2016. Market conditions in two or three years may be more competitive, and commercial values could be greater due to the continued growth of the sport.

With rugby sevens making its debut at the 2016 Olympic Games, the IRB will also be hoping that the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo may pique broadcaster interest in the 2019 World Cup in Japan.

The strategy of RWCL over the last decade has been to sell two tournaments at once, to prevent broadcasters cherry-picking the events played in their own hemispheres. The event alternates between a northern and southern hemisphere host.

It could look to boost the value of the French rights for 2019 by selling the

rights along with those for a World Cup in 2023 in a more favourable time zone. The 2023 host is expected to be announced in 2017. IMG's advisory deal for the World Cup runs until 2019.

'Richest ever'

Overall media-rights income for the 2015 tournament looks set for a huge uplift compared to 2011. The 2011 World Cup generated about €102m in media-rights fees (*TV Sports Markets* 15:21). Deals for 2015 in the UK and France alone are worth about €121m.

The main reason behind the increase is the hosting of the tournament in England, one of the sport's biggest television markets, and an advantageous time zone for France, another strong market.

UK commercial broadcaster ITV is

paying about £60m (€71m/\$96m) for the rights in 2015, in a two-tournament deal that also covered 2011, and is worth £80m in total.

"The 2015 World Cup will be the most successful tournament ever from a commercial perspective," Murray Barnett, head of commercial, broadcast and marketing at the IRB, told *TV Sports Markets*.

"The zenith was 2007, we took a slight step back in 2011 because of the time zone, but 2015 in England will be the richest World Cup in television revenue, with the widest distribution ever."

There are thought to have been increases in nearly all territories where new deals have been agreed. The IRB is yet to sell its rights in the key markets of Japan, Ireland, Italy and New Zealand. ■

TENNIS

Wimbledon gets 14% increase from reluctant bidders

By Robin Jellis

The All England Lawn Tennis Club secured a 14-per-cent increase in the value of rights to Wimbledon in France after a complex negotiation in which neither incumbent rights-holder Canal Plus nor rival beIN Sport wanted to get drawn into a bidding war.

Al Jazeera-owned pay-television operator beIN Sport eventually won the rights, paying about €4m (\$5.4m) per year in a five-year deal, from 2014 to 2018. Canal Plus, France's dominant pay-television platform, paid €3.5m per year from 2011 to 2013.

Separately, beIN Sport also claimed the rights to ATP World Tour 500 and World Tour Masters 1000 men's tournaments.

Seasoned tennis observers said that the Wimbledon negotiation was a curious one. In the first round of bidding, in June, it is thought that Canal Plus bid less than €2m per year – just over half of its previous fee. This bid was increased in a second round, but was still lower than the €3.5m it paid in its previous deal. There

were only two rounds of bidding.

There was one other bidder – digital-terrestrial broadcaster L'Équipe 21, owned by French newspaper *L'Équipe*. It bid for digital rights and offered some free-to-air coverage, but its offer was very low.

The AELTC will be pleased to have secured an increase, and beIN Sport will be pleased to have secured one of the sport's crown jewels by paying a modest premium. Canal Plus may rue letting the property go for five years without a fight.

One local expert said, however, that Canal Plus was now focusing on keeping 'must-have' properties, those which really drive subscriptions, rather than battling it out with beIN Sport for 'nice-to-have' content. Canal Plus's top rights are: French football's Ligue 1 (which it shares with beIN Sport); the Uefa Champions League; the English Premier League; Formula One motor racing; and Top 14 rugby.

Free-to-air factor

It is thought that an important factor was that beIN Sport was open to offering some free-to-air coverage of the tournament, which Canal Plus was not.

beIN Sport has agreed to sublicense non-exclusive rights to a free-to-air broadcaster if a French player reaches the semi-finals or the final. French player Marion Bartoli won the 2013 women's Wimbledon championships. The final was

shown only on pay-television.

The fact that the AELTC agreed to a five-year deal, instead of its usual three-year deal, also suggests that the body was keen to build a long-term partnership for Wimbledon in France.

The deal is a second successive increase for Wimbledon rights in France. To acquire the rights in the previous cycle Canal Plus had to increase its fee by 75 per cent, from €2m per year, due to interest from now-defunct pay-television channel Orange Sport, and pan-European broadcaster Eurosport.

The AELTC is advised by the IMG Media agency.

ATP deals

beIN Sport also acquired the rights to ATP World Tour 500 and World Tour Masters 1000 men's tournaments for about €6m per year, for five years from 2014 to 2018. Canal Plus paid about €5m for these rights in a deal ending in 2013.

The 20-per-cent increase was the result of three-way competition involving Canal Plus, beIN Sport and basic-tier sports broadcaster Ma Chaine Sport.

beIN Sport's fee is thought to be split about €4m for 1000 events, and about €2m for 500 events. The deal also covers the season-ending World Tour Finals. MCS bid aggressively for 500 events only, offering more than €2m per year.

Its bid was rejected, however, as the ATP favoured a deal covering both its 1000 and 500 events.

The ATP events would have provided MCS with complementary coverage to its Women's Tennis Association rights. It has the rights to over 400 matches from 22 Premier Tournaments, including the end-of-season Championships, in a four-year deal from 2013 to 2016.

Canal Plus is also only thought to have bid for 500 events. L'Équipe 21 bid for the rights to the semi-finals and finals of all 1000 events, but its offer was rejected.

In the previous cycle, Orange initially bought the rights for three years, from 2011 to 2013, for about €5.5m per year. When the telco shut down its pay-television operation in June 2012, Canal Plus picked up the rights for about €5m per year.

The rights to both tournaments are

sold by the ATP's commercial arm, Tennis Properties Limited, which is advised by IMG Media.

Masters

Canal Plus retained the rights to two other ATP events. It renewed its deal for all rights to the Monte-Carlo Masters and for the pay-television rights to the Paris Masters, both for five years, from 2014 to 2018. Both deals were negotiated directly with the tournament organisers.

The combined value of the two deals is thought to be €600,000 per year, similar to what the broadcaster paid in its previous three-year deals for the two events, from 2011 to 2013.

Canal Plus will sell on free-to-air rights for the Monte-Carlo Masters. Public-service broadcaster France Télévisions agreed a sublicensing deal covering 2011

to 2013, and is thought to be interested in renewing its deal.

BeIN Sport was keen to acquire rights to both events but Canal Plus was helped by its strong relationship with watchmaker Rolex. Rolex is the title sponsor of the Monte-Carlo Masters and also sponsors Formula One and several golf events for which Canal Plus has broadcast rights. It is thought to have preferred Canal Plus as tournament broadcaster.

Free-to-air channel W9, owned by commercial broadcaster M6, renewed its deal for free-to-air coverage of one semi-final and the final of the Paris Masters. In a separate deal with TPL, it acquired free-to-air-rights to the final of the World Tour Finals. Both deals are for three years, from 2014 to 2016. The combined value of the deals is thought to be about €400,000 per year. www.football-italy.com

SERIE A

Infront may have to gamble on growth in global rights values

Continued from page 1 ►

Conscious of the greater risks for the agency inherent in their proposal, the clubs are demanding watertight financial security should Infront fail to bring in the €1bn per season and €1.15bn per season minimum guarantee set by the clubs for each cycle. Infront must provide a bank guarantee for the first €100m of any shortfall.

In its current advisory deal, Infront Italy, the Italian division of the agency which handles the contract, provided a 'letter of comfort' from its Swiss parent company for income less than €900m per season but was not required to provide a bank guarantee.

On the surface, the challenge does not look insurmountable. In its current deals, the league already brings in an average of €1bn per season – €883m per season from domestic rights and €117m per season from international rights. Just maintaining the status quo would still mean big profits for Infront.

The main problem for Infront is that the Italian pay-television market is shrinking.

With the country's two main television platforms, Sky Italia and Mediaset, losing customers and cutting costs, matching current levels of domestic rights fees would represent a considerable achievement.

Sky currently pays €561m per season for live rights and Mediaset €268m per season. Sky has made it clear that if the league can deliver the broadcaster the increased exclusivity it craves, it will respond with an increased fee. Mediaset wants to pay less than it does now but does not want to end up with a rump of unfashionable clubs or unattractive match-picks which could threaten the survival of the platform, potentially leaving the league with just one buyer for the following cycle.

If Infront failed to find a balance between the interests of the two broadcasters to match their combined €829m per season for domestic live rights, it would leave the agency looking for a big increase in value for the international rights – bigger, probably, than the 30-per-cent uplift between the last and current cycles.

Given the growth trend for the global rights of Europe's top football leagues, an increase looks certain. The clubs, according to one insider, believe that the international rights are hugely undervalued. It is unclear whether this is purely down to media reports that the MP & Silva agency earns €213m per season from selling on the

rights – a figure which the agency put down to a clerical error in the way it reported its annual results.

A difficult negotiation between Infront and the league seems certain and nobody in Italian football is sure of what would happen next if Infront rejected the league's proposal. The agency still has one year to run on its existing advisory contract.

The agency must come out of the talks with some kind of profitable deal. When Bridgepoint paid €550m to acquire Infront in September 2011, its valuation would have been linked to Infront's ebitda, a significant proportion of which – some reports say as much as half – is driven by the Serie A deal. Bridgepoint's chances of selling on the agency at a healthy profit in the next three to five years rest heavily on the forthcoming negotiations.

1. Infront's current deal

Infront guarantees a minimum of €900m per season for six seasons, from 2010-11 to 2015-16. It has to make up any shortfall should the income fall below €900m. Above €900m it takes the first €25m. From €925m to €950m it takes 10 per cent, with the league taking 90 per cent. From €950m to €1bn it earns 15 per cent and on income above €1bn it would earn 20 per cent.

In the current three-year cycle, the league

sold its rights for an average of €1bn per season (€883m for domestic rights, €117m for international). The agency earns about €35m per season. It earns additional revenues for brokering the sale of club archive rights to broadcasters, match production and various technical services.

2. Infront proposal for next cycle

The agency proposed a minimum income of €5.5bn over six seasons, from 2015-16 to 2020-21, made up of €900m per season for the 2015-16 to 2017-18 seasons, and €930m for the 2018-19 to 2020-21 seasons. The deal would work on a similar commission structure to the current deal.

If exactly the same media-rights fees were earned as in the current cycle, the agency would continue to earn €35m per season.

3. The league's counter proposal

The league has asked Infront for guaranteed income of €1bn per season for the first three years, and €1.15bn for the second period of a finalised contract. The renewal for the second term would be triggered only if Infront brought in €1.15bn per season in the first three years.

According to some reports, the league has proposed an alternative commission model in which Infront would earn 2.8 per cent on domestic income and four

per cent on international rights, but only if the agency brought in at least €1bn per season.

If current rights-fee income from broadcasters was repeated exactly, the agency would earn about €25m per year on domestic rights income of €883m, plus €4.7m on international rights income of €117m – a total of just under €30m per season, or €5m per season less than under the current commission structure.

The agency would have to provide a bank guarantee for the first €100m per year of any shortfall. The bank charges on such a guarantee would be about €6m per year. ■

OLYMPIC GAMES 1

Canoc brings new TV rights model to the Caribbean

By Dan Horlock

The value of the rights for the 2016 Olympic Games increased by over 200 per cent in the Caribbean due to competition between the previous Olympics rights-holder and a new player in the region.

Canoc, formed of National Olympic Committees and Commonwealth Games Associations in the Caribbean, paid \$2.5m (€1.9m) for the rights to secure its first-ever rights deal. The fee was up from the \$750,000 that the IMC group paid for the rights to the 2012 Games.

The deal does not include the rights to the winter Games to be held next year. The winter Games has a nominal value in the Caribbean. The rights to the 2010 winter Games were included in the IMC deal.

Canoc's chief executive officer, Larry Romany, told *TV Sports Markets* this week that in spite of the huge increase the numbers added up. "We were privy to the revenue that IMC made last time throughout the Caribbean. Based on that system Canoc could support the payment of \$2.5m," he said. Canoc is funded by the individual members through their sponsorship deals.

The deal covers 20 markets (see Sports Clips). The vast majority of media-rights

value in the region is generated from free-to-air deals in the markets of Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, and Barbados.

Romany said that the group would seek to increase the amount of coverage of the Games by moving away from the exclusive free-to-air deals that had been the strategy of previous Olympics rights holders.

"We want to be able to show the Games on all platforms in each market and we will not be granting exclusivity to a specific media house in each territory as was done before."

Canoc will have three revenue streams. First, from the sale of airtime to sponsors on the television feed of the Games being shown across the region. Second, from rights fees in its deals with free-to-air broadcasters. In addition to the rights fees, the group wants to generate income from a revenue share with the broadcasters on the advertising inventory which is not part of the sponsor deals.

Sponsorship revenue will be the biggest revenue stream, Romany said. "The bigger fee is actually paid by the sponsor for being able to present it in a block, as one feed." He conceded that there would be some tough negotiations ahead with broadcasters.

He said that with the increased exposure being more attractive for sponsors, the organisation ought to be able to break even on its investment.

Canoc is also in negotiations with cable platforms for two or three channels to be used as 24-hour per day Olympic channels.

The channels would show second- or third-tier events with the first-tier events shown by the free-to-air broadcasters.

The group plans to bundle more sports content into its offering so that the Olympics would become more than two weeks every four years. The group will produce a monthly magazine programme that will follow the athletes as they prepare for the Games and will look to acquire other rights properties.

Commonwealth goal

Canoc is in negotiations with the Fast Track agency to acquire the rights to the 2014 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow. The group is in discussion with potential sponsors regarding the "brand value" of the Commonwealth Games in the Caribbean before finalising its bid.

The group also plans to acquire the rights to the 2014 Central American and Caribbean Games in Veracruz, Mexico, and "parts" of the 2014 Youth Olympic Games in Nanjing, China.

Romany said that it was important to look at a sustainable way of generating income through several rights deals, not just the Olympics. Canoc is also interested in the International Association of Athletics Federations rights and the world championships of cycling and swimming.

"We are trying to tie up all of those rights to bundle it with the Olympics across the quadrennial for the sponsors." He said that by bundling the content together it would become a very attractive proposition to both sponsors and broadcasters.

Athletics is the third-most popular sport in the Caribbean behind football and cricket, according to Romany. In Jamaica, the biggest market in the region, athletics is the most popular sport.

Rio Carnival

The location of the 2016 Games would be more attractive to sponsors than London due to the more favourable time zone and the close cultural ties between the Caribbean and the city of Rio due to the Rio Carnival, Romany said.

The more favourable time zone would mean that more programming could be built around the live feed in primetime, which would be more appealing to broadcasters.

The timing of the Games, two years after the 2014 Fifa World Cup, was also important, Romany said. "With the football next year that has created an

even greater interest in what's happening in Rio and it was an opportune moment for us to do this."

The group is expected to hold discussions with IMC with regards to exploiting coverage of the Games via its pay-television broadcaster SportsMax. However, any deal would be conditional on the broadcaster showing coverage on an unencrypted channel available on basic-tier cable services. SportsMax has two premium sports channels and is transmitted regionally to 23 countries in the Caribbean through cable operators in each territory.

Rights fee distribution

The revenues generated by Canoc will be distributed in two main areas. First, funds will go towards the development of athletes from small territories such as Montserrat and the Turks and Caicos

Islands. Second, funds will go to the development of both youth and elite athletes in the larger territories that have National Olympic Committees. "Our primary focus is on the smaller territories and their development programmes. The money will then filter through to the National Olympic Committees," he said.

Canoc was created in 1999 to develop Olympic sports in the Caribbean. It has set up commissions for education and development over the period. The commercial activities of the body, including the 2016 Olympics deal, are handled by its broadcasting arm.

Canoc is based in St Lucia. Its management team is composed of the chairman, Steve Stoute, seven directors, including Larry Romany, and the company secretary.

[www.canoc.com](#) For the full interview with Larry Romany visit our website. ■

OLYMPIC GAMES 2

América Móvil close to deals with ESPN and DirecTV

By Dan Horlock

Mexican telecommunications company América Móvil is understood to be close to sealing pan-regional pay-television rights deals for the 2014 and 2016 Olympic Games.

ESPN, which held the rights for the 2010 and 2012 Games, is close to agreeing a deal covering the whole of Central and Latin America. For the 2010 and 2012 Games, ESPN paid \$9.5m (£7m) for the exclusive pay-television rights in Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela. The deal also included the exclusive pay-television and free-to-air rights in Argentina.

Pan-regional pay-television broadcaster DirecTV is close to a deal for the south of Latin America.

Both deals would be for non-exclusive rights. América Móvil will broadcast coverage of the Olympics 24 hours per day via its pay-television channel Claro Sports, which is widely available across the region.

América Móvil, owned by billionaire Carlos Slim, acquired the rights to the 2014 and 2016 Olympic Games for Central and Latin America in April in a deal worth \$110m (*TV Sports Markets* 17:7).

Arturo Elías Ayub, communications vice president of Grupo Carso, which is owned by Slim, said that one of the company's main objectives was to ensure as wide a reach as possible for the Games.

The company has sold on free-to-air rights on a market-by-market basis for Sochi, which have a tiny value in the region. But these pan-regional pay-television deals would be its first major sublicensing deals to include Rio. Elías Ayub declined to comment on the two deals.

Last week, the telco agreed an exclusive free-to-air sublicensing deal in Mexico with commercial broadcaster Canal 22 for the winter Olympics only. There was no rights fee but América Móvil will get a share of Canal 22's advertising revenues.

Canal 22 will show far more coverage than the International Olympic Committee's stipulated minimum of 40 hours. It is understood it will show between 120 and 150 hours of coverage.

The broadcaster also showed the 2010 winter Games in a similar deal agreed directly with the IOC. The committee sold the rights to the 2012 Games in

Mexico to media group Televisa in a deal worth \$18.8m.

América Móvil has plans to launch its own pay-television platform and free-to-air channel in Mexico to exploit the rights to the summer Games. The company cannot enter the market at present due to the country's cross-ownership legislation. The company has a monopoly in the telephony markets.

However, the telco anticipates that the government will pass new legislation in the first quarter of next year to allow it to enter the television market. "The government will consider companies with big market shares as substantial players and will provide asymmetric regulation [a regulatory tool designed to help new entrants into markets]," Elías Ayub said. He said that he expected the company to be given a "unique concession" allowing it to offer triple-play services.

Elías said that the company had a fall-back plan if regulation was not passed for the company to enter the television market. However, its rivalry with Televisa and commercial broadcaster TV Azteca, which hold a duopoly over the Mexican television market, would leave it short of options, with Canal 22 the only other broadcaster to whom it could sell on the rights (*TV Sports Markets* 16:16). ■

SPORTS CLIPS: News from TVSM Daily from November 7 to November 20

MEDIA RIGHTS 1

Football: Euro 2016, Euro and World Cup qualifiers, Ligue 1 and more

- **Football:** Swedish public-service broadcaster SVT and commercial and pay-television broadcaster TV4 acquired rights for the Uefa Euro 2016 national team tournament. Public-service broadcaster NRK and commercial and pay-television broadcaster TV2 confirmed deals for the tournament in Norway. The deals, which were brokered by the CAA Eleven agency on behalf of Uefa, include coverage on all media platforms.
- **Football:** European governing body Uefa awarded rights to the European qualifying matches for the Euro 2016 and 2018 Fifa World Cup national team competitions in Portugal, Belgium, Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic. The agreements concern all live matches with the exception of those featuring the respective national team. The rights were awarded to Portuguese pay-television broadcaster Sport TV, pay-television operator Chello Central Europe in Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, and pay-television broadcaster Telenet, which acquired Dutch-language rights in Belgium. The deals, brokered by the CAA Eleven agency, include television, mobile and online rights.
- **Football:** Eredivisie Media and Marketing, controlled by the Fox International Channels subsidiary of 21st Century Fox, agreed a four-year rights deal, from 2014-15 to 2017-18, with Dutch governing body the KNVB. General entertainment channel Fox will show Netherlands senior national team friendlies. It will also show the semi-finals and final and highlights of the KNVB Beker, the domestic cup, as well as the Johan Cruyff Schaal between the winners of the top-tier Eredivisie and KNVB Beker. Pay-television channel Fox Sports will broadcast all U-21 team home tournament qualifiers and friendly games, plus up to six games per round from the second round of the KNVB Beker.
- **Football:** The MP & Silva agency agreed a worldwide rights distribution deal with the Kuwait Football Association. The exclusive package runs until 2016 and includes national team friendly and qualifying home matches for all international competitions. The rights include cable, satellite, betting, terrestrial, web television, IPTV and mobile platforms.
- **Football:** UK telecommunications company BT acquired exclusive live rights for the Uefa Champions League and Europa League club competitions for three seasons, from 2015-16 to 2017-18 (page 1).
- **Football:** Pay-television broadcaster SuperSport renewed a rights deal for the Uefa Champions League and Europa League club competitions covering sub-Saharan Africa (page 3).
- **Football:** The Saran Media agency agreed an exclusive deal to distribute worldwide rights to the Turkish Cup and Super Cup, Turkey's top cup competitions, outside of the tournaments' home market. The rights cover the 2013-14 season and include all media platforms.
- **Football:** Pan-regional broadcaster Eurosport acquired exclusive live rights for the next two editions of the Fifa Club World Cup. The next edition will take place in Morocco from December 11-21. The deal covers Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Hungary, Iceland, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. The broadcaster has non-exclusive rights in Denmark. All matches will be broadcast live on Eurosport 2, Eurosport France and the Eurosport Player online simulcast television service.
- **Football:** Digital free-to-air channel Sommet Sports acquired live rights in New Zealand for all games during the 2013 Fifa Club World Cup.
- **Football:** Swedish commercial and pay-television broadcaster TV4 extended a deal for France's top-tier Ligue 1 for one year until the end of the 2014-15 season. The TV4 Sport channel currently broadcasts Ligue 1 games, but the coverage will be shown by the new TV12 channel from spring 2014.

SINCE LAST TIME

- English football's Premier League settled its long-running legal battle with video-sharing website YouTube over alleged copyright infringement of its content. The league and fellow complainant Fédération Française de Tennis, the governing body of tennis in France, plus several music publishers, dropped the case that was first opened in 2007. The league told *TV Sports Markets*: "We can confirm that in light of steps taken by YouTube to improve detection and take down processes for Premier League copyrighted content that we have agreed to cease legal proceedings. We will continue to work with YouTube to ensure that only legitimate Premier League content features on its channels." Each side bore its own legal costs. Separately, the league said the Federation Against Copyright Theft's successful conviction against a website that had been illegally streaming Premier League games was a "significant win" in its battle against piracy and intellectual property theft.
- North America's Major League Baseball and NFL American football leagues threatened to move their broadcast rights to pay-television unless streaming service Aereo was blocked. The leagues offered their support to US rights-holders engaged in a legal dispute with Aereo through a "friend of the court" filing with the US Supreme Court. US networks ABC, CBS, NBCUniversal and Fox, which have alleged that Aereo steals copyrighted television content, are appealing a decision that denied their request to shut down the streaming service while the case moved forward.
- A lawsuit brought by US college athletes seeking a share of television and video game rights revenues has been allowed to proceed. US district judge Claudia Wilken ruled that the players

SPORTS CLIPS: News from TVSM Daily from November 7 to November 20

MEDIA RIGHTS 2

Basketball, boxing, cricket, ice hockey and mixed martial arts

- **Basketball:** The Turkish Basketball Federation agreed a long-term partnership with the Infront Sports & Media agency that includes the exclusive domestic and international distribution rights for the top-tier Turkish Basketball League. Infront will open a new office in Istanbul to support the deal, which also includes the production of content for the federation's digital platforms, plus sponsorship rights.
- **Basketball:** Video-sharing website YouTube agreed a one-year extension with North American league the NBA for the live streaming of more than 350 games from the second-tier Development League during the 2013-14 season. Fans will also be able to access the games on the league's YouTube channel through all of the league's 17 team websites.
- **Boxing:** Digital media company Remark Media acquired digital distribution rights to the Clash in Cotai on November 24, headlined by Manny Pacquiao's fight against Brandon Rios, and announced the launch of a boxing-dedicated channel in partnership with Chinese online television service provider PPTV. Remark Media will distribute the rights to the event in partnership with PPTV in China and UStream Korea in South Korea. The Boxing Channel, which will launch with the Clash in Cotai, will feature live boxing, documentaries, feature films, interviews, analysis and highlights.
- **Cricket:** Digital sports media company Perform agreed a four-year deal, from 2014 to 2017, with the England and Wales Cricket Board, to deliver live and on-demand coverage of the England team's home international matches to North America and the Caribbean. Live and on-demand content will be made available to viewers via smart-television, PC, mobile and tablet platforms.
- **Cricket:** Australian commercial broadcaster Nine struck a deal with the England and Wales Cricket Board for the rights to the next two Ashes series played in England. The deal includes exclusive rights in Australia to the Ashes, One Day Internationals and Twenty20 matches between the national teams of England and Australia in 2015 and 2019.
- **Cricket:** South African public-service broadcaster SABC agreed a deal with the Cricket South Africa governing body to provide live coverage of all national team matches during the 2013-14 season. The deal covers South Africa's Test series against India and Australia, One Day Internationals against Pakistan and India, and Twenty20 games against Pakistan and Australia.
- **Ice Hockey:** German sports broadcaster Sport1 acquired rights for live coverage on television and the Sport1.de website of all games during the 2013 Deutschland Cup in Germany featuring the national teams of the host country, Slovakia, Switzerland and the US. Sport1 agreed the deal with DEB, the German ice hockey federation.
- **Ice Hockey:** NHL franchise the Phoenix Coyotes agreed a multi-year extension to its regional rights deal with pay-television broadcaster Fox Sports Arizona. The Fox Sports Arizona and Fox Sports Arizona Plus channels will show 70 Coyotes regular-season games during the 2013-14 season as part of a deal that will run "well into the next decade."
- **Mixed Martial Arts:** The Legacy Fighting Championship promoter agreed a multi-year rights deal with US pay-television channel AXS TV Fights. The broadcaster will start the deal in 2014 by showing 12 live Legacy FC events.
- **Mixed Martial Arts:** Abu Dhabi TV, which is operated by pay-television operator Abu Dhabi Media Company, acquired rights for events organised by UK promoter Bamma. The rights cover Bahrain, Egypt, Chad, Iraq, Iran, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, United Arab Emirates, Yemen, Algeria, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia, the Comoros Islands, Djibouti, Mauritania, Somalia and Sudan.

could sue the National Collegiate Athletic Association as a class action. The action aims to change rules that prevent the athletes from earning money on their images.

- North American sports industry revenues are projected to grow at an annual rate of 4.8 per cent to \$67.7bn (€50.5bn) by 2017, fuelled by the media-rights market, according to a report by PricewaterhouseCoopers. Media rights are projected to increase more than any other sector of the industry, growing at a compound annual rate of 7.7 per cent to \$17.1bn by 2017.
- The Spanish Footballers' Association, the country's union of professional players, called for a five-per-cent share of any fee from future centralised rights deals struck by the Spanish Football League. The Spanish government is planning to present a new Professional Sports Act that will outline a more centralised rights model before the end of 2013.
- The Argentinian government set aside a further ARS\$310.6m (€39.2m/\$53.3m) in its annual budget for its *Fútbol para todos* (Football for all) broadcast project. The funding will be added to the ARS\$1.2bn already budgeted for 2013-14. The government launched the scheme in 2009, buying the rights for the domestic football league until 2018-19 in order to put the matches on free-to-air television.
- Media company 21st Century Fox said that investment in new channels, including the launch of the new Fox Sports pay-television channels, had affected profit in the company's first quarter of the 2013-14 financial year. In interim results for the three months until the end of September, net income stood at \$1.26bn (€940.3m) compared to \$2.23bn a year earlier.

MEDIA INTERNATIONAL

SPORTS CLIPS: News from TVSM Daily from November 7 to November 20

MEDIA RIGHTS 3

Motorsport, Olympic Games, rugby union, taekwondo and tennis

- **Motorsport:** US pay-television broadcaster Fox Sports acquired rights for events operated by the Feld Motor Sports division of event promoter Feld Entertainment. The deal, which was agreed between Fox Sports and the IMG Media agency, will run for five years, from 2014 to 2018. The multi-platform deal includes 115 hours of original programming and five hours of live coverage of the Monster Energy Supercross motorcycling event, the Monster Jam monster truck tour, the Amsoil Arenacross off-road motorcycle series and the Monster Energy Cup motorcycle event.
- **Olympic Games:** Canoc Broadcasting, a company formed by sports bodies in the Caribbean for handling media rights for major properties, acquired rights for the 2016 summer Games in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The multi-platform and multi-language deal with the International Olympic Committee covers Anguilla, Antigua & Barbuda, the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bermuda, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Dominica, Grenada, Cooperative Republic of Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Montserrat, St Kitts & Nevis, St Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad & Tobago and the Turks and Caicos (page 7).
- **Olympic Games:** Portuguese public-service broadcaster RTP acquired free-to-air rights for the 2014 winter Games in Sochi, Russia, and the 2016 summer Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in a deal with the Sportfive agency.
- **Rugby Union:** French commercial broadcaster TF1 acquired rights for the 2015 Rugby World Cup. The deal with tournament operator Rugby World Cup Limited includes live coverage and highlights of all 48 matches and covers television, online and mobile rights (page 4).
- **Taekwondo:** UK public-service broadcaster the BBC agreed a rights deal for the inaugural World Taekwondo Grand Prix, which takes place from December 13-15 in Manchester. The BBC, which struck the deal with the GB Taekwondo national governing body, will provide live coverage via its Red Button digital service and the BBC Sport website.
- **Taekwondo:** The European Broadcasting Union, the consortium of public-service broadcasters, struck a deal with the European Taekwondo Union governing body to distribute live coverage of the finals of the 2014 Taekwondo Senior European Championships men's and women's continental events worldwide via its Eurovision subsidiary.
- **Tennis:** French pay-television broadcaster beIN Sport acquired rights for the Wimbledon championships and the men's ATP World Tour Masters 1000 series, 500 series and season-ending ATP World Tour Finals (page 5).
- **Tennis:** Pay-television broadcaster Canal Plus renewed its rights to the ATP World Tour Masters 1000 tournaments in Monte-Carlo and Paris for five years, from 2014 to 2018. The deal was agreed with the tournament organisers (page 5).
- **Tennis:** French digital-terrestrial broadcaster W9 agreed a three-year extension, from 2014 to 2016, to its rights deal for the season-ending ATP World Tour Finals and the Paris Masters, which is also sanctioned by the ATP World Tour, the professional men's tour (page 5).
- **Tennis:** UK public-service broadcaster the BBC agreed a two-year extension, from 2014 to 2015, to its contract with the men's ATP World Tour for rights to the season-ending World Tour Finals. The non-exclusive rights include live coverage of eight singles matches, including one semi-final and the final, per year.
- Discovery Communications and French media company TF1 are in talks over the American media and entertainment company securing control of pan-regional sports broadcaster Eurosport ahead of schedule. Discovery secured an option to raise its stake in Eurosport to 51 per cent on or after December 21, 2014 as part of a deal to acquire 20 per cent of the broadcaster in December 2012.
- UK pay-television broadcaster BSkyB said it would broadcast free-to-air highlights of the 2013-14 Ashes cricket series between Australia and England on its Pick TV channel. Sky acquired the exclusive live UK rights to the series from the Cricket Australia governing body but failed to agree a terrestrial deal.
- Pay-television broadcaster Sky Italia signed a deal with Telecom Italia for its dedicated Sochi 2014 winter Olympic Games channels to be carried by the telco's Tim broadband and ultra-broadband networks. Tim customers who purchase Sky's 'Ticket Big Events' package will be able to access sports events from their mobile device, live and on demand, starting with the winter Olympics in February.
- Pan-regional sports broadcaster Eurosport became a partner of the new Xbox One video game console. Customers in Austria, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Spain and the UK who buy the new console and choose an Xbox Live Gold subscription will gain access to the Eurosport Player application, which offers an online simulcast of the Eurosport and Eurosport 2 channels. The content will be available in English, German, Italian and Spanish.
- Satellite-television provider Canal Digital Sweden formed a joint venture with the National Federation of People's Parks and Community Centres to show live sports coverage in 16 Swedish cinemas. Canal Digital will provide cinemas with the 12 sports channels of C More Entertainment, the premium pay-television arm of commercial and pay-television broadcaster TV4 Group.
- Indian pay-television broadcaster Star Sports took legal action against cable-television operator GTPL Hathway for alleged illegal transmission of the former's channels during India's recent Test cricket series against the West Indies. Star Sports filed First Information Reports – documents that can pre-empt

SPORTS CLIPS: News from TVSM Daily from November 7 to November 20

criminal charges – against GTPL in Gujarat, Maharashtra, Bihar and Jharkhand.

MEDIA RIGHTS NEGOTIATIONS

- Major League Baseball franchise the Chicago Cubs exercised an option to curtail a local rights deal with cable-television broadcaster WGN-TV after the 2014 season. Unless the broadcaster agrees to pay substantially higher fees for the 2015 season and beyond by early December, the Cubs will start talks with other parties. The franchise also said that any new deal with WGN-TV would only run until 2019 to fall in line with the Cubs' other regional rights deal, with pay-television broadcaster Comcast SportsNet Chicago, removing three years from the existing contract.
- Uefa, football's European governing body, invited bids for the rights in the United States and Caribbean to the Champions League, Europa League and Super Cup club competitions for three seasons, from 2015-16 to 2017-18. Bids must be submitted by December 3. Uefa postponed the sales process for the rights in the Philippines to the European qualifiers for the Euro 2016 and 2018 Fifa World Cup after the country was struck by Typhoon Haiyan.
- Nonce Paolini, chief executive of the TF1 Group, said that the commercial broadcaster's rights for the France national football team were "not indispensable," with the European qualifiers for the Uefa Euro 2016 and 2018 Fifa World Cup national team tournaments on the market. Paolini said that TF1 had already made bids for the rights, but added that the price must be "reasonable." France has already qualified for Euro 2016 as the host nation.
- Entertainment agency and its private equity partner Silver Lake Management. Forstmann Little is seeking completion of a sale by the end of the year.
- Philipp Grothe, the chief executive and co-founder of Kentaro, rubbished claims that the Swiss division of the agency, Kentaro AG, had gone into liquidation. Grothe told *TV Sports Markets* that the division had just completed a €27m (\$36m) recapitalisation. He said that an entry on the Swiss company registry Moneyhouse, and other similar reports, saying the company had gone into liquidation were "incorrect and will be deleted soon."
- The Chinese Olympic Committee signed an eight-year partnership with Tencent under which the internet company will provide exclusive interviews with the country's athletes during 20 major events. The deal covers the 2014 and 2018 winter Olympic Games, the 2016 and 2020 summer Olympics and the Asian Games in 2014 and 2019.
- The International Cricket Council announced that it would stream live coverage of 16 matches from the World Twenty20 Qualifier 2013 tournament, which started in the United Arab Emirates on November 15, via the global governing body's official website.
- North America's Major League Baseball agreed a multi-platform programming partnership with Viacom-owned youth entertainment media group MTV. Players will feature in lifestyle-focused programmes to be shown on all of MTV's television and online channels.
- The International World Games Association plans to launch its own online video channel. The international organisation, which organises the World Games multi-sport event, hopes to launch the channel early next year.
- US pay-television broadcaster beIN Sport appointed Antonio Briceño as deputy managing director. Briceño will oversee operations, production, marketing, sales and the distribution of beIN Sport in North America, along with its Spanish-language channel beIN Sport en Español.

ALSO SINCE LAST TIME

- The number of bids for the IMG agency was reduced to four, with the agency's owner, private equity firm Forstmann Little, cutting a joint bid from TPG Capital and Creative Artists Agency. The remaining parties said to be in contention are private equity groups CVC Capital Partners, KKR & Co and Carlyle Group, along with a joint proposal from the William Morris Endeavor

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