

# TVSPORTS MARKETS

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## PREMIER LEAGUE 1

### Losses are limited as Silva tries to unravel Middle East conundrum

By Kevin McCullagh

The MP & Silva agency's deal for English Premier League rights in the Middle East last week allowed the league to extract itself from a tough situation.

The agency is understood to be paying between \$300 million (€222 million) and \$340 million over the three years, or \$100 million to just over \$113 million per season. The new deal covers 2013-14 to 2015-16. In the current deal, from 2010-11 to 2012-13, the league earns \$350 million, or just under \$117 million per season.

The league faced several challenges when it tendered the rights in the region this time. First, current rights-holder the Abu Dhabi Media Company, a pay-television operator, wanted to significantly cut its spending on the rights. Second, according to several sources, ADMC was mainly interested in acquiring live rights for only the matches of Manchester City, the Premier League club owned by ADMC's owners, Abu Dhabi's ruling family. Third, ADMC's main rival for the

rights, Qatari pay-television broadcaster Al Jazeera, did not bid aggressively. Both broadcasters wanted to avoid getting into a bidding war.

A joint deal with the broadcasters was a possible solution – but it was one the league would have been keen to avoid. A joint deal may have allowed the league to split the rights as the broadcasters wanted, and to generate a strong, combined rights fee. But it would have made it extremely difficult to generate competition between ADMC and Al Jazeera in future rights auctions, undermining future revenues in one of the league's most lucrative rights territories.

The league would also have wanted to avoid a deal in which one broadcaster secured the live rights to only one club, for fear of the precedent it would set, one informed source said this week. The league would fear encouraging claims such as that by leading club Liverpool in 2011 to be allowed to sell its own

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## BIATHLON

### Germany key to EBU ambitions

By Dan Horlock

Germany is at the centre of the battle for the next cycle of the International Biathlon Union's rights. Getting its valuation right in the sport's most valuable market will be critical to the European Broadcasting Union's chances of holding on to the rights. Bids were submitted last week for the four-year period from 2014-15 to 2017-18.

In its current deal, from 2010-11 to

2013-14, the EBU pays about €45 million (\$61 million), or €11.25 million per year. ARD and ZDF, the EBU members in Germany, are thought to contribute about 60 per cent of the fee, at just under €7 million per year.

The two broadcasters are expected to face competition for the rights from German commercial broadcaster RTL,

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**FASTRACK****NEWS IN BRIEF****ECB upbeat about North American rights**

The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) is confident that its rights in North America and the Caribbean are set for a strong increase in value, in an upcoming tender for 2014 to 2017, due to improved conditions in the cricket-rights market.

Mark Pearce, the board's head of commercial partnerships, told *TV Sports Markets*: "There is a big expatriate market, especially in the US, and a demand for cricket in the region which we hope to exploit."

The rights on offer cover England's home Tests, One Day Internationals and Twenty20 matches against India and Sri Lanka in 2014, New Zealand and Australia in 2015, Pakistan and Sri Lanka in 2016, and the West Indies and South Africa in 2017.

Cricket rights experts say the ECB could generate a fee similar to the \$9 million (€7 million) to \$10 million earned by the Australian board, Cricket Australia, in a four-year deal with pay-television broadcaster Willow TV for 2013-16 agreed last month. Both Cricket Australia's previous deal, from 2009 to 2012, and the ECB's current deal, from 2010 to 2013, are understood to be worth much less than this.

The two main players in the North American cricket rights market are Willow and sports pay-television broadcaster ESPN. Pay-television channel Ten Cricket also shows cricket in the region but does not generally buy rights for North America alone. The broadcaster's North American channel is predominantly a simulcast of its Indian subcontinent channel. It has North American rights to the Pakistan, West Indies and Sri Lanka boards as part of global deals with the boards.

In 2011, ESPN shook up the North American cricket market by acquiring the rights to International Cricket Council events from 2012 to 2015 for a

fee of about \$27 million. This was an increase of 800 per cent on the \$3 million that Willow had paid for the same rights from 2008 to 2011 (*TV Sports Markets* 16:6).

ESPN is expected to bid aggressively for the ECB rights. The broadcaster has said the US cricket market has strong potential, with an estimated 15 million fans, largely made up of the various expatriate and Caribbean populations (*TV Sports Markets* 15:3). ESPN's only current cricket rights in North America are for the ICC events, and the ECB rights would significantly enhance its portfolio.

Willow, the incumbent rights-holder, is the market leader for cricket in North America. It consolidated its position late last year by acquiring the pay-television channel Neo Cricket from the Nimbus Communications agency. It now has two cricket channels in the market. Willow holds the rights to other boards, including South Africa, India and New Zealand.

When the ECB and Cricket Australia last sold their North American rights, around 2008, competition in the market had collapsed after pay-television broadcasters DirecTV and Dish TV stopped acquiring cricket rights.

The two platforms had started acquiring cricket rights in 2004 as they competed for subscribers from the Asian expatriate community. However, they failed to generate strong revenues from their pay-per-view services and niche channels. Many viewers chose instead to watch the content on free, pirated internet streams. ■

**Rai taking Giro talks to the wire**

With less than one month to go before the start of the Italian cycling season, state broadcaster Rai has still not renewed its contract for domestic media rights from 2013 to 2016 with RCS Sport, the rights-holder of the Giro d'Italia and Italy's other major races.

RCS is understood to be frustrated at Rai's leisurely negotiating pace. The

stumbling block is not so much the price as the demands which RCS has made on Rai to improve the production standards. Informed sources say that the broadcaster took two months to respond to the new production handbook put together by IMG Media, the agency which sells the international rights to the races and which acts as the media-rights adviser to RCS for Italy.

One bonus so far for RCS is that Rai has changed the production team for the Giro. In the new deal, it will be handled by Grandi Produzioni Rai, the team which produces events of international appeal. In the past, production was handled by the normal sports production unit of Rai Sport.

Talks about the new deal began in September (*TV Sports Markets* 16:18). Despite the frustrations, RCS is not thought to be negotiating with any other broadcaster and sources close to the talks believe that a last-minute deal will be found.

The Strada Bianche dirt road race through Tuscany takes place on March 3. This is followed by the Tirrenio-Adriatico from March 7-13 and the Milan-San Remo on March 17. ■

**Lawsuit on hold**

The long-running rights dispute between the Brazil-based Traffic Sports agency and the Uruguay-based Full Play Group over the Copa América could be close to a resolution. *TV Sports Markets* understands that the two parties have recently held discussions to resolve the dispute.

In June 2011, Conmebol, South American football's governing body, awarded the rights to the Copa to Full Play for the 2015, 2019 and 2023 tournaments. Traffic claimed it already had an agreement with Conmebol for the 2015 Copa rights and a matching right for the 2019, 2023 and 2027 editions of the tournament. In 2011, it filed a lawsuit in the US against Conmebol, its 10 member associations and Full Play. ■

## PREMIER LEAGUE 1

## Losses limited as Silva takes on Middle East deal

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international rights, and keep all the revenue, or at least have a greater share of overall international revenues. Premier League international rights are sold centrally, with the revenue divided equally between all league clubs.

As one rights expert put it, “there are plenty of broadcasters around the world who would be happy to acquire rights for Manchester United matches alone.”

### Risk factor

Even at the lower end of the estimated rights fee range, the deal will be something of a relief for the league. Some experts had predicted the value would fall by a third or more.

ADMC overpaid to acquire the rights in the current cycle, bidding \$100 million more than the next highest offer, from Arab Radio and Television. ADMC’s \$350 million fee was more than a 200-per-cent increase on that paid by previous rights-holder Orbit-Showtime.

Weak competition from Al Jazeera was also widely predicted, as the previously fierce rivalry between the broadcasters has faded. Some local sources talk of a non-belligerence pact now being in place between the two. The first big sign of this was when ADMC failed to bid against Al Jazeera for Uefa Champions League and Europa League rights for the 2012-13 to 2014-15 cycle. Al Jazeera paid a 25-per-cent fee increase to acquire the rights – compared to the 250-per-cent increase it had paid for the previous cycle when challenged by ADMC.

Outbidding ADMC and Al Jazeera looks like a risk for MP & Silva, at first glance. The two broadcasters are by far the biggest rights fee payers in the region and industry experts say they must be involved if the agency is to make a profit.

However, the general industry view this week was that MP & Silva would not have offered so much without having a

strong indication from at least Al Jazeera, and probably ADMC as well, of what they would be willing to pay to sublicense the rights.

The deal is the agency’s second-biggest in terms of the size of the guarantee, after its €351 million deal to sell Italian Serie A international rights over the three seasons from 2012-13 to 2014-15.

MP & Silva has a close relationship with Al Jazeera. The broadcaster has been acquiring rights from the agency for years. MP & Silva has also acquired rights from Al Jazeera – the broadcaster has global rights for French Ligue 1 football from 2012-13 to 2017-18, and the agency has acquired the rights in Europe and Asia through sublicensing agreements. The two companies’ executives are also thought to have good relationships.

“It was not a situation where there was a bidding war,” Andrea Radrizzani, MP & Silva’s chief executive, told *TV Sports*

*“We bid for the best product and have been called by every broadcaster in the region since we won the rights”*

**Andrea Radrizzani, chief executive,  
MP & Silva**

*Markets.* “The Premier League is must-have content in the region and we saw an opening to jump in and acquire the rights at a similar value as in the past.”

Other agencies are looking at the deal and asking themselves if they have missed an opportunity to make a big profit, one agency source said this week. It is not thought that any other agency made a serious rival bid.

Radrizzani said that MP & Silva does not have any pre-deals for the rights with broadcasters, and that ADMC and Al Jazeera were not the only potential buyers.

“What we have bid for is the best product in a competitive market,” he said. “We have been called by every single broadcaster in the region, free-to-air and pay-television, since we won the rights. Al Jazeera and ADMC are for sure the two companies with the biggest

budgets. But there are also some interesting IPTV operators in the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.”

### No one-club deals

Radrizzani ruled out the possibility of ADMC getting live rights for Manchester City matches only. “I think it would be a very poor package, and probably not enough to justify a significant investment,” he said. MP & Silva has not yet had a “serious conversation” with ADMC about the rights, he added.

Some experts nevertheless expect ADMC to push primarily for live Manchester City matches and other support programming, such as other matches in delayed and highlights format.

Abu Dhabi’s ruling family is understood to consider it strategically important that its pay-television broadcaster has live rights for its Premier League team’s matches throughout the Middle East.

Demands by Abu Dhabi for Manchester City rights would have posed a problem for the Premier League. The league’s desire to avoid a one-club rights deal would be balanced against its desire to avoid annoying an influential league shareholder. Abu Dhabi’s investment in Manchester City has brought top players into the league and fuelled interest around the world.

An MP & Silva-ADMC deal covering live rights for Manchester City matches only would be at a far enough distance from the Premier League for the league to avoid agitating clubs that might be considering individual rights sales, one informed source said. This is despite the Premier League having to approve all sublicensing deals.

MP & Silva has divided up Premier League rights into different match packages in sublicensing deals in other territories, although never into a package covering one club only.

When the agency sold the rights in Japan in the 2010-13 cycle, the matches were offered in packages ranging from 38 matches to 152 matches per season, some exclusive and some non-exclusive. In Vietnam, it sold rights for all matches to one broadcaster, and non-exclusive rights for Saturday matches to several others (*TV Sports Markets* 14:15). ■



## PREMIER LEAGUE 2

# First deals point to uplift in European rights income

By Kevin McCullagh and Frank Dunne

With Premier League deals in many European territories still being finalised late this week, the league looks on course for a pan-regional fee increase in 2013-14 to 2015-16, although it remains to be seen just how great the uplift will be. The league made €450 million (\$608 million) in the region in 2010-11 to 2012-13.

There have been big percentage increases in France, Belgium, and the Netherlands, following a strong increase in the Scandinavian markets in deals agreed last year.

However, there was a smaller-than-expected increase in Italy, and a mixed picture across Central and Eastern Europe, with some markets going down in value. The league is also understood to be struggling in Germany to get offers that meet its expectations.

## France

The 100-per-cent increase paid by Canal Plus to hold onto the rights in France was essential if the company was to continue to be considered a serious sports broadcaster, industry insiders said this week.

The pay-television broadcaster is paying over €160 million, or over €53.3 million per season, up from €27 million per season in the current deal. In the previous cycle, from 2007-08 to 2009-10, the broadcaster paid only €7 million per season.

The nearly eight-fold increase in value over three cycles is not down to an explosion of passion among French fans for English football. It has everything to do with competition in the television market. In the last cycle, Canal Plus fended off an aggressive bid from the telco Orange, which was investing heavily in rights for its Orange Sport channel. On this occasion the threat came from Al Jazeera.

The Qatari broadcaster played down its interest in the rights ahead of the bidding. But Canal Plus could not afford to take any chances. It has already seen Al Jazeera

take away nearly all of its top football rights and could not afford to lose the Premier League too. As one local television executive put it, "had they paid €60 million or €70 million per season, it would still have made sense because they had no choice but to win the rights and couldn't know what Al Jazeera was bidding."

Canal Plus has lost to Al Jazeera the rights to most French domestic league matches, the Uefa Champions League and Europa League, half of the Italian Serie A and half of the German Bundesliga.

"Had they also lost the Premier League," the executive said, "they would have seriously had to consider restructuring their whole business and repositioning themselves. Until now, sport, particularly football, has been at the heart of their marketing, but without the Premier League they would have had neither the quality nor the volume of football to continue that."

The Premier League is considered the third most important football content for pay-television in France after the French league and the Champions League. Much of the interest has centred on Arsenal's French coach Arsène Wenger and the club's many French players. There are about 30 French players currently playing in the Premier League.

## Italy

The acquisition by the Pitch International agency of the rights in Italy, for a fee thought to be about €12 million per season, has been widely greeted as a sign that Al Jazeera is planning to launch its premium sports channel beIN Sport in the country in time for the 2013-14 football season.

The arrival of Al Jazeera would be good news for rights-holders, especially the top Italian football league, Serie A. Italy has become a difficult market because growth has stalled at the country's two main pay-television platforms, Sky Italia and Mediaset, and the two companies are competing less fiercely for sports rights than they did in the recent past.

Pitch works very closely with Al Jazeera and most industry observers think it is unlikely to have gambled such a sum without having a pre-deal in place with the broadcaster. Pitch is not thought to have bid for 2013-16 Premier League rights in many

other markets (although it is thought to have also won in Spain), suggesting that the acquisition is driven by a precise strategy.

If, on the other hand, Pitch has acquired the rights as a speculative investment, hoping for an improvement in market conditions, it is a risk. It will be tough to convince Sky to raise its current valuation.

Sky is the only broadcaster interested in the rights at present. It has shown the league since 2003, having inherited the rights from the Stream platform, which merged with rival Telepiù. Mediaset is cutting costs and did not bid for the rights.

In its current deal, Sky pays just over €10 million per season. It bid a similar figure for the new cycle and only raised its offer very slightly in the second round. It is thought to have decided against raising its bid significantly because of the reduction in the number of Saturday afternoon live matches (in response to the European Court of Justice ruling in the Karen Murphy pub piracy case), and other changes, such as an increase in the hold-back time for delayed matches. The broadcaster is also under pressure to find budget cuts of €200 million per year.

Sky has arguably created the circumstances which have made Italy an attractive market for Al Jazeera by allowing deals for three other major football properties to run out without renewals.

The loss of the Premier League rights follows Sky's decision not to renew rights deals for the German Bundesliga and the English Football Association. Sky also failed to renew the Spanish Liga after a slightly increased offer on the current deal value of €4 million per season was rejected by the Mediapro agency, which sells the Liga's international rights. The rights for the three properties would together have cost less than €10 million per season.

A beIN sport channel could now launch with three top European football leagues, plus England games and the FA Cup. The channel could also probably pick up the rights to the English League Cup and Football League, which are also handled by Pitch.

To be a real threat to Sky and Mediaset, beIN Sport would have to acquire live rights to Serie A, which will not be available until the 2015-16 season. However, in the meantime, the broadcaster could pick up

pay-television highlights rights to Serie A for the seasons 2013-14 to 2014-15 which went unsold at the last auction despite a relatively low asking price. This would enable it to market itself as having coverage of four of Europe's top five leagues.

### The Netherlands

The MP & Silva agency is expected to use the Premier League rights it acquired in the Netherlands to boost the flagging value in the market of its other rights, including Italian Serie A football.

The league's rights fee is thought to have more than doubled as MP & Silva outbid pay-television broadcasters Eredivisie Live and Sport1. Local sources said the agency agreed a deal worth over €20 million, or over €6.7 million per season. Sport1 pays €3.3 million per season in the current cycle.

The agency is expected to use the rights to leverage up its Serie A rights fee in talks with broadcasters. It agreed only a one-season deal for Serie A in 2012-13 after being disappointed with broadcasters' offers. Sport1 is paying around €500,000 this season. The agency has yet to sell the 2013-14 and 2014-15 Serie A rights.

Whether this will work, one local market expert said, will depend on how far News Corporation is prepared to back Eredivisie Live in a battle for market share with Sport1. Eredivisie Live has built a business almost entirely around its exclusive rights for the domestic football league, the Eredivisie. It needs more sports content to grow further, and Sport1 has all the other good pay-television sports content in the market. Eredivisie Live has not been very aggressive in the sports rights market as it is owned by the Netherlands' top football clubs and is run primarily to generate revenue for them from their domestic media rights.

The acquisition of a 51-per-cent stake in Eredivisie Live by News Corporation subsidiary Fox International Channels in August last year means that the channel now has a wealthy backer who could in theory fund a more aggressive approach in an effort to win market share from Sport1.

### Greece

The acquisition of Premier League rights by former Greek state telecommunications monopoly OTE is the biggest blow the pay-television

operator has struck in the sports rights market so far on Nova, its main rival.

OTE outbid Nova, the current rights-holder, and agreed a deal thought to be worth close to the €25 million, or €8.3 million per year, paid currently. Maintaining the fee would be regarded as a success for the league, as Greece's economic decline has resulted in falling rights fees for many sports properties.

From next season, OTE will be able to market a very strong selection of international football content, also including rights for the Spanish Liga, the Italian Serie A, and the German Bundesliga. Nova's remaining top sports rights include football from the Greek domestic league and Uefa Champions League, and basketball from the Greek domestic league and the Euroleague.

### Belgium

Incumbent Premier League rights-holder Telenet made a knockout first-round bid of between €7 million and €8 million per year to beat rival pay-television operator Belgacom. The fee is nearly three times the €2.6 million per year Telenet pays in the current deal.

Telenet and Belgacom are engaged in a fierce battle for the Belgian pay-television, telephony and broadband markets. Industry insiders say Belgacom made it clear unofficially that it would bid aggressively to snatch the Premier League rights from its rival. Belgacom lost its previous exclusive grip over the Belgian domestic football league rights in 2011-12 when the league agreed non-exclusive rights with it and Telenet. The Premier League was considered a good potential replacement.

### Central and Eastern Europe

Premier League rights fees are understood to have fallen in Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary.

The Advisers Media International agency is thought to be paying around €5.5 million to €6 million over three seasons for the rights in Czech Republic and Slovakia. The Important Media House agency paid about €8 million for the two countries in the current cycle. The league is understood to have run at least two rounds of bidding after being disappointed by

first-round offers.

Digi TV, the pay-television broadcaster that acquired the rights from Important Media House in the current cycle, is thought to have struggled to make money on its deal.

AMI is expected to sell the rights to either Digi or pay-television broadcaster Nova. The agency outbid both broadcasters in the auction.

Digi is understood to have acquired the rights in Hungary for the new cycle in a deal worth about €9 million, down about €1 million on current values.

The rights in Romania have been acquired by surprise bidder the Spain-based Multimedia Sport (MMS) agency. It outbid several broadcasters and agencies including Digi's Romanian arm. Commercial broadcaster ProTV also made a token bid.

MMS is not a complete surprise, as it does have a track record with Premier League rights. It has sold the rights in Spain, Portugal and Turkey in previous cycles. The company also organises and sells media rights for national team and club friendlies.

Digi or rival pay-television broadcaster Romtelecom will be favourites to win the rights from MMS. However, the previously strong rivalry between the two in the sports rights market has faded in recent years, which could make it tough for MMS to generate a profit.

In the current cycle, Important Media House acquired the rights in both countries in a deal worth about €25 million in total, with Romania accounting for about 65 per cent of the value.

### Other deals

Reports of further Premier League rights deals were coming in as *TV Sports Markets* went to press, including in: Ukraine, with MP & Silva; Russia, with pay-television broadcaster NTV Plus; Turkey, with the Saran Media agency; a group of Commonwealth of Independent States countries, with Saran Media; and Spain, with Pitch International.

The league this week also announced deals in Poland, with pay-television broadcaster Canal Plus Cyfrowy, and in Bulgaria, with Modern Times Group-owned free-to-air and pay-television broadcaster Nova Broadcasting Group. ■

## PREMIER LEAGUE 3

## Value of clips up as News Corp outbids rival News Corp

By Frank Dunne

The Premier League is understood to have doubled its income for UK internet and mobile clips rights, from £6 million (€7 million/\$9 million) per season to about £12 million per season.

However, income from linear near-live rights – covering 226 matches per season – is thought to be flat or only slightly up on the current £13 million per season. The league failed to find a buyer for a separate package of on-demand near-live rights.

News Corp-owned newspaper publisher News International's winning bid of £36 million over three years for internet and mobile clips was comfortably ahead of the second highest bid, by telco O2, of about £25 million. News Corp-owned BSkyB and the Perform Group are both thought to have bid about £18 million, with Yahoo and ESPN at about £15 million.

Independent rights experts were divided on whether NI had overpaid. One said that the fee would be difficult to

monetise, and that the rights had been “bought for other reasons,” such as marketing. A digital rights expert countered, however, that the deal was a smart move for News.

“They are in the process of turning a print business into an online subscription business,” he said, “and they have decided that having quality content is more cost effective than spending millions on marketing. They have two titles which are already well geared as subscription businesses, each of which has a growing tablet and online readership.”

The clips will be offered on the online and tablet versions of NI's newspapers *The Times* and *The Sunday Times*, which are available on a subscription basis, and on the smartphone and tablet apps of *The Sun*, the UK's best-selling daily paper with a circulation of over 2.6 million.

The increase in the clips value came in spite of the absence of a bid by BT Vision. Many industry experts had expected the bidding for all packages to come down to a head-to-head clash between the UK's dominant pay-television operator, BSkyB, and BT, the aggressive new entrant in the market (*TV Sports Markets* 17:1). In the end, BT didn't bid for anything.

One rights expert said that the kind of investment required to win the near-live rights made sense for a company like

BSkyB, which had a strong position it wanted to defend. It made less sense for a new entry pay-television company.

“Things like near-live games are ‘retainer rights’ – they help stem churn [cancellations] by giving subscribers added value, but they don't drive subscriptions. For the same price, BT could acquire live premium content that will attract subscribers, which is their core business activity at this stage,” he said.

On top of the rights fees, the production cost of the linear near-live matches is a further £10 million per season. The rights-holder is responsible for producing coverage of all 226 matches. One insider said that BSkyB's market intelligence was such that they would not have expected a strong bid from BT.

The costs for the near-live on-demand matches are far lower, but potential bidders were put off by the expected low audiences. One executive said that football fans who wanted round-up coverage turned to *Match of the Day*, the highlights programme of public-service broadcaster the BBC. “Now that both the Saturday and Sunday programmes are on the BBC's iPlayer [an on-demand service], it would be really hard for anyone to generate meaningful audiences with video on demand,” he said. ■

## BIATHLON

## Infront, Ufa and RTL present challenge to EBU

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which is attracted by the large daytime audiences that biathlon events generate throughout the winter.

It is understood that ARD and ZDF have bid aggressively as part of the new EBU offer, reflecting the importance of the rights to the broadcasters. ARD and ZDF share coverage of the sport. Last season, ARD had an average share for its coverage of just over 25 per cent and an average audience of 3.74 million viewers. ZDF had an average share of just under 25 per cent

and an average audience of 3.39 million.

Sources said that a bigger ARD/ZDF contribution could increase the overall EBU bid by 20 per cent or more. One industry executive said that in order to prise the rights away from the EBU, a rival bidder might have to pay an increase of 50-60 per cent on the current fee.

The last time the IBU tendered its rights, in 2009, it turned down a bid from the Sportfive agency that was over 20 per cent higher than the EBU's bid, at €55 million over four years (*TV Sports Markets* 13:4). At the time, IBU vice president Alfons Hörmann said: “We didn't want to change a system that works very well for both sides. It's not just about the extra millions.”

The EBU, in any case, has been providing major increases cycle after cycle. The current deal represented a 60-per-cent

increase on the €28 million it paid in the four years from 2006 to 2007. That deal was up from €10 million over four years in the previous deal.

The dramatic rate of increase is expected to slow this time. Biathlon experts said audience figures in key markets had stagnated in the last two years. “In terms of television audiences the sport has now reached a ceiling,” one said. Fee growth in Germany may also be capped by the loss of women's champion Magdalena Neuner. The marketable German retired last season after her third World Cup victory. She won two Olympic Gold medals at the 2010 Games in Vancouver and was German sportswoman of the year for a third time last year.

Nevertheless, the EBU is expected to face strong competition for the rights from at least two agencies, Infront Sports & Media and Ufa Sports. There are rumours



that one or other of the agencies has teamed up with RTL.

Infront is in a strong position as it currently holds the IBU's marketing rights. Adding media rights would give it full commercial control over the sport and further boost its already powerful winter sports portfolio. Last month, it acquired skiing rights in Finland to move a step closer to a global monopoly on World Cup skiing rights (*TV Sports Markets* 17:1).

Although competition is expected to be strong, the number of interested agencies is small. There are two reasons for this. The main reason is that production costs for biathlon are huge. In the current contract they are almost as high as the rights fee, at about €10 million per season. One expert said that the production of biathlon was now "the most sophisticated of any winter sport, with 20-25 cameras used per World Cup event."

The other reason is that many agencies feel that it would be a waste of time, given the strength of the IBU's relationship with the EBU. As a director of one agency that studied the property but didn't bid explained: "When a property has been with the EBU for a very long time, it is really difficult to assess individual market values across Europe. You know that the rights would be attractive to broadcasters in core markets such as Germany, Austria and Switzerland, but in those markets the public-service broadcasters are the most likely bidders. [If you outbid the EBU to get the rights] can you then go back to them and get more? Beyond those markets, it's less clear. Does an agency take a bet on it? Not without pre-deals, at least in the key markets like Germany."

The EBU relationship goes back to 1993. ZDF, in particular, has worked closely with the IBU to make the sport more television-friendly. The sport really began to take off in 2000 when ZDF started to focus on it after losing the rights to top domestic and international ski-jumping to RTL.

A decision on the award of the rights is expected in the coming months. The rights include all of the governing body's events, including the World Cup, World Championships, Open European Championships, IBU Cup, Junior World Championships and Summer Biathlon World Championships. ■

## FOOTBALL

# EBU will raise its game, but it might not be enough

By Frank Dunne

The European Broadcasting Union is thought to be preparing to improve its offer for the rights to the European Qualifier matches between 2014 and 2018 by about 10 per cent. It might not be enough to prevent the CAA Eleven agency from adopting a market-by-market sales strategy.

The EBU, the consortium of public-service broadcasters, is thought to have submitted an initial bid of about €60 million (\$81 million) for 33 territories when Uefa first tendered the rights last May. Uefa later appointed CAA Eleven to sell the global rights. The EBU offer excluded all the major television markets, but the consortium is thought to have re-submitted a higher offer, adding a bid for Germany.

CAA Eleven has told the EBU that the consortium will have to raise its bid substantially to remain in the negotiation. The EBU is preparing to table a new offer but sources close to the consortium say that it is unlikely to be increased by more than 10 per cent. The EBU broadcasters felt that they had pushed themselves to the limit for the first bid and were convinced that it was competitive.

It is thought that the negotiation is on the original 33-territory EBU bid, with the agency talking to broadcasters directly in Germany and Europe's other top television markets.

The rights that the EBU bid for were for live free-to-air coverage of the national team matches, home and away, in each country. The games are qualification matches for the 2016 European Championship and the 2018 World Cup. The bid excludes pay-television rights and third-party rights (those of matches not involving the national team). Uefa offered the EBU the option of acquiring all rights, including third-party and pay-television rights. After feedback from members, the consortium decided

to take the more cautious option.

Agreeing a good deal with the EBU would give the agency a strong platform to close the remaining deals in Europe. But the valuations of the two sides are a long way apart and the Euro 2016 qualifier matches covered by the deal begin next season.

One rights expert argued that by delaying, the EBU would be piling the pressure on the agency. "The longer the EBU keeps them waiting, the stronger its position gets. It provides a one-stop shop for 33 markets. If a deal can't be found, the agency then has 33 lots of negotiations, with 33 lots of unique market conditions, 33 contracts to draw up, and 33 deals to service. It's a hell of a lot of work in a short space of time."

However, another expert put exactly the opposite view. "EBU members want these rights. In many markets, they are the ones who have always shown the national team and don't want to lose it. The more time passes, the more time local broadcasters in individual markets have to figure out what offer they need to make to take the rights."

## UK talks

Of the talks in individual markets for the same rights, it is thought that those in the UK are the most advanced. Commercial broadcaster ITV and pay-television operator BSkyB made a joint bid for the UK rights when Uefa first tendered the rights, which CAA Eleven has used as the basis for further negotiations.

Some UK broadcast sources put the joint bid at about £80 million (€93 million/\$125 million), but other sources say that it was well above £100 million. CAA Eleven has tried to use the emergence of BT Vision as a major player in the UK sports rights market to push up the value.

Under the offer, ITV would get all England matches live, BSkyB would get the matches of Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Sky would also have its pick of third-party matches. Both would show extensive highlights of all matches.

The two broadcasters are already partners of Uefa, as part of joint deal for the Uefa Champions League. The two were among a relatively small group of

European broadcasters that made direct bids for the qualifiers. Most saw Uefa's tender process as being designed to procure an agency deal and decided against showing their hand.

### U-21 rights

The first rights property covered by CAA Eleven's contract with Uefa for national team commercial rights is the U-21 European Championship in June in Israel.

The competition has a relatively low value but the agency, having been appointed only in November, is in the unenviable position of having to go to the

market almost immediately, while still in the process of building its sales staff and focusing its energies on the far more valuable qualifiers property.

Last week, the agency issued tenders in four of the eight markets with a participating team, and will issue the other four tenders next week. The eight competing teams are: England, Italy, Spain, Germany, Russia, Israel, Norway, and Holland.

The highest media-rights income the competition has ever raised is about €12 million. The bulk of the media-rights value is in the markets of the participating

teams. Four of the top five television markets are represented in 2013, but the lack of a French team will cap earnings.

Italy is the single most important market and deals with the state broadcaster Rai are thought to account for up to a third of the total value of the rights. The country has a strong record at U-21 level and interest is high. However, CAA Eleven comes to market at a time of economic crisis and may struggle to match historical fees. It is thought some broadcasters have tried to get the U-21 rights thrown into a deal for the qualifiers but the agency has refused. ■

## FOOTBALL

# Mediaset to buck trend and make money on football

By Dan Horlock

Spanish commercial broadcaster Mediaset paid so little for the Spanish national team rights it acquired last week that it is expected to make a profit on the deal from advertising sales, in spite of the dire market situation.

Mediaset, which owns the Telecinco and Cuatro commercial channels, acquired the rights to Spanish national team home games in a deal worth between €17 million (\$23 million) and €19 million – just over €1.1 million per match at the higher value. The new deal reflects a reduction of about 60 per cent from the previous value. The national team rights were previously held by state broadcaster TVE, which paid about €25 million per year in a five-year deal, from 2008 to 2012, working out at between €2.5 million to just over €3 million per match.

The broadcaster last week also acquired the rights to the 2013 Fifa Confederations Cup in Brazil for about €10 million. The fee is down by about 33 per cent from the €15 million Telecinco paid for the 2009 tournament. It is understood that Fifa had originally asked for €16 million this time, but had

been forced to accept the reality of the current market situation.

Spain's deep recession is providing commercial broadcasters with the opportunity to acquire top football rights without losing money. Commercial broadcasters across Europe have become used to losing money on top football rights deals. They acquire the rights anyway for strategic reasons. Telecinco is understood to have made significant losses on its investments in Euro 2012 and the 2009 Confederations Cup. Mediaset paid about €65 million for the Euro 2012 rights. Although this was down from €75 million for the Euro 2008 rights, it was still unable to refinance the deal from airtime sales.

The 2013 Confederations Cup runs from June 15-30. Spain will play a maximum of five matches if it qualifies from the group stage and a minimum of three matches if it fails. The tournament is regarded as important in Spain. In 2009, the team went out at the semi-final stage losing 2-0 to the US.

The national team contract covers the rights to 16 Spain home matches from February 2013 until June 2014. Mediaset will broadcast 11 matches in 2013 and five friendlies in 2014 before the Fifa World Cup finals in Brazil, which begin on June 12. The rights include all of Spain's remaining qualifying matches for the World Cup, excluding the Finland v Spain match on September 6, 2013.

Mediaset agreed the deal with the Grupo Santa Mónica agency, the rights distribution partner of the Real

Federación Española de Fútbol, the Spanish football federation.

TVE was unable to agree an extension with the federation following this year's government-imposed budget cut. TVE has to cut its budget from €1 billion to €941.6 million. The golden era of Spanish football has coincided with Spain's worst recession since the 1950s. Spain is the reigning European and world champion and is ranked number one in the world.

Mediaset is understood to be keen to do a deal with Fifa for the 2014 World Cup rights. One source close to the broadcaster said that Mediaset was "ready to be flexible" in its negotiations. However, a deal is not expected to be completed until after Spain has qualified for the tournament, with the risks of failure being too high in an extremely weak advertising market. Spain is not assured of its place in Brazil in 2014, having been drawn in a tough qualifying group with France.

The 2010 World Cup rights were acquired by the Prisa media group, owner of the Canal Plus pay-television channels. Prisa sublicensed rights to Telecinco in a deal worth about €35 million.

Mediaset is also understood to be keen to add further top sports. It is believed to be looking at basketball properties including the 2014 Fiba Basketball World Cup, which will be hosted in Spain, as well as the 2013 Eurobasket to be hosted in Slovenia in September. ■



## SPORTS CLIPS: News from TVSM Daily from January 24 to February 6

### TV RIGHTS 1

## Premier League, internationals, South American football and more

- **Football:** Spanish broadcaster Mediaset acquired rights for Spain national team games until June 2014, and the 2013 Fifa Confederations Cup (page 8).
- **Football:** US pay-television broadcaster ESPN acquired English-language rights for Mexico national team home matches. The agreement covers 20 games in 2013 and 2014, including qualifiers for the 2014 Fifa World Cup. ESPN struck the deal with US Spanish-language broadcaster Univision, which retained the Spanish-language rights for the matches.
- **Football:** Digital video company Base79, which operates YouTube channels, struck a deal with the Fédération Française de Football to stream France national team matches live on the video-sharing website. The length of the deal was not disclosed. The first game covered was the France v Germany friendly on February 6, which was shown non-exclusively on YouTube in the UK, the Netherlands and Japan.
- **Football:** Video-sharing website Dailymotion acquired non-exclusive live internet rights in the UK, the Netherlands and Japan for the France v Germany friendly on February 6 in a one-game deal with the Fédération Française de Football.
- **Football:** The English Premier League awarded rights in the Middle East and in several European territories for the 2013-14 to 2015-16 seasons. It also awarded near-live, internet and mobile clips rights in the UK (pages 1-6).
- **Football:** The Traffic Sports agency agreed rights deals with several broadcasters. Portuguese pay-television broadcaster Sport TV extended rights for the Copa Libertadores and the Copa do Brasil, and acquired rights for the Copa Sudamericana, in two-year deals for 2013 and 2014. Sport TV also acquired rights for the 2013 Gold Cup. In Spain, the Mediapro agency acquired rights to the 2013 Gold Cup for its pay-television channel Gol T. In South America, pay-television broadcaster Gol TV acquired rights for the Gold Cup in all territories except Brazil. Israeli pay-television sports broadcaster Charlton acquired rights for the 2013 Gold Cup, and the 2013 and 2014 Copa Libertadores and Copa Sudamericana. Romanian commercial broadcaster Antena TV acquired rights for the 2013 Copa do Brasil.
- **Football:** German sports broadcaster Sport1 acquired rights for the English FA Cup in a deal with the MP & Silva agency. The agreement started immediately and will run for 16 months, until the end of the 2013-14 season.
- **Football:** US regional pay-television broadcaster Comcast SportsNet Houston acquired rights for games featuring Major League Soccer franchise Houston Dynamo. Under the three-year deal, from 2013 to 2015, the broadcaster will show 15 games per season.
- **Football:** Pay-television broadcaster Gol TV struck domestic rights deals in Peru with the UTC de Cajamarca and Pacifico clubs, which have just been promoted to the country's top division, the Copa Movistar Torneo Descentralizado. Gol TV will pay \$1m (€741,000) per year for each club's matches. In a separate deal, the broadcaster sublicensed rights for games of the Sporting Cristal club to public-service broadcaster Peru TV.
- **Football:** US Spanish-language pay-television broadcaster Estrella TV acquired live rights for games in the Primera División, the top division of football in El Salvador, featuring leading club Alianza. Estrella TV will show games live on Sunday afternoons.
- **Football:** Digital media company Intigral acquired rights for the Saudi Arabia King's Cup and Crown Prince Faisal bin Fahd Cup tournaments. Intigral will provide video-on-demand coverage of games and highlights through its Dawri Plus service via internet, mobile and IPTV platforms.

### SINCE LAST TIME

- Jay Rasulo, the chief financial officer at Disney, said the media conglomerate was "exploring an exit" from the UK market for its premium sports channel ESPN. Rasulo said ESPN had made losses in the UK due to increasing sports-rights fees. ESPN is thought likely to sell on much of its rights inventory to telco BT Vision.
- The International Olympic Committee denied that it had asked Russia's government to turn the clocks back one hour to benefit broadcasters of the 2014 winter Olympic Games in Sochi. The IOC said it was only asked for an opinion and said that it would favour the move, but any decision was "clearly one for the government."
- News Corporation rebranded its broadcast operations in Asia that were previously under the ESPN Star Sports brand as 'Fox Sports' channels on January 28. News Corp last year bought out rival

media conglomerate Disney's 50-per-cent stake in ESS. Fox International Channels Asia, News Corp's international multimedia business, will manage all of the rebranded channels in Brunei, Cambodia, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Macau, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Singapore, Chinese Taipei, Thailand and Vietnam.

### TV INTERNATIONAL

- NBC Sports chairman Mark Lazarus said he expected the US broadcaster to generate a profit from its coverage of the 2014 winter Olympic Games despite having lost \$223m (€165m) covering the previous edition of the winter Olympics. Lazarus said that advertising sales were "pacing extremely well." The broadcaster will begin its coverage the day before the start of the Games. During the Games, it will provide tape-delayed coverage on primetime

**SPORTS CLIPS:** News from TVSM Daily from January 24 to February 6**TV RIGHTS 2****Cricket, cycling, figure skating, golf, ice hockey, MMA and motorsport**

- **Cricket:** US pay-television broadcaster Willow TV acquired rights for Australian cricket in a deal with Cricket Australia, for 2013 to 2016, brokered by the IMG Media agency (page 2).
- **Cricket:** Pay-television broadcaster Neo Sports acquired rights for the Asia Cup national team tournament. The deal includes rights in India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka for the 2014 event as well as first refusal rights for the 2016, 2018 and 2020 tournaments. The broadcaster agreed the deal with Nimbus Sport, part of the Nimbus Communications agency, marketing partner of the Asian Cricket Council. Neo Sports will show the tournament on its Neo Prime channel.
- **Cycling:** Qatari pay-television broadcaster Al Jazeera acquired rights for the 2013 ladies' Tour of Qatar, which ran from January 29 to February 1, in a deal with the Qatar Cycling Federation, the operator of the event.
- **Figure Skating:** Governing body US Figure Skating agreed a new rights deal with the NBC network for four years, 2014-15 to 2017-18, for the Skate America event and the US Figure Skating Championships.  
The Icenetwork.com website, a subsidiary of US Figure Skating, acquired rights for the World Figure Skating Championships, the Four Continents Championships and the Grand Prix of Figure Skating Series in a deal with the International Skating Union. The website's coverage will be made available to NBC.
- **Golf:** US network NBC acquired rights for the Scottish Open in a deal with the European Tour and US pay-television broadcaster the Golf Channel, an existing rights-holder of the tournament. The deal covers the 2013 and 2014 Opens. NBC will show two-and-a-half hours of Golf Channel's live coverage on each of the final two days of play.
- **Ice Hockey:** UK and Ireland pay-television broadcaster ESPN acquired rights for the Great Britain team's games at a winter Olympic Games qualifying tournament in Riga, Latvia. The deal includes live coverage of games against Latvia on February 7 and France on February 8. The team's final match against Kazakhstan on February 10 will be shown either live or delayed.
- **Mixed Martial Arts:** US cable-television broadcaster NBC Sports Network acquired rights for the World Series of Fighting in 2013 to 2015. NBCSN will show at least six live events per year. The NBCSports.com website will also show live coverage of the series.
- **Motorsport:** Dutch pay-television sports broadcaster Sport1 acquired the exclusive rights for Formula One in 2013 to 2015 in a deal with Formula One Management, the championship's commercial rights-holder. Sport1 will show all races and qualifying sessions live, and will allow viewers to follow the action from multiple camera feeds.
- **Motorsport:** Pay-television broadcaster Sky Deutschland renewed its rights for Formula One in Germany and Austria for 2013 to 2015, in a deal with Formula One Management. Sky will show live coverage of all practices, qualifying sessions and races, across all platforms.
- **Motorsport:** German sports broadcaster Sport1 acquired rights for Formula One in 2013 to 2015 in a sublicensing deal with commercial broadcaster RTL. The deal covers free-to-air rights for live coverage of practices, and highlights coverage of qualifying sessions and races.
- **Motorsport:** Sportsman Media Group and the Red Bull Media House, the promoters of the World Rally Championship, agreed one-year rights deals for the series for 2013 with the following broadcasters: France Télévisions, TF1 and L'Équipe 21 in France; MTV3 and YLE in Finland; SVT and Viasat in Scandinavia; Sport TV and RTP in Portugal; Canal Plus in Spain; OTE in Greece; Sportitalia and Canale Italia in Italy; RTBF in Belgium; Fox Sports in Central and South America; ESPN in Brazil; ESPN Star Sports in Asia; J Sports in Japan; Astro in Malaysia; TrueVisions in Thailand; Speed in Australia; Sky New Zealand; and SuperSport in sub-Saharan Africa.

television, but live coverage of every event will also be available on either television or digital platforms.

- US network CBS's live coverage of the NFL American football Super Bowl game on February 3 attracted an average of 108.4 million viewers. This was down 2.6 percent on the US audience for last year's match, which was a US television audience record.
- US broadcaster Time Warner Cable said it will launch a new regional pay-television sports channel as part of its rights deal with Major League Baseball team the LA Dodgers. The SportsNet LA channel will start broadcasting Dodgers games in 2014.
- Multi-territory cable-television operator Liberty Global played down the chances of it leading Virgin Media, the UK cable platform which it is bidding to take over, into sports rights bidding wars with BSkyB, the UK's leading pay-television broadcaster. At present, Virgin does not have its own sports channels and does not acquire exclusive sports content. "I do not see us doing anything in this market that's meaningfully different from what Virgin's been doing with respect to premium content," Mike Fries, Liberty Global's chief executive said.
- UK public-service broadcaster the BBC said its iPlayer on-demand service achieved record-breaking figures last year. The opening ceremony of the London 2012 Olympic Games was the most popular programme with 3.3 million requests. There were 2.32 billion television and radio programme requests and 36.5 billion minutes of programmes consumed across all iPlater platforms.
- UK pay-television broadcaster BSkyB is to show 3D coverage of Formula One motor racing for the first time, when it covers test

## SPORTS CLIPS: News from TVSM Daily from January 24 to February 6

### TV RIGHTS 3

#### Rowing, rugby union, speedway, tennis, volleyball and more

- **Rowing:** The European Broadcasting Union, the consortium of public-service broadcasters, renewed a deal with the Fédération Internationale des Sociétés d'Aviron, the international rowing federation, for 2013 to 2016. The deal covers the World Rowing Championships in 2013, 2014 and 2015, the annual World Rowing Cup series, and the European Rowing Championships.
- **Rugby Union:** Organisers of the Six Nations tournament struck a deal with YouTube to allow the video-sharing website to show coverage of the competition in 2013 to 2015. Match highlights will be available within minutes of games finishing to viewers worldwide via a dedicated Six Nations channel. Viewers in the UK, Ireland and Italy can also access longer highlights of games from 24 hours after the matches.
- **Rugby Union:** UK pay-television broadcaster BSkyB acquired rights for autumn international matches featuring the national teams of Ireland, France and Italy in 2014 to 2017. The rights were acquired in separate deals with the Fédération Française de Rugby, the Federazione Italiana Rugby and the Irish Rugby Football Union.
- **Rugby Union:** Irish public-service broadcaster RTÉ extended its rights for the Ireland national team's autumn internationals to cover 2014 to 2017 in a deal with the Irish Rugby Football Union. RTÉ acquired exclusive free-to-air rights on television, digital and radio. RTÉ will also continue to be host broadcaster of the matches.
- **Rugby Union/Gaelic Sports:** North American sports broadcaster Premium Sports extended a deal with Ustream to allow the video-sharing platform to show live coverage of the Six Nations rugby union tournament and Ireland's Gaelic Athletic Association hurling and Gaelic football National League competitions. Ustream will show live coverage of the tournaments in the US and Canada.
- **Skateboarding:** The IMG Media agency agreed a deal to distribute the international media rights for the Bowl-A-Rama skateboarding series. IMG agreed the deal with Frontside, the operator of the annual series.
- **Speedway:** Polish pay-television operator Canal Plus Cyfrowy acquired rights for the domestic Ekstraliga in 2013 to 2015.
- **Tennis:** SportsMax will show coverage of WTA Tour events after the Caribbean pay-television broadcaster's parent company, International Media Content, acquired the rights in a four-year deal, from 2013 to 2016, with the IEC in Sports agency. SportsMax will show live coverage of the semi-finals and finals of 22 tournaments each year.
- **US College Sport:** The IMG agency's college sports division, IMG College, acquired multimedia rights for sports events organised by West Virginia University in the US. The deal will run from 2013-14 to 2024-25, and is expected to be worth \$9m (€7m) per year.
- **Volleyball:** The Fédération Internationale de Volleyball extended its exclusive rights deal with Japanese commercial broadcaster Fuji TV, to cover 2013 to 2020.

sessions at Barcelona's Circuit de Catalunya from February 28 to March 3 on its Sky 3D channel.

- UK pay-television broadcaster BSkyB will allow viewers without subscriptions to access its sports channels through a 'day pass' being launched later this year for its internet television service Now TV. For £9.99 (€11.65/\$15.69), viewers will have unlimited access to all six Sky Sports channels for a 24-hour period.
- The Virgin Atlantic airline agreed a deal with BSkyB to show the UK pay-television broadcaster's sports programming on its flights.
- Digital sports media company Perform launched an official NBA website in Germany to stream live games from the North American basketball league. The NBA.de website will stream live coverage of one game per week throughout the regular season, playoffs and conference finals, as well as daily highlights. The website is being hosted in a dedicated section on the Perform-owned Spox.com.
- Argentinian agency Torneos y Competencias launched Sport Plus, a new pay-television sports channel in Brazil. The channel is being carried by Brazilian satellite-television operator Sky Brasil and operated by Time Out, a subsidiary of Torneos. Sport Plus will focus on football, basketball and tennis, but will also show action and adventure films, and sports documentaries.

### TV RIGHTS NEGOTIATIONS

- Canadian pay-television sports broadcaster TSN is close to extending its live rights deal for the Canadian Football League. The current deal expires at the end of this year.
- Bids tabled by French broadcasters in September 2012 for rights for the Formula One motor-racing championship in 2013 to 2015 are no longer valid, according to French newspaper *L'Équipe*. The most lucrative offer, from pay-television broadcaster Canal Plus, was for €27m (\$37m) per year. Commercial broadcaster TF1 paid €31m per year in the most recent deal, which ended in 2012.
- French pay-television broadcasters Canal Plus and beIN Sport tabled bids for handball rights on offer from the Fédération Française de Handball. The rights cover France men's and women's national team games, excluding international tournaments, plus the national women's championship and the domestic women's league cup for four seasons, from 2013-14 to 2016-17.
- Mexican media group Televisa and commercial broadcaster TV Azteca are in talks to acquire rights for American football's NFL in 2013-14 to 2015-16.



## SPORTS CLIPS: News from TVSM Daily from January 24 to February 6

- Governing body Tennis Australia is split over the organisation's domestic broadcast rights strategy for the Australian Open grand slam tournament. TA vice-president Harold Mitchell wants to renew with current free-to-air partner Seven, whose A\$21m (€16m/\$20m)-per-year deal expired after this year's tournament, for five more years. Other executives want to tender the rights.
- Australian commercial network Nine pulled out of the race to acquire rights for the 2014 winter Olympics and 2016 summer Olympics due to losses incurred in its coverage of the London 2012 summer Olympics. Free-to-air channel Seven is the favourite to acquire the rights, which are likely to be awarded by the end of February.
- Sky New Zealand chief executive John Fellet is confident that the pay-television broadcaster will renew its rights for Australian rugby league's National Rugby League. Fellet said Sky had submitted the highest bid for the next cycle of rights, starting in 2013.
- The Netball New Zealand and Netball Australia governing bodies, which organise the ANZ Championship, are in talks over a rights deal that would ensure every game of the club competition is shown on Australian television for the first time. The bodies are in talks with three broadcasters and a deal is expected to be announced ahead of the start of the 2013 season in March.
- Thai entertainment and media company RS said it would bid for the next cycle of rights for Thai football's Premier League. The rights will run for three seasons, from 2013-14 to 2015-16.
- tournament for the next three years, from 2013 to 2015. Input was appointed to the role by the Fédération Française de Tennis after winning a tender process. The company will produce the international signal and daily highlights, as well as preview and review shows and digital content.
- Cycling's global governing body, the Union Cycliste Internationale, started showing live coverage and highlights of its events for free via video-sharing website YouTube. The UCI will provide coverage of World Championships in road, track and BMX cycling, as well as World Cup events in cyclo-cross, track and BMX cycling. Viewers will be able to access the coverage worldwide, except in territories where broadcast rights deals have been agreed.
- Newspaper publisher Axel Springer is set to appoint media group Constantin Medien to produce its coverage of German football's Bundesliga. Axel Springer has acquired rights for internet and mobile highlights clips of the league covering the 2013-14 to 2016-17 seasons.

## INDUSTRY MOVES

- Liverpool appointed Matthew Baxter as the new head of the English Premier League football club's digital media and television operations. Baxter previously served as senior vice-president of the MGM Networks media company. • Digital media company Perform appointed Olaf Jochmann as the new commercial director and head of rights at its Perform Germany division. Jochmann was previously managing director of the Kentaro agency. • Owen Leed was appointed as chief revenue officer at the Total Sports Asia agency. Leed will support the agency's chief executive, Marcus Luer, in developing new projects. • Nick Wilkinson left pan-Asian sports broadcaster ESPN Star Sports to become the Wasserman Media Group agency's new managing director for the Asia-Pacific region. Wilkinson, who will be based in Singapore, will report to David Kogan and Sara Munds, Wasserman's global media division managing directors. • Charles Biétry left his role as vice-president of beIN Sport, the French pay-television broadcaster owned by Qatari pay-television broadcaster Al Jazeera, on January 31. Biétry will remain a consultant to Nasser al-Khelaifi, the president of beIN Sport.

## ALSO SINCE LAST TIME

- Hicham El Amrani, the secretary general of the Confederation of African Football, accused Nigerian broadcasters of offering a "ridiculous price" for the rights for the 2013 Africa Cup of Nations tournament. There is no free-to-air rights deal for the tournament in Nigeria because local broadcasters could not agree on a rights fee with the LC2-Afnex agency. The broadcasters and the Nigeria Football Federation have complained that the asking price for the rights was too high.
- Production company Input Media will continue to produce international coverage of the French Open tennis grand slam

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