

# TVSPORTS MARKETS

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## TV ITALY

### Pitch clears path for Al Jazeera but stop-gap solution may be needed

By Frank Dunne

The Pitch International agency's acquisition of the rights in Italy to Spain's La Liga last week appeared to be confirmation that Qatari pay-television operator Al Jazeera is set to launch its beIN Sport channels in Italy. Pitch works closely with the broadcaster and often acquires rights on its behalf.

Pitch is paying between €8 million (\$10.4 million) and €9 million per season for the rights. The deal begins immediately and runs until the end of the 2014-15 season. The Liga deal follows the acquisition last month of the rights to England's Premier League for three seasons, from 2013-14 to 2015-16, for which the agency is paying just over €12 million per season.

The immediate issue for Pitch, according to several insiders, is that Al Jazeera is not ready to launch an Italian operation this August. A more likely launch date is the summer of 2014, in time for the new European football seasons. This would leave Pitch with the

problem of how to exploit its rights next season. The idea, it is said, is that a third party would operate the channel for one year, after which it would be taken over by Al Jazeera. Italian broadcast sources say that the agency has been exploring a number of options, and has held talks with several leading players in the local broadcast market, but that nothing has yet been agreed.

The arrival of Al Jazeera would be good news for sports rights-holders selling into Italy. The launch of beIN Sport channels in France and the US has led to rights inflation in both markets.

In some respects it would appear to be a risky moment to launch in Italy. The pay-television market is shrinking, with the largest platform, Sky Italia, losing subscribers. However, one expert said that the calculations made by a premium channel syndicator, such as Al Jazeera, were different to those made by platforms such as Sky and Mediaset Premium.

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## TV ASIA

### MP & Silva to push channel strategy

By Dan Horlock

The MP & Silva agency could roll out its new sports channel package in other Asian territories should its inaugural scheme in Indonesia prove successful.

In July, the agency will launch a bouquet of four channels in Indonesia, including: a Premier League channel; a football channel; a sports channel; and a fight sports channel (*TV Sports Markets* 17:5).

MP & Silva chief executive Andrea

Radrizzani told *TV Sports Markets* this week: "It takes a higher level of risk, more commitment in terms of production and more investment – it is not simple. But we will have the expertise to do this in other countries in the future. It depends on the landscape of the market."

Radrizzani said that in order to launch its bouquet of channels in another Asian

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The next issue of *TV Sports Markets* will be published on April 19

## FASTRACK

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### ARD/ZDF may yet join EBU qualifiers deal

The CAA Eleven agency is finalising a deal with the European Broadcasting Union for Uefa's 'Week of Football' European qualifiers media rights, worth about €70 million (\$91 million).

The deal excludes the 'big five' markets of France, Germany, Italy, the UK and Spain, as well as the Nordics, Turkey and Russia. One major market that is included is Poland.

The deal covers rights in each territory for home and away Euro 2016 and World Cup 2018 qualifying matches of the local national team.

As *TV Sports Markets* went to press, it was understood that a deal also covering Germany, with German EBU broadcasters ARD and ZDF, remained under discussion. If the two join the deal, it could push the overall value up by about €90 million, to €160 million. ARD and ZDF have paid an average of about €4.5 million per qualifier over the last two to three cycles and are understood to consider that a fair market rate.

ARD/ZDF made two offers for the rights, one as part of the public-service broadcaster consortium, and one on their own. ■

### Fis looks for more from EBU

Talks are underway between the Fédération Internationale de Ski, the sport's world governing body, and the European Broadcasting Union to renew their deal for the global media and marketing rights for the alpine and Nordic World Ski Championships.

The EBU, the consortium of European public-service broadcasters, has a deal for the 2015 and 2017 championships worth €93.5 million (\$122 million), and is negotiating for rights for 2019 and 2021. The consortium has an exclusive negotiation period which runs until the end of May.

The federation is said to be expecting a decent increase. When the last deal

was agreed, at the end of 2009, broadcasters were uncertain about the impact of the global financial crisis, which forced the price down slightly. ■

### Pro12 rugby talks under way

The Pro12, the rugby union league for Irish, Italian, Scottish and Welsh regional teams, is in talks with broadcasters to extend media rights deals for the 2014-15 season onwards. The league is understood to have opened talks with Irish broadcasters in December. Deals are expected to be signed by the end of this season, in May.

The league's current UK and Ireland deals cover the four seasons from 2010-11 to 2013-14. These are with regional UK public-service broadcasters BBC Northern Ireland and BBC Wales; Gaelic-language public-service broadcaster BBC Alba in Scotland; Republic of Ireland public-service broadcaster RTÉ; Irish-language public-service broadcaster TG4 in the Republic of Ireland; and Welsh-language broadcaster S4C in Wales.

Digital sports broadcaster Sportitalia has rights for the competition in Italy in a deal covering at least 2012-13.

The 'domestic' rights, covering the territories the teams come from, are sold by the league in partnership with the Bridge Television agency. The league has a deal with the Pitch International agency for its international rights. ■

### BoxNation strikes rights deals

UK pay-television boxing broadcaster BoxNation made two rights acquisitions in a bid to boost its subscriber numbers. It paid about \$450,000 (€346,000) for the rights to the Floyd Mayweather Junior v Robert Guerrero fight. The fight will take place in Las Vegas on May 4. The undefeated Mayweather is a huge draw for boxing fans. The deal was struck with Mayweather Promotions, the agency that represents Mayweather.

It is understood to have also paid about £300,000 (€345,000/\$448,000) for Amir Khan v Julio Díaz. British

boxer Khan is rebuilding his stock after suffering a devastating knockout at the hands of US boxer Danny García in July last year. The fight will take place on April 27 in Sheffield. It will be the first time Khan has fought in the UK for over two years. The deal is with Khan's promoter, Khan Promotions. ■

### Mediaset the winner in Spain

The value of the rights for the weekly live Spanish Liga free-to-air match has fallen since last season from about €130 million (\$169 million) per season to about €10 million per season.

Spanish commercial broadcaster Mediaset last week acquired the rights for the match for two seasons, from 2013-14 to 2014-15, from the Mediapro agency. The deal also included the rights to the end of the 2012-13 season.

Mediaset paid a total of about €24 million for the rights, split: €10 million per season for the 2013-14 and 2014-15 seasons; €4 million for the remainder of the 2012-13 season. The fees could go up by 30 per cent per game should the match be played on the weekend. The match is currently played on Monday or Friday.

The fee has fallen because Real Madrid and Barcelona games are no longer shown on free-to-air television. Last season, 15 matches involving one of the clubs were broadcast live free-to-air, including one *Clásico* between the two. The value was also hit by the poor Spanish advertising market.

Mediaset's contract begins on April 1 with the Real Betis v Getafe game. It will exploit the rights on its commercial channels Telecinco and Cuatro. Until April, the matches will continue to be shown on digital-terrestrial sports channel Marca TV.

Mediaset also signed a deal with the Spanish football federation for the national team rights until June 2014 on the same terms as it had with the Santa Mónica Sports agency. The deal had been in jeopardy after the federation cancelled its deal with Santa Mónica. ■

## TV ITALY

## Pitch clears path for Al Jazeera but stop-gap channel needed

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"The question is whether a premium add-on channel can get enough attractive content to convince those already subscribing to pay-television platforms to pay a further €8 or so per month," he said. Because the average revenue per user has always been low on Mediaset and had recently dropped on Sky, there was scope for subscribers to pay more for top football such as the Premier League and La Liga, he added.

Another Italian expert, Augusto Preta, general manager of media advisers ITMedia Consulting, agreed that the prospects for a premium football channel in Italy were healthy. He said that the existing eight million Italian pay-television homes gave Al Jazeera a very solid basis on which to build a business. Everything would depend on what kind of carriage agreements they could strike with platforms and that, in turn, would be linked to what rights they acquired.

If a platform like Sky thought that a standalone premium channel was bringing added value, it would be more inclined to do a good deal, he said. For example, if lots of new subscribers bought through Sky's basic offering to get to the European football on beIN Sport, it could be advantageous. However, if beIN Sport carried content that was in direct competition with that carried by Sky, such as live Serie A football, the risk was that customers would churn out of their Sky Sports package to take a cheaper beIN Sport channel. "It's always a trade-off for platforms," he said, "and the chances of a premium channel building a business will only become clear once we know their full rights portfolio."

A new sports channel could, in theory, acquire live Serie A rights now, but only for transmission on digital-terrestrial platforms. A package of live digital-terrestrial rights for eight small Serie A teams was unsold at the last auction.

However, acquiring such a package would not make sense for a channel seeking distribution on Sky, which is a satellite platform, and nobody has so far approached the league to bid for it.

### Sky gazumped

Pitch acquired the Liga rights by outbidding Sky in an audacious last-minute deal. In its last Liga deal, Sky paid €4 million per season. It increased its offer to about €6.5 million per season for three years from this season, 2012-13, but this was rejected by the Mediapro agency, the Liga's international rights-holder.

Sky reopened negotiations in recent months with Mediapro and had secured what it understood to be a verbal agreement with the agency. The first time the broadcaster realised that this was not the case was when it saw media coverage of the deal with Pitch. A source close to Sky described the way in which the negotiation had been concluded as "hostile."

Sky's strategy of investing heavily in motorsports such as Formula One and MotoGP, and making relatively small savings by dropping or not bidding aggressively for rights to the Premier League, La Liga, German Bundesliga, and England national team and FA Cup rights, has been questioned by several independent experts. They argue that by doing so, Sky was practically inviting Al Jazeera, or another channel operator, to come in and create a premium football channel.

Mediaset Premium, Italy's second pay-television platform, has recently picked up some European football rights, but well-placed sources say that it has nothing to do with the impending arrival of Al Jazeera.

Mediaset has acquired highlights to the German Bundesliga and Spanish Liga, both in low-cost deals. It also showed two FA Cup matches live two weeks ago in an ad hoc deal. The Italian rights-holder for the FA's content, the MP & Silva agency, offered the matches free of charge, first to Sky – which declined for scheduling reasons – then to Mediaset.

Broadcast sources say that the agency offered the rights to maintain some visibility for the FA's flagship competition in one of Europe's major television markets. The wider rights package remains unsold. ■

## CYCLING

## ASO, not UCI, holds the key to world series plan

**By Frank Dunne**

The talks which have recently begun between the International Cycling Union (UCI) and Jonathan Price and Thomas Kurth about the two executives' proposals for a new world series of cycling represent a breakthrough for the pair after two years of being stonewalled by the sport's world governing body.

However, many cycling experts – even those who share the view of Kurth and Price that the sport is punching below its weight commercially – believe the idea is doomed to fail.

For over 10 years, there have been attempts to create a more coherent and unified commercial structure for the sport with centralised sales of commercial rights. All have so far foundered on the refusal of the Amaury Sport Organisation, the organiser and commercial rights-holder of the Tour de France, to be involved. The Tour is by far the most valuable cycling event on the calendar.

Despite the progress with UCI, the support of many cycling teams, and some powerful financial backing for the project, there are no signs yet that ASO is on board.

"You have to come back to ASO if you want to do anything in cycling," one insider said. He said that ASO's power and influence was greater than that of the UCI. "It's like cricket, where the Board of Control for Cricket in India is more powerful than the International Cricket Council, or basketball, where the NBA is more powerful than the International Basketball Federation. In any discussion about changing cycling, ASO is always the elephant in the room."

The UCI and ASO both declined to answer questions on the series this week.

The proposed World Series Cycling is popular with the teams because it promises greater financial rewards with fewer days' racing (see panel, page 4). Independent cycling experts argue that there would be many other advantages of having a single controlling entity for all



the top races. It would allow for a unified and consistent quality of television production, for example. There is currently a huge variation in the way cycling is filmed across the season.

The Price plan requires the central sale of media rights and a redistribution of media rights income to the teams. On the current UCI men's World Tour calendar there are 28 events spread across 10 months, with multiple commercial rights-holders, including event organisers and rights agencies. The World Tour contains the three grand tours – the Tour de France, the Giro d'Italia and the Vuelta a España – plus classic road races such as the Tour de Suisse, the Milan-San Remo, the Paris-Roubaix and the Tour de Flandres.

The new series would only really be commercially successful if it could combine the planned new events with at least some of the major established races. Broadcaster and sponsor interest in 10 completely new events, with no history or heritage, would be limited, regardless of which riders were involved. This, rather than approval from the UCI, is the real stumbling block.

ASO sells the global commercial rights to the events it organises. It has always resisted any attempt to limit its commercial autonomy and historically has been implacably opposed to sharing media-rights income with teams. At the moment, teams are funded by sponsors and other private backers.

The second most important promoter, RCS Sport, organiser of the Giro and other Italian races, is said to be more pragmatic about the proposals. RCS sells its own domestic Italian rights and has an eight-year deal with the IMG Media agency for the sale of international rights.

Insiders say that RCS does not have an in-principle objection to sharing media-rights income. As one source put it, "the view is that if sharing income with the teams enabled RCS to require the presence of the top riders in its events, in the same way that top tennis players are required to take part in a certain number of ATP events each season, it would be worth looking at."

### Latest plan

Price, a former sponsorship executive at Premier League club Manchester United, has been pushing his world series for over

### World Series Cycling model

The concept for the proposed World Series Cycling has evolved over the last two years and will probably change further as its proponent, Jonathan Price's Gifted Group, negotiates with the International Cycling Union.

The only detailed breakdown to have emerged is that which was prepared for the Gifted Group by financiers Rothschild in 2011.

Under the plan, 14 teams, or franchises, would race in 10 newly created European events. WSC would be a joint venture between teams, the Gifted Group and its main financial backer (at the time Rothschild, now Zdenek Bakala). The WSC calendar would involve 40 days of racing in the 10 European events, and six events outside Europe. The new events would take place over four days and each would consist of a time trial, sprint stage, rolling stage and mountain stage. The

WSC would have a final points tally that would establish the number one rider and top team in the world each season.

Rothschild said the series would generate commercial income (centrally sold television and sponsorship rights) of €17 million (\$22 million) in the first season (which was to be 2013), rising to €39 million by 2017.

The teams would own 64 per cent of the venture, or 4.6 per cent each. They would each invest €250,000 per season, Gifted Group would invest €550,000 and the main financial backer would put up €20 million. Each year, the teams would receive a minimum of €1.5 million, plus a share of income from the sale of media rights.

Recent reports say that Price and Kurth are now proposing to stage fewer new events and incorporate more established races in the series.

two years. He has had many set-backs. Talks to involve the Creative Artists Agency in 2011, when Peter Kenyon, the former Manchester United chief executive, was still at the agency, came to nothing. Talks with the Lagardère Unlimited and Infront Sports & Media agencies were similarly unproductive.

One senior agency executive said that as time passed, the chances of the project taking off were diminishing. "Since Price first came to the market with this idea we've had a major recession in Europe, with particular problems in countries where cycling is popular, like Italy and Spain. The numbers [for projected commercial revenues] already looked overly optimistic two years ago."

The plan now does have strong support, however. Czech billionaire Zdenek Bakala, owner of the Quick-Step team, has stepped in as financial backer. Thomas Kurth, who was formerly frontman for the G14 group of European football clubs, has joined Price to help pitch the idea.

*TV Sports Markets* understands that recent reports that Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation plans to become a partner in the scheme are, at best, premature. However, News-owned UK pay-television broadcaster BSkyB is understood to be keeping an open mind about whether or not to become involved. One well-placed source said that Sky turned down an

invitation last year from Price to get involved in order to concentrate on its cycling team, Team Sky, but added that "it was always in Sky's thinking that if the UCI didn't get its act together, it might change its mind. That's still the case."

BSkyB's strategy on cycling to date has been very much based around its sponsorship of Team Sky. The broadcaster deliberately did not target cycling rights, despite the sport's growing popularity in the UK, because it did not want to take the sport off free-to-air television, a far better platform for achieving visibility for its cycling team brand. Last year, for example, Sky was offered the opportunity to acquire the exclusive UK rights for the Giro and the other RCS races but declined. IMG later agreed a pan-European deal with sports broadcaster Eurosport.

Some insiders believe that Sky may be about to change strategy and start targeting rights. Last month, the broadcaster acquired extensive highlights rights for the RCS events in a sublicensing deal with Eurosport.

The UCI attempted to centralise the commercial rights to cycling in 2003 under its then-president Hein Verbuggen (*TV Sports Markets* 7:6). The following year, when it unveiled its new Pro Tour, it was forced to accept that ASO, RCS and Unipublic, owner of Spain's Vuelta, would not commit their commercial rights to the project (*TV Sports Markets* 10:18). ■

## TV ASIA

# MP & Silva channel strategy 'could work in other markets'

*Continued from page 1 ►*

territory, the agency would need to support its content with a main driver, as it had done with the Premier League in Indonesia.

The agency is selling the channels as part of three different rights packages – platinum, gold and silver. It created one platinum package, four gold packages and four silver packages.

The platinum package includes all four channels in high definition, and all live football matches from the MP & Silva portfolio (see panel), including all 10 Premier League matches live per week. The gold package is for three channels, excluding the Premier League channel, and includes four live Premier League matches per week. Both include a dedicated feed for the 2014 Asian Games. The silver package is for the sports channel only, and includes one live Premier League match per week.

Satellite pay-television broadcaster Orange TV, owned by Mega Media Indonesia, acquired the platinum package in a three-year deal, from July 2013 to July 2016. The deal was agreed on a cost-per-subscriber basis, with a minimum guarantee for the agency. The package was for three channels, as Orange TV already has a fight sports channel on the platform.

Radrizzani said that pay-television broadcaster Telkomvision had earlier approached the agency for the rights but could not agree a deal. This left at the table Orange TV and the Lippo Group, which owns cable pay-television operator First Media. The agency went with Orange TV because it was willing to give up its exclusivity to the package by allowing MP & Silva to sell the same platinum package to regional IPTV operator Nexmedia, which is only available in Jakarta.

Nexmedia is owned by the media group Elang Mahkota Teknologi (EMTK).

Orange TV and Nexmedia will be able to simulcast multiple live matches on their platforms as part of a red button service

MP & Silva's channel bouquet in Indonesia contains four channels: a dedicated Premier League channel, a football channel, a general sports channel and a fight sports channel.

The Premier League channel will show 380 live matches per season, a weekly magazine show – Premier League World – plus weekly previews and reviews, and a highlights show.

The wider football channel will show live matches from Europe and the Americas. The leagues available on the channel include: the Premier League, England's second-tier league the Championship, Italy's Serie A, France's Ligue 1, North America's Major League Soccer and Brazil's Campeonato Série A. The channel will also have the English FA Cup and League Cup, and the Coppa Italia, as well as England and Italy's 2014 Fifa World Cup qualifier matches. Content from the club channels of Arsenal, Borussia Dortmund and AC Milan will also be available on the channel.

The general sports channel will have four live football matches per week: one Premier League match, two Italian Serie A games and one Ligue 1 match. Other content includes: Olympic Council of Asia events, seven Association of Tennis Professionals 250 events, International Baseball Federation events, Italian volleyball's Lega Pallavolo, German motorsport's Deutsche Tourenwagen Masters, cycling's Tour of Britain as well as rugby, basketball and other local events.

The fight sports channel will have live events, including: Big Fights: World Championship Boxing; Championship Kickboxing; and Championship MMA. It will also have archive footage from: US pay-television broadcaster HBO's pay-per-view events and World Championship Boxing, Greatest Classics, World Class Championship Kickboxing and the World Sumo Challenge.

dependent on the platform's capability.

Lippo acquired the gold package in a three-year deal, from 2013 to 2016, on a cost-per-subscriber basis with a minimum guarantee for the agency. The deal is worth about \$7 million (€5.4 million) over three years. It was inaccurately reported in the last issue of *TV Sports Markets* that Lippo had paid \$70 million for the MP & Silva channels. Lippo will also be able to simulcast multiple live matches on its platforms as part of a red button service but this will not include Premier League matches.

Three gold packages and four silver packages are still available. The agency is in advanced talks with interested parties for the remaining licences.

The agency has also agreed a free-to-air deal with the EMTK group for two live Premier League matches per week plus the semi-final and final of the FA Cup and other selected games. The games will be broadcast on either of its free-to-air channels SCTV or Indosiar.

## Premier profit

Radrizzani said the agency would make a profit on its investment in Premier League rights in Indonesia. It is understood to already be close to breaking even on the total investment of more than \$90 million

over the next three seasons.

He rejected the claims of some local broadcasters who said the agency had decided to launch the bouquet of channels only after broadcasters refused to meet its asking price for the Premier League rights.

"It was always my intention to enter into the channel business because I know the market well. We have huge quantities of high quality content, so that is why I decided to go this way. I am offering a strategy that could last beyond the Premier League three-year period. I am the first one to do this and I am very proud of it," Radrizzani said.

Pay-television in Indonesia has an extremely small penetration rate. In 2010, it was about three per cent, close to 1.2 million subscribers, although that number is expected to increase to about six million subscribers by 2016.

The low pay-television penetration rate in Indonesia is what convinced Radrizzani to launch the channels. "It makes sense in Indonesia as most of the platforms are new and want to compete with [pay-television broadcaster] Indovision. They have good budgets but don't have production facilities and the capability."

The agency noted that the pay-television sector was on the brink of a major growth spurt in a country which

was experiencing strong economic growth, with gross domestic product expected to rise by six to seven per cent annually for the next five years.

He said that the agency was contributing to the development of the pay-television industry in the country because until now it had been controlled by one player. Indovision controls two-thirds of the market. At the end of 2010 it had just over 800,000 subscribers. Indovision is operated by Skyvision. The biggest media group in Indonesia, Media Nusantara Citra, owns 51 per cent of Skyvision.

### Premier impact

The Premier League is the single most desirable product for pay-television broadcasters in South East Asia, according to MP & Silva.

The agency said that the Premier League rights could help challenger operators build scale, transform content offerings and brand perception, drive subscribers and average revenue per user, and cut churn.

In its presentations to broadcasters in the region, the agency highlighted the case of pay-television broadcaster PCCW

in Hong Kong, which acquired Premier League rights for three years starting in the 2007-08 season. The broadcaster's revenues doubled to over \$200 million in its first year holding the rights, and continued to rise in the following years. Average monthly revenue per customer increased by 38 per cent, with the broadcaster breaking even in 2009 on its \$180 million investment in the rights. PCCW was able to dethrone previously dominant pay-television broadcaster i-Cable, adding about 100,000 new subscribers by the first half of 2008. ■

## ICE HOCKEY

# League enjoys modest increase as C More renews

By Robin Jellis

The Elitserien, Sweden's top ice hockey league, will earn an increase of at least eight per cent in the value of its domestic live rights following last week's deal with pay-television operator C More Entertainment.

C More will pay about SEK325 million (€39 million/\$51 million) per year in a four-year deal, from 2014-15 to 2017-18, covering live rights for most matches. C More and sister broadcaster TV4, a commercial and pay-television operator, paid a combined SEK300 million per year for the rights in the current cycle, 2010-11 to 2013-14. C More bid by itself this time.

C More's deal covers most regular-season matches plus the play-offs and finals. The league requires C More to sublicense rights for some play-off matches from the quarter-final stage onwards, including the final, to free-to-air television.

The league has two further packages of rights to sell: a package of six regular-season matches designated for free-to-air coverage, and a package of free-to-air highlights. The package of six live free-to-air regular season matches did not exist the last time the league sold the rights.

The new deal was agreed directly with the league, which was advised in the sales process by the Profile Partners agency.

A source close to the league said its income could rise to about SEK350 million per season once the remaining rights packages were sold.

Competition from several rival bidders, including the Kentaro agency as well as other agencies and broadcasters, helped to boost the price. The Medge Consulting agency, which was reported to have been interested in the rights, did not bid.

Commercial and pay-television broadcaster Modern Times Group, C More's key rival in the Swedish pay-television sports rights market, is not thought to have bid very aggressively. MTG has spent heavily on football rights in the past couple of years, including the English Premier League and the Uefa Champions League.

Renewing the Elitserien was important for C More in defending its position in the pay-television market. MTG's grip on the Premier League and Champions League made renewing the Elitserien even more of a priority. C More had the Premier League rights before MTG outbid it in the 2010-11 to 2012-13 cycle. MTG last year renewed the rights until 2015-16. MTG also has rights for the second-tier Swedish ice hockey league, the Allsvenskan.

Competition between C More and MTG has cooled since the last time the Elitserien rights were sold, in 2009. A bidding battle between the two back then resulted in TV4 and C More – which was then called Canal Plus – paying a 50-per-cent fee increase on the previous deal, from 2006-07 to 2009-10, in which Canal Plus's then-parent company SBS paid SEK200 million per year.

### New package

Public-service broadcaster SVT, TV4 and SBS, now a purely basic-tier broadcaster, are understood to be in talks with the league about the six live free-to-air regular-season matches.

The league may sell fewer than six matches, or none at all, depending on whether broadcasters meet its price expectations. If the league is not happy with the offers, it is expected to sell the rights to C More for a further fee.

The league has also yet to sell free-to-air highlights rights. SVT has these in the current cycle and is understood to be in talks to renew the rights, with a deal expected by mid-April.

In the new cycle, C More will show all regular-season games, with the possible exception of the six which are being offered to free-to-air television, and the early stages of the play-offs.

TV4's interest in the latter-stage play-off rights, which it holds in the current cycle, appears to have faded. In January this year, it sublicensed this season's play-off matches to SBS in a deal worth just over SEK40 million.

### Breakaway threat recedes

A threat to break away from the Elitserien by some of its top clubs that existed at the time the rights were last sold appears to have receded.

Five of the biggest Elitserien sides were considering quitting to join a league in another country, or to found a new pan-regional league. The clubs were frustrated at being unable to stop top players leaving for the wealthier NHL in North America or Kontinental Hockey



League in Russia. C More and TV4 had a clause in the current deal allowing them to renegotiate it if there was a breakaway.

There are also understood to have been talks about expanding the Elitserien from 12 to 14 teams, but it is likely to be several years before any such change happens. ■

## BIATHLON

# EBU and Infront face off once again for winter sport

By Kevin McCullagh

The European Broadcasting Union and the Infront Sports & Media agency have been shortlisted as the final two bidders for the International Biathlon Union's global rights in 2014-15 to 2017-18.

First-round bids were made at the end of January. Talks between the IBU and the two shortlisted bidders to decide the winner will begin after Easter.

One source close to the talks said the IBU was seeking an increase of around 30 per cent on the value of its current deal, which would take it to an average of about €14 million (\$18.3 million) per season. The EBU, the consortium of public-service broadcasters, pays an average of about €11 million per year in the period 2010-11 to 2013-14.

The EBU and Infront are thought to have been the only two serious bidders. Stronger interest in the rights had been expected by some due to the current popularity of the sport in markets including Germany and Norway.

German commercial broadcaster RTL was considered a possible bidder but is not thought to have bid. One German market expert said the lack of a bid from a non-EBU German broadcaster was surprising as "biathlon is one of the only properties really interesting to German broadcasters outside of football at a reasonable cost." Biathlon World Cup coverage regularly drew around 3.5 million viewers, and a 25-per-cent audience share, for German EBU broadcasters ARD and ZDF last season.

Any broadcaster weighing up a bid would have balanced the attraction of the

strong audiences against the possibility that German athletes may not perform well in the next cycle, and that the coverage may clash with ARD and ZDF's Fédération Internationale de Ski World Cup coverage, another popular winter sport television property.

The last time the rights were sold, in 2009, RTL had talks with the IBU but did not bid. RTL said at the time it didn't bid because it was clear that the EBU was the IBU's preferred broadcast partner.

Germany is the biggest broadcast market for biathlon. ARD and ZDF are thought to contribute about 60 per cent of the current EBU fee. ■

## MIXED MARTIAL ARTS

# BT pays big fee increase despite lack of competition

By Dan Horlock

BT Vision, the pay-television operation of UK telecommunications operator BT, has paid nearly four times more for the rights to the mixed martial arts promoter Ultimate Fighting Championship than ESPN pays in the current deal, despite there being no competition for the rights.

BT this week agreed a deal for three years, from August 2013 to August 2016, paying £4 million (€4.6 million/\$6 million) per year. The deal was brokered by the RDA agency. In its current one-year deal, pay-television broadcaster ESPN pays just over £1 million.

There are two reasons why BT paid such a high fee. First, it is getting more content and a greater level of exclusivity than ESPN. Second, it was in a hurry. BT needs to build a strong rights portfolio quickly ahead of its new sports channels launching this summer.

The new contract includes exclusive coverage of all live UFC events, including a series of extra live events created on the back of the Fox deal in the US agreed in August 2011, as well as the reality show series *The Ultimate Fighter*. ESPN did not have this additional content. Some delayed content will be made available for free-to-air broadcasters, as UFC has done in the past with commercial broadcaster

Channel 5, but BT is not thought to be concerned about the limited erosion of its exclusivity. Channel 5 previously broadcast delayed UFC programming very late at night. There is no free-to-air agreement currently in place.

UFC approached the market looking for £5 million per year but found little competition for the rights, although it is understood that some third-party channel operators were interested in setting up a UFC channel. The UK's dominant pay-television operator BSkyB has never had any interest in the sport. Its market research shows little interest among existing subscribers. ESPN is withdrawing from the UK market while Channel 5, which broadcast delayed rights and magazine programming until December 2011 as part of an 18-month contract, has changed direction since 2010 under the ownership of Richard Desmond, and is now bidding less aggressively for sport.

Despite the high price, several independent rights experts said that UFC was good content for an emerging pay-television operator like BT.

One expert said that UFC had a hardcore following that could not be described as a sports audience. "UFC fans are not sports fans. It is a unique category that brings with it a small but loyal subscriber base that is only interested in that discipline," he said. He said that UFC could account for about 70,000 additional subscribers.

It is understood that research conducted by ESPN shows that nearly all of those who subscribe to their premium channel to watch UFC say that they are not interested in any other sport and would cancel if ESPN dropped UFC.

The new deal makes the UK one of UFC's most lucrative media-rights markets behind its domestic market in the US and Brazil. The acquisition of the rights for the US-based promoter complements BT's acquisition of ESPN's UK pay-television business, which has a strong US sports-rights focus (*TV Sports Markets* 15:5).

It was the first major rights deal agreed by Garry Cook, the UFC's executive vice president and managing director of Europe, Middle East and Africa. Cook, the former chief executive of Premier League club Manchester City, was appointed in September. ■

## TV US

# ESPN Deportes plots future beyond 2015

By Dan Horlock

ESPN's US Spanish-language broadcaster ESPN Deportes this month acquired an enhanced Mexican football rights package as part of its plans to strengthen its football content following the loss of Spanish Liga rights this season.

The channel, which has about five million subscribers, has set out a five-year plan beyond 2015 to target major football properties such as the Uefa Champions League and Spain's La Liga, to cater to its Hispanic audience.

The Spanish-language market has become very competitive in recent years (see panel). ESPN Deportes both inherits rights from and acquires rights independently of its parent company ESPN. However, with its parent company losing out to News Corporation-owned Fox for premium football rights, and new broadcasters such as beIN Sport also entering the market, ESPN Deportes' offering has been significantly reduced.

ESPN Deportes general manager Lino García told *TV Sports Markets* this week: "The main sports for our channel are football, boxing and baseball. Football is the biggest sport. But rights for European football are tied down until 2015. We have a five-year outlook beyond 2015 which includes looking at the major properties."

García said that the US Hispanic media marketplace had become more competitive over recent years and that ESPN Deportes had been forced to make more prudent acquisitions. However, he said that "doubling up" on its Mexican football rights meant that the channel still had strong, relevant content for its target market.

The new deal includes the recently restored Mexican cup which was not previously included. The cup was discontinued in 1997 but was restored

in 2012. The cup takes place twice per season, in both the opening and closing stages of the Mexican season.

The Mexican football deal runs for three years, from 2013 to 2015, and was a renewal of an agreement with US pay-television broadcaster Azteca América covering the home league matches of four top-tier clubs: Cruz Azul, Jaguares, Morelia and Puebla. Azteca América is a division of Mexican commercial broadcaster TV Azteca, which has the domestic and international media rights to several top-tier clubs in Mexico. Media rights are sold on a club-by-club basis in Mexico.

## US Spanish-language market

ESPN Deportes' main rival in the US Spanish-language sports-rights market is News Corp's broadcaster Fox Deportes, which has just over 13 million subscribers, and holds the rights to the Uefa Champions League and Europa League. It sublicenses Europa League rights to ESPN Deportes.

The two biggest Spanish-language broadcasters in the US are Univision and Telemundo, owned by NBCUniversal. Other broadcasters in the market include Gol TV, which had just under 16 million subscribers in 2012. That number is under pressure following pay-television operator DirecTV's decision to drop the channel last year after it lost the Spanish Liga rights from 2012-13 to 2014-15 to pay-television broadcaster beIN Sport. In the 2009-10 to 2011-12 period, Gol TV sublicensed Spanish Liga rights to ESPN Deportes.

The Al Jazeera-owned Spanish-language pay-television channel beIN Sport en Español holds the exclusive rights to premium football properties such as Spain's La Liga and Italy's Serie A.

There are also regional cable pay-television operators such as Time Warner Cable Deportes which acquire Spanish-language sports rights.

The deal was negotiated by ESPN Deportes and included English-language rights for the first time.

ESPN Deportes will share coverage of the Mexican cup, Copa MX, with Spanish-

language broadcaster Univision. ESPN has an alliance with Univision. The two broadcasters recently agreed a deal to share the rights for Mexico national team matches. They also bid successfully together for the 2010 and 2014 Fifa World Cups.

For the channel's other key sports, García said that the World Baseball Classic, which concluded this week, was an example of a property that until now "had not been maximised" but presented an opportunity for the broadcaster. The tournament is still in its infancy (the previous two editions were in 2006 and 2009) but it is slowly establishing itself in the baseball calendar as the sport attempts to grow internationally beyond US borders. He said that the tournament was ideal for the channel as it tied into the ethnic make-up of its audience.

The tournament has a strong representation from Latin America, with this year's final contested between Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic. Some of Major League Baseball's best players come from Latin America. García said the tournament would grow in value, which was the reason ESPN Deportes signed a two-tournament deal covering 2013 and 2017.

The World Baseball Classic takes place every four years. It is currently the only national team baseball tournament, after the Baseball World Cup was discontinued in 2011. It is contested by 16 national teams from around the world, with 39 games being played over two-and-a-half weeks. The final of the 2013 tournament was won by the Dominican Republic on March 19.

For its boxing coverage García said that Mexican fighters "grabbed the interest" of its audience but that the channel was also committed to showing US fighters and the sport as a whole. The channel shows live fighter weigh-ins plus pre- and post-fight press conferences as well as magazine programmes from pay-television broadcaster HBO's pay-per-view boxing coverage. ESPN Deportes also has live boxing on its Friday Night Fights programme. ■



# SPORTS CLIPS: News from TVSM Daily from March 7 to March 20

## TV RIGHTS 1

### Football: FA Cup, Spanish Liga, Ligue 1, MLS, Mexican football and more

- **Football:** Polish pay-television broadcaster Orange Sport acquired exclusive rights for the English FA Cup and England national team home matches. The deal started on March 10 with live coverage of Manchester United v Chelsea. The length of the agreement was not disclosed. Orange Sport struck the deal with the Advisers Media International agency, which is selling the rights in Eastern Europe in 2012-13 to 2017-18 under a deal with the English Football Association.
- **Football:** Spanish commercial broadcaster Mediaset acquired domestic rights for one live free-to-air match per week from the Spanish Liga (page 2).
- **Football:** The Pitch International agency acquired exclusive rights in Italy for the Spanish Liga in 2012-13 to 2014-15 (page 1).
- **Football:** Excaf Telecom, a Senegalese telecommunications company acquired rights for the French Ligue 1. The deal started immediately and will run until the end of the 2014-15 season. Excaf will exploit the rights on its pay-television channel RDV, which will provide live coverage of a Ligue 1 match every Friday, plus a weekly highlights programme.
- **Football:** WPWR My40 Chicago, a regional pay-television broadcaster owned by the Fox Network in the US, acquired rights for matches featuring Major League Soccer team Chicago Fire. The deal covers the 2013 season. The broadcaster will show up to 23 matches.
- **Football:** US pay-television broadcaster ESPN acquired rights for selected teams' games in the Liga MX and Copa MX, Mexico's top league and cup competitions. The agreement will run for three years, from 2013 to 2015 (page 8).
- **Football:** French digital-terrestrial television broadcaster W9 acquired rights for France national team games at the Women's Euro 2013 tournament for a fee of €800,000 (\$1.04m). The free-to-air channel, a subsidiary of commercial broadcaster M6, will show France's group matches against Russia on July 12, Spain on July 15 and England on July 18, plus any games involving the team in the knockout stages. W9 struck the deal with the CAA Eleven agency.
- **Football:** The IMG Media agency struck a deal to distribute the rights to Beach Soccer Worldwide tournaments. IMG will distribute rights to Europe and Asia for three years, from 2013 to 2015. The agency will sell rights to more than 20 national team and club tournaments, including all qualifying tournaments in Europe and the Americas for the 2013 Fifa Beach Soccer World Cup.

## SINCE LAST TIME

- The European Court of Justice ruled that websites that retransmit live television without permission from the broadcaster are in breach of copyright. The case – brought by UK commercial broadcasters ITV, Channel 4 and Channel 5 against TVCatchup.com, which streams free-to-air shows from UK broadcasters – has implications for numerous websites that show sports programming without permission from the rights-holding broadcaster.
- North American ice hockey's National Hockey League is considering launching a dedicated NHL channel in Europe from next season, 2013-14. The channel would carry English-language coverage, but it is thought that the NHL would roll out local-language versions in territories where it fails to find a local-language broadcaster. The proposed channel comes in response to the planned closure of ESPN America, the US sports channel distributed in Europe by sports broadcaster ESPN. ESPN America currently has pan-European English-language rights to the league outside the Nordics.
- Media conglomerate Lagardère is not interested in acquiring the IMG agency whole, but would consider buying parts of it, Arnaud Lagardère, the company's general and managing partner, said. IMG's private equity owners Forstmann Little are believed to be considering selling the company.
- Details emerged of the rights-sharing agreement in France for Euro 2016. The rights are divided between pay-television channel beIN Sport and commercial broadcasters TF1 and M6. According

to French newspaper *L'Équipe*, beIN Sport will pay €60m (\$78m) for rights to 29 matches, while TF1 and M6 will pay €25m each for the rights to 22 matches between them.

- Pay-television broadcaster beIN Sport secured a carriage deal in the US with IPTV operator Verizon FiOS TV. The beIN Sport HD and Spanish-language beIN Sport en Español HD channels are now available to FiOS TV customers in Florida, Texas, California and Pittsburgh, and will be available across the country by the middle of April.

## TV RIGHTS NEGOTIATIONS

- Fifa, football's world governing body, launched an invitation to tender for the rights in Spain to the 2014 World Cup. Bids must be submitted by April 12. The rights cover television, IPTV, internet and mobile platforms, as well as radio rights.
- Singapore pay-television broadcaster StarHub entered talks with English football's Premier League about acquiring rights for the league's matches for three seasons, 2013-14 to 2015-16. StarHub is unhappy about an exclusive negotiating period given by the Premier League to rival pay-television operator SingTel, which meant that StarHub had to wait for five months to begin talks with the league after SingTel had acquired non-exclusive rights for the next cycle. Broadcast regulations in Singapore bar the broadcasters from acquiring exclusive rights for the matches.
- The Nimbus Communications agency and Neo Prime, a pay-television channel operated by the agency's Neo Sports Broadcast division, lodged separate bids for the worldwide rights to Sri Lanka national cricket team home matches over

# SPORTS CLIPS: News from TVSM Daily from March 7 to March 20

## TV RIGHTS 2

### Athletics, basketball, boxing, darts, ice hockey, MMA and more

- **Athletics:** Swiss public-service broadcaster SRG SSR extended a deal for the annual Athletissima Lausanne event for four years, 2013 to 2016. SRG SSR will produce coverage for international broadcasters. SRG SSR agreed the deal with the organisers of the event, which is part of the IAAF Diamond League series.
  - **Athletics:** South African public-service broadcaster the SABC acquired rights for events organised by Athletics South Africa, the sport's governing body in the country. The deal started immediately and will run for one year, with an option to extend for another year. Events covered include the annual Comrades Marathon, Two Oceans Marathon and Soweto Marathon.
  - **Aussie Rules:** Sommet Sports, a digital free-to-air channel launching in April, and pay-television broadcaster Sky New Zealand agreed deals for rights in New Zealand for the 2013 Australian Football League season. Sommet will show six matches live per week, plus three games on a delayed basis. Sky will show one delayed game per week. Both broadcasters will show live coverage of St Kilda v Sydney Swans on April 25 – the first ever AFL Premiership fixture in New Zealand – and Collingwood v Essendon on the same day, live coverage of the Premiership grand final, and a weekly magazine programme. The broadcasters will also both show coverage from the Finals Series.
  - **Basketball:** The Sportfive agency extended an agreement with the International Basketball Federation (Fiba) for rights in Asia, excluding Japan and the Arab region, for Fiba tournaments through to the 2015 men's and women's Asia Championships. The deal includes rights for the men's and women's Basketball World Cup and men's and women's continental championships.
  - **Basketball:** Indian subcontinent pay-television broadcaster Taj TV acquired rights for the Euroleague in a deal covering the rest of 2012-13 and the next two seasons, 2013-14 and 2014-15. Taj acquired the rights from the Total Sports Asia agency and will exploit them on its Ten Sports channel in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Afghanistan, Bhutan and the Maldives.
  - **Boxing:** UK pay-television broadcaster BoxNation acquired rights for Amir Khan v Julio Diaz, on April 27, and Floyd Mayweather Junior v Robert Guerrero, on May 4 (page 2).
  - **Commonwealth Games:** Indian subcontinent pay-television broadcaster Taj TV acquired free-to-air and pay-television, internet, mobile and radio rights for the 2014 Commonwealth Games in a deal with the event's organising committee, Glasgow 2014.
  - **Darts:** UK pay-television broadcaster BSkyB renewed its rights for Professional Darts Corporation events in a five-year deal from December 2013 to January 2017. The deal covers the World Championship, Premier League, Grand Prix, Grand Slam of Darts and World Matchplay. The deal excludes the UK Open, which was included in the previous deal. The deal was negotiated by promoter Matchroom Sport, the majority shareholder in the PDC.
  - **Ice Hockey:** Pay-television operator C More Entertainment acquired rights for the Swedish Elitserien for four seasons, 2014-15 to 2017-18 (page 6).
  - **Mixed Martial Arts:** Pan-Asian sports broadcaster ESPN Star Sports acquired rights for Asian championship the Super Fight League in a five-year deal, from 2013-14 to 2017-18. ESS will broadcast 23 events per year, on a fortnightly basis, starting on March 29. Nimbus Sport, part of the Nimbus Communications agency, was appointed by the league to produce all coverage for the same five-year period.
- 
- seven years, from 2013-14 to 2019-20. Indian subcontinent pay-television broadcaster Taj TV and the Total Sports Asia agency also submitted bids for the rights to Sri Lanka Cricket, the rights-holder.
  - The Professional League Committee of the United Arab Emirates launched a tender for its domestic football competitions for three years, from 2013-14 to 2015-16. The rights cover the top-tier Pro-League, the second-tier Reserve League, the Cup and the Supercup. Bids must be in by April 15.
  - Billionaire Carlos Slim wants rights to Formula One motor racing and games featuring Mexican football club Monterrey for a new free-to-air television channel he wants to launch in the country. Slim wants to acquire the Formula One rights from pay-television broadcaster Fox Sports, which currently shows the championship in Mexico. He has offered \$10m (£7.7m) per year for rights to Monterrey home games, an increase on the \$4m per year earned in the club's current deal with the Televisa media group.
  - US pay-television broadcaster HBO will no longer acquire rights to boxing events organised by Golden Boy Promotions, which promotes many of the sport's top fighters. HBO sports division president Ken Hershman put the decision down to different "business philosophies" at the two companies. Several of Golden Boy's fighters have turned their backs on HBO to sign rights deals with rival pay-television broadcaster Showtime over the past two years.
  - World Rowing, the sport's global governing body, decided against renewing a rights deal with US sports broadcaster Universal Sports Network, a subsidiary of the NBCUniversal media company, and instead will stream coverage of rowing events free of charge via its official website to viewers in the US. The website will show live coverage and highlights of races and medal ceremonies as well as interviews.
  - US satellite pay-television operator DirecTV said it would consider acquiring non-exclusive rights to the NFL's Sunday

# SPORTS CLIPS: News from TVSM Daily from March 7 to March 20

## TV RIGHTS 3

### Motorsport, netball, rugby league, tennis, US college sport and more

- **Motorsport:** US broadcaster Univision Deportes acquired exclusive Spanish-language broadcast and digital rights for Formula One in a multi-year deal with Formula One Management, the championship's commercial rights-holder, beginning this season. Univision Deportes will show live coverage of all 19 races this season. Selected races will be streamed online.
- **Motorsport:** Greek public-service broadcaster ERT acquired rights for Formula One in a two-year deal, for 2013 and 2014, with the Asset Ogilvy agency. ERT will broadcast all races live except for the five Asia-Pacific races, which will be shown in full on a delayed basis, plus a pre-race show and highlights of qualifying. The deal was reported by local media to be worth €2.85m (\$3.7m), with ERT paying €250,000 in cash and giving Asset Ogilvy €2.6m worth of advertising airtime.
- **Motorsport:** Albanian free-to-air broadcaster Top Channel acquired rights for Formula One in a two-year deal, for 2013 and 2014, with the Asset Ogilvy agency. Top Channel will show live coverage of races and qualifying. It may sublicense rights for other content, such as practice sessions, to a pay-television broadcaster.
- **Motorsport:** The Abu Dhabi Media Company (ADMC) renewed its exclusive rights for Formula One in the Middle East and North Africa in a deal for the 2013 season. All races will be broadcast live on ADMC's free-to-air channel Al Riyadiya +2 and the high-definition channel Al Riyadiya +6.
- **Motorsport:** UK commercial broadcaster ITV acquired rights for the Fédération Internationale d'Automobile World Rally Championship in a deal for the 2013 season. ITV will show highlights of each round on digital channel ITV4 on Tuesdays after each race. ITV agreed the deal with the championship's promoter, a joint-venture between the Sportsman Media Group and Red Bull Media House.
- **Motorsport:** French pay-television broadcaster Canal Plus acquired exclusive rights for the GP2 series in a three-year deal, from 2013 to 2015. The rights will be exploited on the Sport Plus channel.
- **Netball:** Australian public-service broadcaster SBS and pay-television broadcaster Fox Sports acquired rights for the ANZ Championship – Australia and New Zealand's top club competition – and Australia national team matches, in a two-year deal covering 2013 and 2014. The deal was agreed with Netball Australia and Netball New Zealand, the sport's governing bodies in the two countries, and the organisers of the ANZ Championship. SBS will show live coverage of one Championship match per week each Sunday non-exclusively along with Fox, matches from the finals, and live coverage of national team competition the Test Series. Fox will show all Championship matches including the finals, and live coverage of all Australia national team Test matches played in Australia and New Zealand. It is the first time in the ANZ Championship's history that all 69 matches will be shown live on television.
- **Rugby League:** Pay-television broadcaster Sky New Zealand extended a rights deal with the Australian National Rugby League. The agreement will run for five years, from 2013 to 2017, and covers live rights to all matches featuring New Zealand team the Warriors, as well as the Premiership finals and grand final, the annual State of Origin series between Queensland and New South Wales, and the Rugby League All Stars game.
- **Rugby League:** Papua New Guinea state-owned broadcaster Kundu TV acquired rights for the 2014 Queensland Cup club tournament in Australia. Papua New Guinea is planning to enter a club team into the competition.
- **Speedway:** British Eurosport, the UK arm of pan-regional broadcaster Eurosport, acquired exclusive live rights in the UK and Ireland for the Fédération Internationale de Motocyclisme-sanctioned Speedway Grand Prix and Speedway World Cup motorcycling series. The three-year deal with BSI Speedway, which operates the series and is a subsidiary of the IMG agency, will run from 2013 to 2015.
- **Tennis:** Sport 24, the live sports channel produced and distributed by the IMG Media agency for airlines and shipping lines, acquired rights for men's ATP World Tour tournaments. The deal with ATP Media, the media arm of the tour, will run for three years, from 2013 to 2015. The agreement includes rights to the tour's top-tier Masters 1000 series and the end-of-year World Tour Finals.
- **Tenpin Bowling:** US pay-television channel the CBS Sports Network, which is operated by the CBS network, acquired rights for events run by the Professional Bowlers Association. The length of the multi-year deal was not disclosed. CBS Sports Network will begin the agreement by showing a series of five events in June.
- **US College Sport:** US pay-television broadcaster ESPN agreed in principle a new rights deal with the Mountain West conference. The deal will run for seven years, from 2013-14 to 2019-20. ESPN will broadcast up to 16 American football games, and up to 31 men's basketball games, per year. It will show a minimum of three home American football games on its main channels ESPN, ESPN2 or ABC. The rest of the coverage will be on other ESPN channels or online at ESPN3.com.
- **US College Sport:** The Fox Sports Media Group, a division of US network Fox, acquired rights for the Eastern College Athletic Conference lacrosse competition. The multi-year deal will start in May. There will be live coverage on the Fox-owned FSN, Fuel TV and Fox College Sports pay-television channels. From the 2014 season, new national sports channel Fox Sports 1 will provide coverage.



## SPORTS CLIPS: News from TVSM Daily from March 7 to March 20

Ticket service, or dropping the service completely when its exclusive deal expires at the end of 2014-15, depending on the cost of a renewal.

- Australian networks Ten and Seven submitted bids for Cricket Australia's next cycle of free-to-air domestic media rights. The rights cover national team Test and one-day matches in Australia plus domestic club competitions the Sheffield Shield and Big Bash League over five years, 2013-14 to 2017-18. Telecommunications company Telstra did not submit a bid. Pay-television broadcaster Fox Sports lodged an offer for the Big Bash League rights. The Nine network, the incumbent rights-holder, will have the opportunity to match the highest bid.

### ALSO SINCE LAST TIME

- French pay-television and free-to-air broadcaster Canal Plus, which operates the D8 and D17 free-to-air digital-terrestrial television channels, started lobbying the country's government for an expansion of the number of sports events reserved for broadcast on free-to-air television under listed events legislation.
- The Delhi High Court in India ruled that mobile phone services Crickbuzz, On Mobile and Idea Cellular cannot provide live score updates for sports events for which broadcaster Star India, part of News Corporation, has exclusive media rights, without being licensed to do so by the broadcaster. The court said that the mobile phone services would only be able to provide the scores with a 15-minute delay. But the services are allowed to report 'noteworthy information' about matches without a licence. Star had claimed in court that the mobile services were violating its exclusive rights for matches organised by the Board of Control for Cricket in India between 2012 and 2018 by providing scores from these matches.
- UK public-service broadcaster the BBC confirmed it would show four programmes covering the English Football Association Women's Super League top division in the 2013-14 season as part of an existing deal with the association. The programmes will feature round-ups, highlights, features and previews. The BBC Sport website will also show a weekly goals round-up throughout the league season.
- Constantin Medien said that better-than-expected financial results generated by its sports and event marketing division boosted overall full-year sales at the media company to €520.5m (\$677m) in 2012. The company, which owns the Team Marketing agency, said that overall turnover was up from €465.7m in 2011 and exceeded expectations of €460m-€480m for 2012.
- Production company Plazamedia will produce internet clips of the German Bundesliga, the top two divisions of football in the country, for publisher Axel Springer, which has Bundesliga rights for the four seasons from 2013-14 to 2016-17.
- Beijing's former mayor Liu Jingmin called for an end to Chinese state broadcaster CCTV's "monopoly" control over nationwide sports coverage. Liu said that a second national sports channel, to complement CCTV's sports channel CCTV-5, would help to increase coverage and rights revenues for Chinese sports properties.
- The Aussie Rules Australian Football League announced a net profit of A\$6.7m (€5.3m/\$6.9m) for 2012, the first year of its new five-year media rights deals, from 2012 to 2016, with the Seven network and pay-television platform Foxtel. The league said that the average television audience for live games increased year-on-year by 12 per cent to 4.78 million viewers in 2012.
- Bookmaker Betfred launched a television channel, initially for its high-street outlets, ahead of the UK's Cheltenham Festival horse racing event, which started on March 12. The channel will broadcast on every day of the year, except Christmas Day, and will show live race coverage plus other programming.
- Murray Barnett was appointed as the new head of commercial, broadcast and marketing at the International Rugby Board, rugby union's global governing body, and Rugby World Cup Limited, the commercial organisation that operates the quadrennial Rugby World Cup. Barnett will start in his new role on April 15.

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