

COLLECTIVE SELLING 1

Spanish league looks to Italy in putting revenue sharing model first

By Dan Horlock

The president of the Spanish football league Javier Tebas Medrano said this week that agreeing a fairer system of revenue distribution among clubs was more important than imposing centralised selling.

Spain's secretary of state for sport, Miguel Cardenal, is planning to introduce legislation by the end of the year that will force football clubs to negotiate the sale of media rights on a collective basis, in much the same way the Italian government did in 2008. The provisions of the law would come into force from the 2015-16 season, once existing broadcasting contracts have expired.

The legislation is supported by the league. Its new president Tebas, who was elected last week, told *TV Sports Markets* that La Liga was "a unique market in which at least some aspects should be regulated by the government. It's a special

market limited to 20 first division clubs that needs specific regulatory standards."

He warned, however, that getting the revenue model right should be the priority. "There are two aspects to collective selling: the central sales mechanism and the revenue distribution model," he said. "We want to resolve the revenue sharing model. This can be done with or without a central selling process."

The Spanish Liga has the most unbalanced television revenue income distribution of the top five European leagues. Last season, Spain's biggest clubs, Real Madrid and Barcelona, earned 10 times more than the smaller clubs. This season, the two will earn 6.5 times more than the smaller clubs, as part of the new broadcast deals covering the period 2012-13 to 2014-15 (*TV Sports Markets* 16:5).

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FOOTBALL

Suitors line up in UK for FA rights

By Kevin McCullagh

The English Football Association is understood to be confident of strong bidding when it tenders its domestic media rights for 2014-15 to 2017-18 early next week.

On the market will be rights for club competitions the FA Cup and Community Shield, as well as 14 England national team home and away friendly matches, and U-21

national team home and away qualifying matches and friendlies.

Pay-television operator BT is expected to bid aggressively. It is building up its rights portfolio ahead of the launch of its BT Sport channels this summer, which are to challenge BSkyB's sports pay-television service. Sky is also expected to bid.

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FASTRACK

NEWS IN BRIEF

BT fails to break up Sky/ITV qualifier deal

UK pay-television operator BT has failed to force its way into the negotiations for the rights to the Uefa European Qualifiers with the CAA Eleven agency.

Commercial broadcaster ITV and pay-television operator BSkyB have agreed a deal with the agency worth between £80m (€94m/\$120m) and £90m and are now finalising the long-form contract.

The ITV/BSkyB bid was made to Uefa last summer, and became the basis of negotiations with CAA Eleven once it was awarded the rights by Uefa in October. BT had not finalised its plans for a pay-television service at the time of the Uefa auction and once it had negotiations with ITV/Sky were already advanced.

The deal covers the World Cup and Euro qualifying matches of all European federations for four years, from 2014-15 to 2017-18. The rights for the matches played by the five 'home nations' – England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland – are said to have been valued at £80m. ITV is getting live rights to England matches. Sky is getting live rights to the other four. Sky is paying an additional sum for live rights to the qualifiers of all other European nations. ■

Vietnam delivers big increase

The MP & Silva agency acquired exclusive rights to the 2014 Fifa World Cup in Vietnam in a deal thought to be worth over \$10m (€7.7m).

The fee represents an increase of at least 135 per cent on the deal for the 2010 tournament, which was worth about \$4.25m.

The deal was brokered by Football Media Services, a joint venture between the Dentsu advertising agency and the Infront Sports & Media agency, which sells the rights in Asia, excluding Japan and Thailand, on behalf of Fifa, football's global governing body. FMS

paid a minimum guarantee of \$350m for the 2007-2014 Asian rights.

The majority of the value in the rights is for the 2014 World Cup. The rights to be offered by MP & Silva include live coverage of all 64 matches during the tournament as well as daily 45-minute highlights programmes for the duration of the competition.

Vietnam is an emerging market with several media players and a big population. However, the rapid growth of sports-rights fees in the country has led to the creation of a pool of broadcasters. The pool is headed by state broadcaster VTV which negotiates with foreign content providers. The aim of the pool is to limit competition. It is thought to include all of the country's pay-television broadcasters.

The deal also includes a number of other events operated by Fifa. These events include: the 2013 Confederations Cup, Beach Soccer World Cup, U-20 World Cup and U-17 World Cup, plus the 2014 U-20 Women's World Cup and U-17 Women's World Cup. ■

Spanish federation goes in-house

The Spanish football federation is in negotiations with the Grupo Santa Mónica Sports agency about unpaid debts as it looks to take the sale of its commercial rights in house.

Local sources claim that the agency owes the federation €14m (\$18.2m). The debt is said to relate to broadcasting rights revenues the agency secured on behalf of the association in a contract which expired in December 2012.

Santa Mónica acted as the commercial rights agent of the Real Federación Española de Fútbol, the Spanish football association, until February this year when the association cancelled the agreement.

The association wants to sever its ties with the agency before the national team's friendly tour of the US in June, according to local experts. It is understood to be in the process of setting up a small in-house team to

handle its commercial rights.

The double financial blow of negotiating a multi-million euro settlement with the association in addition to losing the rights represents a big threat to the agency's future. The federation deal was its biggest sports-rights contract.

In March, the federation cancelled its agreement with Santa Mónica after accusing the agency of breaching its contract by failing to consult it over a deal for domestic media rights signed with commercial broadcaster Mediaset.

The association later signed a deal with Mediaset until June 2014 on the same terms as the broadcaster had agreed with Santa Mónica.

Santa Mónica had not responded as *TV Sports Markets* went to press. ■

IMG heads for Premier profit

The IMG Media agency looks set to make a small profit on the rights to the English Premier League in Vietnam.

The agency is thought to have paid about \$35m (€26.9m) over three years, from 2013-14 to 2015-16, or just under \$12m per season for the rights. It split the rights into three packages and so far has raised about \$33m by selling the two main packages to pay-television operator Canal Plus in a deal agreed last month. It is looking for at least \$4.5m, or €1.5m per season, for the other package.

IMG is also thought to be close to a deal in Japan with public-service broadcaster NHK and satellite pay-television broadcaster J Sports. The agency is also finalising news access deals.

The agency paid about \$50m for the rights over three years, just under \$17m per season. The fee was seen as an aggressive one but IMG was said to be confident that there was still growth in the market and that the launch this year of pay-television channel Fox Sports Japan would drive competition. However, Fox is not thought to have bid. Its main sport is baseball and the late-night start time of most Premier League matches made it unattractive. ■

COLLECTIVE SELLING 1

Spanish league says revenue deal must be the priority

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Tebas said that the Spanish Liga was looking to follow the Italian model of collective selling in its attempt to establish a blueprint for Spain.

The Italian law – known as the Melandri law after Giovanna Melandri, the sports minister who authored it – laid down precise rules on the sales mechanisms for rights, but only broad principles on how rights income should be shared.

The outcome was two years of in-fighting among Serie A clubs about revenues, which on one occasion ended in punches being traded between the presidents of Lazio and Napoli (*TV Sports Markets* 15:7). The law has now come under fire in Italy (see separate story, page 3).

Cardenal said last month that it would be up to the clubs to decide how the money was distributed – that would not be legislated – but that it would be “natural” to expect the gap between those who earn the most and those who

earn the least to narrow.

Under the model that was eventually agreed upon by Italian clubs, Serie A champions Juventus last season earned €87m (\$113m). This was 4.35 times greater than the €20m earned by bottom club Cesena. By comparison, in England’s Premier League, champions Manchester City earned €74.6m, with bottom club Wolves earning €48.1m – a ratio of 1.55:1.

Tebas said that it was very important that Real Madrid and Barcelona, who each will earn €130m this season, did not feel “disadvantaged” under a new system of media rights revenue distribution.

The closest rivals to the big two in terms of media-rights income are Atlético de Madrid and Valencia which earn about €48m per season and €42m per season respectively. Tebas said a strong Real Madrid and Barcelona, as well as a strong Atlético de Madrid and Valencia, benefited everyone in the Spanish Liga. He said that if the top clubs were to perform poorly in the Uefa club competitions it would reflect badly on the league as a whole and Spanish clubs could lose players to other leagues.

November 2010 agreement

Tebas said that the “vast majority” of football clubs had agreed upon a revenue sharing model in November 2010 which would come into force for

the 2015-16 season.

Under the agreement, Barcelona and Real Madrid would get 34 per cent of total revenues, Atlético de Madrid and Valencia would get 11 per cent, and the other clubs would split the remaining 55 per cent. Barcelona and Real had initially demanded 40 per cent.

However, based on the split of rights fees in the current three-year media-rights contracts, the model would make virtually no difference to the top clubs’ income.

In the current rights cycle, Real Madrid and Barcelona earn around 35 per cent of the Liga’s total rights revenues of about €770m per season, which covers both the first and second divisions. Atlético de Madrid and Valencia earn about 12 per cent of the total, with 53 per cent divided between the other league clubs.

Of the 42 clubs in the top two divisions, 35 have signed the agreement. The seven clubs understood to be against it are: Villarreal, Sevilla, Espanyol, Real Zaragoza, Athletic Bilbao, Málaga and Real Sociedad. They want a greater share of the league’s total media rights income.

Tebas, the 50-year old lawyer who ran unopposed to replace José Luis Astiazarán as president, said that there was political support for collective selling but that it was necessary to “wait and see if that translates into a law.” ■

COLLECTIVE SELLING 2

Melandri law ‘must be updated’ to reflect changing market

By Frank Dunne

The 2008 law which imposed the collective selling of media rights on professional sport in Italy needs to be redrafted to reflect changes in the market, according to the lawyer who advised the government on drafting the law.

It is a view which is backed by broadcasters and by the media adviser to the top football league, Serie A.

Separately, the law is under fire from the country’s antitrust authority for its

revenue-sharing mechanism but some football insiders expect this dispute to be a sideshow to the main debate about the law (see box, page 4).

Enzo Morelli, the lawyer who advised sports minister Giovanna Melandri on the law, told *TV Sports Markets* this week: “On the question of how rights are commercialised, the law definitely needs to be amended but not on its basic principles, which should not be touched.”

He said that the requirement to sell rights by technology platform and to have separate packages for digital rights (see panel, page 4) no longer made sense.

“The market is now a single entity,” he said. “You have different devices but there’s no real difference between platforms.” He said that the league needed to have the ability to market rights on a platform-

neutral basis, as other major rights-holders have been doing for several years.

Critics questioned the sale by technology platform at the time the law was being discussed in parliament in 2007, arguing that it was overly restrictive and out of touch with market trends (*TV Sports Markets* 11:21). But Morelli insisted that it was not a mistake.

“The sale by platform came about because the markets were very distinct then and each had its dominant player: the telecoms market, the DTT market, the satellite market. Because of this, the antitrust authority was insistent that sale by individual platform was the only system which could stand up.”

Morelli said that the rapidity of the technological change in the market since the law was drafted between 2006 and

2007 could not have been predicted at the time. "The market now is completely open. You have products like SkyGo [Sky Italia's internet-delivered player] that have changed the market. The iPad – which brings together mobile with digital capacity – didn't exist five years ago."

Morelli did admit to one error in the drafting of the law, however, and warned the Spanish authorities currently studying the Italian law not to repeat it (see separate story, page 1). "One big mistake was not to require clubs to reinvest a part of their income in their youth set-ups," he said. "Serie A is the European league in which teams use the smallest number of players from their academies. That was an error, but Spain understands the importance of the academies."

Melandri law

Individual selling was introduced in Italian football in 1999. The 'Melandri law' which replaced it laid down that:

- the league, as championship organiser, and the clubs, had a claim to joint ownership of the rights
- the league had to sell its main live and highlights rights centrally
- the league had to make available rights for each technology platform
- the league had to identify "emerging technologies" for which rights must be sold non-exclusively
- the clubs retained ownership of their archive rights and match production
- media-rights income should be shared among the clubs using three criteria: a "significant proportion" shared equally, the rest split according to supporter base and sporting results.

Law 'dated'

Morelli's view is in line with that of Marco Bogarelli, president of Infront Italy, the Italian arm of the Infront Sports & Media agency, and media adviser to Serie A.

Bogarelli last week told an industry event that the centralisation of the rights had been a positive thing for Italian football, helping to push up the value of its media rights by 27 per cent. But the law was now dated, he said, and needed to be changed to allow the league greater flexibility. As currently drafted, he said, the law made it

Antitrust has 'no authority' on revenue sharing

The lawyer who advised on Italy's Melandri law on collective selling, Enzo Morelli, said this week that it was unlikely that the government would act on an antitrust authority demand for the law's income-sharing provisions to be changed.

Earlier this month, the antitrust authority, L'Autorità Garante della Concorrenza e del Mercato, called on the government to change the way the law redistributed media-rights income. It called for: an increase in the amount linked to sporting merit in the most recent season; a reduction in the amount paid according to historical results; and the scrapping of the link to supporter base. The authority argued that such a system would allow for a fairer sharing of resources which would improve competitive balance in the league. It also said that a third party, with no link to the clubs or the league, should handle revenue distribution.

Morelli said that it was unlikely that the government would act upon the recommendation because the authority "does not have the competence" to intervene in such areas.

"The relevant market is either the audiovisual sports rights market or the communications market," he said. "It

cannot intervene in issues of sporting balance because there is no market in sporting competition. The Melandri law does not confer any authority on the antitrust authority in this matter."

The authority was responding to a complaint by two Serie A clubs – Palermo and Chievo – that the current system was unfair.

The 20 clubs have, in any case, already agreed on changes for next season in an attempt to increase the amount of income linked to the most recent season's performance.

At present, only five per cent of media rights income, plus the league's collectively sold sponsorship income – which is currently €34m (\$44.2m) per season – is paid out on the basis of the most recent season's results. The income is divided proportionally between the 20 teams according to league position. In the current season, the top club will earn €7.05m, the bottom club €350,000.

From next season, only the top 10 clubs will share the collectively sold sponsorship revenue, which is expected to rise to above €40m. Under the proposed system, the top team will earn just over €13m next season, while the bottom club will continue to earn €350,000. ■

impossible for internet operators such as Google, or technology companies such as Apple, to acquire exclusive rights.

Other experts say that it would even make it difficult for an operator like Al Jazeera to enter the market. The broadcaster's strategy with its beIN Sport channels is to secure distribution across all pay-television platforms. It is not clear how it could do this under the current law, without having to acquire the same rights for both digital-terrestrial and satellite transmissions.

Political agenda

Some observers believe the insistence on selling by platform was driven by a political agenda: to check the power of Silvio Berlusconi.

The law was introduced by a centre-left government. Berlusconi was head of the centre-right Forza Italia party, as well as owner of the country's biggest commercial broadcaster, Mediaset, and one of its top three clubs, AC Milan.

In June 2004, Mediaset signed up the exclusive rights to the top three clubs – Juventus, Inter and AC Milan – in long-term deals with long-term extensions, effectively taking a premium pay-television property off the market for up to a decade (*TV Sports Markets* 8:12). The deals were later struck down by the antitrust authority.

The subsequent weakening of Berlusconi's political power and of Mediaset's power in the television market has reduced the need for such heavy-handed intervention in the market. ■

FOOTBALL

FA looks to cash in as BT, BBC, Sky and ITV all target its rights

Continued from page 1 ►

Public-service broadcaster the BBC will bid. It did not bid the last time the rights were sold. A lack of live football in its rights portfolio is understood to be one factor driving its interest.

Incumbent free-to-air rights-holder ITV, the commercial broadcaster, is thought to be interested in renewing its rights. Incumbent pay-television rights-holder ESPN has sold its UK pay-television channels to BT (*TV Sports Markets* 17:5).

Currently, ITV has rights for the best FA Cup matches and all England senior national team matches, in a two-year deal covering 2012-13 and 2013-14. It pays £42m (£49m/\$65m) per year.

ESPN has live rights for FA Cup and other lower-profile content in a four-year deal covering 2010-11 to 2013-14, worth £17.5m per year.

Competitive England national team home matches – qualifiers for the Uefa European Championship and Fifa World Cup – are not being tendered. They are being sold by Uefa in 2014-15 to 2017-18 as part of the centralised European Qualifiers product. Uefa has guaranteed the FA £115m for the global rights for these matches.

The strong line-up of interested broadcasters is in sharp contrast to the last time the FA took domestic rights to market. ITV faced no serious rivals when agreeing its 2012-14 deal, and was able to force a 42-per-cent price cut – the broadcaster had paid £73m per season from 2008-09 to 2011-12.

ESPN did not face intense competition when it acquired its FA rights in December 2009 either. The rights had been dropped by the UK arm of pay-television broadcaster Setanta, which went bust that year. There was one other serious bidder, the BBC, but it bid less and for a shorter deal than ESPN.

Friendlies

There are 20 dates in the four-year period on which England could play friendlies. The FA is marketing only 14 matches for two main reasons.

First, it is taking into account the possibility England fails to qualify directly from the group stages of the 2018 World Cup qualification competition. It would then have to play in a two-legged qualification play-off, which would eat up two friendly dates. England are likely to qualify directly for Euro 2016 without a play-off.

Second, the association wanted to allow the England team manager to be able to decide the dates for some friendlies. Friendly dates are frequently a few days before or after qualifier match dates, and the manager may want to avoid playing two matches in quick succession, for example if he considers too much long-distance travel is required.

The FA gets the rights for away friendlies as part of its deals with host federations to organise the matches.

Clips competition

Newspaper publishers News International and the *Daily Mail* are thought to be interested in acquiring the internet clip rights that the FA will tender.

Digital rights specialists like the Perform Group, as well as major sports-rights agencies looking to boost their digital activities, are also likely to target the rights.

News International acquired rights for English Premier League football clips in 2013-14 to 2015-16 in January. Its winning bid of just under £36m for internet and mobile clips for the three years was comfortably ahead of the second highest bid, by telco O2, of about £25m (*TV Sports Markets* 17:3). News Corp-owned BSkyB and the Perform Group are both thought to have bid about £18m, with Yahoo and ESPN bidding about £15m. News is understood to have been determined to blow its rivals out of the water in the first round.

News plans to use the clips as a paid-for product to drive subscriptions to its online and tablet editions of its newspapers *The Times*, *The Sunday Times* and *The Sun*.

The *Mail's* internet business model is currently based on free access to its

content. Its Mail Online news website is one of the most popular in the world, with around 100 million unique browsers per month.

The *Mail* has not previously acquired exclusive sports rights, but has deals to carry sports videos from digital media companies Perform Group and Yahoo. Perform's video player, which shows sport and entertainment clips, and English Premier League highlights clips from Yahoo are accessible on Mail Online web pages. Yahoo is the current holder of the Premier League clip rights that News International has bought for the next cycle.

It will be up to the buyer of the FA clips whether they make them freely available or charge for them. ■

MOTOGP

BT's big money, big coverage offer wins over Dorna in UK

By Kevin McCullagh

A large increase in rights fee and coverage has encouraged motorcycle series MotoGP to switch from free-to-air to pay-television coverage in the UK.

Pay-television operator BT Vision is understood to be close to a five-year deal for the rights, from 2014 to 2018, worth between £6m (£7m/\$9m) and £8m per year.

Current UK primary rights-holder the BBC, the public-service broadcaster, pays about £3m per year in a four-year deal from 2010 to 2013. Pay-television broadcaster Eurosport has some less valuable, non-exclusive UK rights for the series in a deal covering 2012 and 2013.

BT is understood to be promising improved coverage for the sport. The BBC's coverage has been criticised by some fans and motorsports experts, for things such as a lack of programming outside of race coverage, putting coverage on its red button service instead of on its main channels, and not having coverage consistently on the same channel.

The rights are being sold by MotoGP commercial rights-holder Dorna Sports,

advised by the IMG Media agency. Dorna declined to comment on the deal when contacted by *TV Sports Markets* this week.

BT and the BBC are understood to have been the only serious bidders, although several other broadcasters, including pay-television operator BSkyB, weighed up a bid. The BBC's offer is thought to have been well behind BT's.

Sky is understood to have been planning a serious bid last year. It changed its mind after being forced to pay a 40-per-cent increase to retain its English Premier League football rights when BT unexpectedly emerged as a competitor in that auction.

Leap to pay-TV

Dorna is taking a risk with MotoGP's profile in the UK by moving to pay-television, and especially to a broadcaster that will be only about eight months old when the deal begins. But it's a risk rights-holders are increasingly willing to take in major European countries with mature pay-television markets, especially when commercial and public-service broadcasters are cutting their budgets.

Formula One motor racing has sold exclusive live rights to some races to pay-television broadcasters in the UK (BSkyB) and Italy (Sky Italia), and to all races in France (Canal Plus). Uefa Champions League football is now exclusively live on pay-television in France, except for the final.

Dorna itself sold MotoGP rights in Italy for 2014 to 2018 to Sky Italia, although the pay-television broadcaster is committed to showing a large amount of free-to-air coverage, including the top eight races each season live (*TV Sports Markets* 16:9). Italy is the second-biggest media rights market for the championship after Spain.

Sky Italia offered Dorna a similar inducement to BT – a better rights fee than was on offer from free-to-air television, and an increase in coverage and promotion.

Live coverage of MotoGP races on the BBC drew an average audience of 843,000 in 2012, down from 1.013m in 2011. Interest is expected to grow this year following good performances last season by UK rider Cal Crutchlow, and the stepping up to MotoGP from Moto2 by another UK rider, Bradley Smith. ■

BASKETBALL

Euroleague must sell airtime to maintain value

By Frank Dunne

Basketball's Euroleague will have to sell broadcast sponsorship or airtime around TVE's coverage of Real Madrid matches in order to match the rights fee the Spanish state broadcaster was paying in its previous deal, which ended last season.

TVE acquired the rights in a deal which will initially run through to the end of the 2012-13 season, including Real's participation in the Final Four, with an option for two more seasons. The agreement also includes non-exclusive rights to some matches of other Spanish teams. TVE will show the matches on its Teledeporte digital-terrestrial sports channel.

In its four-year deal, from 2008-09 to 2011-12, TVE paid €2m (\$2.6m) per year for the Real Madrid rights. It did not renew this season due to its budget cuts. In the deal which the Euroleague has just struck with TVE, the broadcaster will pay production costs and a small rights fee, and provide airtime. It is understood that if the league sells all the airtime, it will come close to matching the €2m per season. Only if it can hit something like this figure will the league confirm the two-year option, local sources say.

Spain has gone from being the best to being one of the toughest markets for the league. However, this year it has made some breakthrough deals outside Europe which will take coverage of the sport to strategically valuable audiences. In March, it signed a deal with Indian subcontinent pay-television broadcaster Taj TV, using the Total Sports Agency to broker the deal. The deal covers the rest of this season and two more. The agency obtained a small rights fee and there is a minimum broadcast commitment of one live match per week. The league has identified India as one of the sport's major growth markets. ■

TV SPAIN

Crisis hitting World Cup and Roland Garros negotiations

By Dan Horlock

The deepening crisis in Spain is making for tough negotiations even for premium properties such as the Fifa World Cup and French Open tennis.

Fifa, football's world governing body, is understood to have received no credible bids for the 2014 World Cup by its April 12 deadline. The MP & Silva agency has yet to secure a deal in Spain for the French Open, which begins at the end of the month.

Fifa has the option of coming back to the market later this year, but there is no guarantee it will find a healthier market. The crisis in Spain's television advertising market is deepening. In the first quarter, the value of the market fell by 15.7 per cent to €409.3m (\$532m).

A delay to the negotiations may have one advantage. One reason that broadcasters were unwilling to meet Fifa's valuation of the rights is that Spain has yet to qualify for the World Cup. Spain has a one-point advantage over France with three qualifying matches still to play. The airtime calculations of commercial broadcasters would be a lot more bullish if Spain were definitely involved in the finals.

Fifa is understood to have continued talks with broadcasters this week and is said to be confident of doing a deal before the qualification cycle is over.

One broadcast source claimed that Fifa was looking for a fee in excess of the €90m-€100m that the Prisa media group paid for the rights to the 2010 World Cup. Other sources said that Fifa was aware of the problems in the market and had factored that into its asking price. Commercial broadcasters are said to value the rights at no more than €50m on current airtime values, with some experts predicting a compromise will be found at about €70m.

Commercial broadcaster Mediaset is the favourite to acquire the rights. This year Mediaset, which owns the Telecinco

and Cuatro commercial channels, completed a deal with Fifa for the 2013 Confederations Cup in Brazil for about €10m. The fee was down by about 33 per cent from the €15m Telecinco paid for the 2009 tournament.

Other potential buyers are commercial broadcaster Antena 3, state broadcaster TVE and the Mediapro agency.

For the 2010 tournament, Prisa, owner of the Canal Plus pay-television platform, was able to recoup about €35m of its outlay by selling on rights to 22 of the 64 matches, including all Spanish national team matches, the opening game and the final to Telecinco.

Prisa is in no position to bid for the rights again. It is heavily burdened by its Spanish Liga rights deals, which it signed last year, and has since tried unsuccessfully to renegotiate down (*TV Sports Markets* 17:4). Prisa is spending about €530m per season for the rights, from 2012-13 to 2014-15. It is an increase of over 75 per cent on the €300m it paid for a weaker package of rights last season. The investment was designed to

reinvigorate its pay-television subscriber numbers. It does not appear to be working.

In 2012, Canal Plus's satellite subscriber numbers fell by just over two per cent over the year, from 1.756m to 1.719m. However, in the last two months of the year the broadcaster lost over 12,000 subscribers, despite the platform enjoying far greater La Liga exclusivity than before.

Tough Roland Garros talks

Local sources say that MP & Silva will struggle to match the fee it got last year for the French Open, when it signed a low-value, stop-gap deal worth about €2.8m with Mediaset (*TV Sports Markets* 16:8). The agency was banking on the situation in Spain improving.

Mediaset has decided not to renew the rights. The broadcaster is understood to have lost money on the acquisition, despite the low rights fee and Spanish player Rafael Nadal retaining the title. It has also spent a lot of its budget on other premium sports content since the turn of the year,

including Spanish national football team rights and Spanish Liga rights.

It is thought that Antena 3 and cash-strapped TVE are still in talks with the agency to acquire the rights.

For commercial broadcasters, the tournament is effectively a gamble on Nadal reaching the final. Half of the advertising value is said to be in the men's final. Nadal has won seven of the past eight French Open titles but has only recently returned from a seven-month absence due to a knee injury.

MP & Silva paid the French Tennis Federation €22m per year for the French Open rights in Europe for five years, from 2012 to 2016. It later extended the deal by one year, to 2017. Spain was expected to deliver up to €10m per year in rights fees. In the previous four-year contract, from 2008 to 2011, TVE paid €4.6m per year as part of a European Broadcasting Union deal. MP & Silva is said to have rejected a renewal offer of €4.6m per year over four years from TVE at the start of 2012. ■

TVSportsMarkets

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Some of the changes that we are implementing include improvements in the way that we deliver your news, information and analysis to provide enhanced insight into the industry sectors that matter to you. We are also building new functionality into our website to improve your experience of our site and to offer a more user-friendly platform.

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DIGITAL MEDIA

Perform deal leaves puzzle over Rightster JV with MP & Silva

By Frank Dunne

The surprise announcement last week by digital specialists the Perform Group that it had acquired the online streaming rights to Italy's Serie A and France's Ligue 1 from the MP & Silva agency raised eyebrows across the industry.

Just nine months ago MP & Silva was talking up its new joint venture with rival digital specialists, Rightster. The venture was launched on the back of Rightster's acquisition of exactly the same rights from the agency (*TV Sports Markets* 16:14). The agency opted for Rightster, in part, because it was unhappy with the way Perform had been exploiting its rights.

It is likely to be several months before it becomes clear what has happened to the

joint venture. The two parties are understood to be in complex negotiations to save the relationship but several experts this week argued that the Perform deal was effectively its death knell.

One industry source claimed that the agency had been unhappy with the timing of Rightster's payments. Another source said that the joint venture had failed to deliver enough deals with bookmakers.

MP & Silva and Rightster both declined to comment on the situation. Nobody at Perform was available for comment as *TV Sports Markets* went to press.

The Perform deal is for two seasons, from 2013-14 to 2014-15. The package also includes: Brazilian Série A and Campeonato Paulista football, Major League Soccer, the Turkish Cup, English football leagues below the Premier League, some ATP 250 tennis tournaments, the Spanish and Italian basketball leagues, EHF Champions League handball and the German handball Bundesliga.

As a company listed on the London Stock Exchange, Perform was keen to get

news of the deal to the markets quickly (and has a legal obligation to do so). Its share price dropped 13 per cent last July on the news that it had lost the rights, before rallying strongly.

The benefit may only be temporary. Experts say that the long-term strategy of the major agencies, including MP & Silva, will be to challenge Perform by taking a slice of the digital market, rather than collaborating with the company.

However, as one industry expert put it, "moving into the digital market will not be easy for traditional rights-trading agencies. It requires a different mindset and a different skillset. The difficulties encountered by the MP & Silva/Rightster joint venture underline that."

Rightster was founded in May 2011 with \$25m (€19m) from private investors and has grown rapidly. MP & Silva is one of 50 clients, so the failure of the joint venture alone would not be a threat to the company's future. It is currently in talks to raise a further \$30m of funding, which it expects to complete by June. ■

CYCLING

ASO opts for long-term security in difficult market

By Robin Jellis

Amaury Sport Organisation has obtained a small increase from France Télévisions for the rights to the Tour de France in a five-year renewal, from 2016 to 2020.

ASO, the rights-holder and organiser of the Tour and other French stage races, last week agreed a deal with the public-service broadcaster worth about €30m (\$39m) per year. The broadcaster will also pay production costs.

The current deal, for the five years from 2009 to 2013, is worth about €25m per year. It was extended by two years, from 2014 to 2015, in a deal worth about €28m per year. ASO agreed the extension so that the domestic cycle would fall into line with its cycle for international rights.

With the French advertising market in recession, it arguably made little sense

for ASO to agree a deal from 2016 so early. But the organisation is said to be keen to secure long-term deals which safeguard the funding of French cycling. In June 2012, ASO sold US rights to the NBC Sports Network in a 10-year deal, from 2014 to 2023.

France Télévisions was happy to agree an early deal. It has secured the rights to one of its core sports properties on a long-term basis in a moment of great financial uncertainty, and was able to do so at a time that its commercial rivals have been weakened by the recession.

One source close to the talks played down the impact of the recession on the decision of the broadcaster to renew so early. "Of course the financial situation was taken into account," he said, "but it had nothing to do with the timing of the deal. Whatever the situation, business is always going on." The broadcaster, he added, "has to work on the costs of production and try to find where it can save money. When it comes to renegotiations it needs to be as efficient as possible, but important sports events are things that people keep on watching. It has to save money, of

course, but has to keep in mind the importance of its rights."

France Télévisions, as well as its rivals, is struggling financially. The government has cut its funding by two per cent across the next three years. The broadcaster registered a €2.2m profit in 2012, but expects to return losses of about €42m this year. The aim is to break even by 2015.

ASO issued a tender for the rights in February. It is understood that France Télévisions faced little competition in the bidding. Commercial broadcaster TF1 is not thought to have bid. The Tour de France is a listed event, which ruled pay-television operators such as Canal Plus or beIN Sport out of the process.

The deal also includes the following races: Paris-Nice, Paris-Roubaix, Paris-Tours, Flèche Wallonne, Liège-Bastogne-Liège, the Critérium International, the Critérium du Dauphiné, the Dakar rally and the Paris Marathon. This is the same content as is in the current deal. In 2012, these events accounted for more than 170 hours on France Télévisions. It is thought that the Tour represents at least two-thirds of the value of the deal. ■

SPORTS CLIPS: News from TVSM Daily from April 18 to May 1

MEDIA RIGHTS 1

Football: World Cup, Premier League, Brazilian football and more

- **Football:** The MP & Silva agency acquired exclusive media rights in Vietnam for the 2014 Fifa World Cup (page 2).
- **Football:** The CAA Eleven agency struck rights deals in Italy and Germany for the 2013 Uefa Euro U-21 national team tournament. Italian state broadcaster Rai acquired exclusive rights to show live coverage and highlights across television, internet and mobile platforms. In Germany, commercial broadcaster ProsiebenSat.1 acquired rights. The broadcaster's main channel Sat.1 and basic-tier channel Kabel Eins will share coverage. ProsiebenSat.1 will also stream live coverage via its Ran.de website.
- **Football:** Pan-Balkan pay-television broadcaster SportKlub extended its rights for the English Premier League in a deal with the IMG Media agency. The deal runs for three seasons, from 2013-14 to 2015-16, and covers Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia. The agreement includes live or delayed coverage of all 380 matches per season.
- **Football:** Pay-television broadcaster Setanta acquired live rights in the Republic of Ireland for 33 live English Premier League matches per season for three seasons from 2013-14 to 2015-16 in a deal with the league. The rights are for matches at 3pm on Saturdays.
- **Football:** Brazilian free-to-air broadcaster Esporte Interativo acquired rights for the Campeonato Paraibano, the state league in Paraíba, Brazil. Esporte Interativo will show the competition for the next 10 years, from 2014 to 2023. The broadcaster will have rights to all games except those that are hosted by Treze, the only one of the league's eight clubs to oppose the deal. The broadcaster will give the seven clubs in the deal 50 per cent of television advertising revenue from its coverage of the tournament.
- **Football:** US pay-television broadcaster Fox Sports agreed a one-year rights deal for the inaugural 2013 season of the North American National Women's Soccer League. The broadcaster will show six regular-season matches, starting on July 8, followed by two play-off matches and then the championship game on August 31. The rights will be exploited on the Fox Soccer pay-television channel.
- **Football:** Pay-television sports broadcaster SuperSport, which operates in sub-Saharan Africa, acquired rights for the second-tier Kenyan Nationwide League in a deal with the Football Kenya Federation, the sport's governing body in the country. SuperSport will broadcast 20 matches per season. The length of the agreement, which started immediately, was not disclosed.

SINCE LAST TIME

- Joao Havelange quit as honorary president of Fifa after the ethics committee of football's global governing body published a report into the ISL bribery scandal. The report cleared current Fifa president Sepp Blatter of misconduct but described former president Havelange's behaviour as "morally and ethically reproachable" in his dealings with ISL, Fifa's former marketing partner, which bribed officials in return for World Cup media rights during the 1990s. The report added that former Fifa executive committee member Nicolas Leoz took bribes from ISL, but said that any action against Havelange and Leoz would be "superfluous" following their resignations from Fifa.
- Production company Sunset+Vine will have to pay UK pay-television operator BT financial penalties if key incidents are missed during live broadcasts of the English Premier League. Sunset+Vine – which was appointed by BT to produce live coverage of the Premier League and English club rugby union's top-tier Premiership – will have to pay BT £250,000 (€294,000/\$382,000) for every goal that is missed and £150,000 for every corner or 'offensive free kick' missed during its live football coverage.
- The 2014 Fifa World Cup must be broadcast in its entirety on free-to-air television in Thailand, the country's National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission watchdog said. Pay-television operator RS, which acquired exclusive rights for the tournament, had asked the regulator to relax its 'must-have'

rule, which dictates that certain sports events are available via free-to-air broadcasters. RS had proposed letting 22 of the matches be shown free-to-air, keeping the other 42 exclusively on its pay-television platform.

MEDIA INTERNATIONAL

- UK pay-television operator BT will appeal a ruling by Britain's Competition Appeal Tribunal that removed rules forcing pay-television broadcaster BSkyB to offer its sports channels at a discounted rate to rival television services. The hearing is expected to take place in the next few weeks.
- UK cable-television platform Virgin Media renewed a deal to carry pay-television broadcaster BSkyB's Sky Sports 1 and Sky Sports 2 channels beyond this summer. The length of the deal was not disclosed.
- Christine Kelly, the head of sport at the Conseil Supérieur de l'Audiovisuel, France's media regulator, said that the Uefa Champions League and the Formula One motor-racing championship could be added to the French government's list of sports events that are protected for free-to-air television.
- Spanish agency Mediapro and telecommunications company Telefónica launched a new pay-television channel to provide live coverage of the Uefa Europa League football tournament. The channel, Gol 2 Internacional, will show the remaining games of this year's competition and full coverage of the next two seasons,

SPORTS CLIPS: News from TVSM Daily from April 18 to May 1

MEDIA RIGHTS 2

American football, basketball, cricket, cycling, handball and ice hockey

- **American Football:** The Denver Broncos NFL franchise agreed a rights deal with local pay-television broadcaster Kusa TV. Kusa TV-operated 9News will broadcast three of the team's pre-season games later this year, against the San Francisco 49ers, Seattle Seahawks and Arizona Cardinals. The broadcaster will also show three 2013 regular-season games, which will be carried on a national basis, against the Baltimore Ravens, Indianapolis Colts and New England Patriots.
- **American Football:** US sports broadcaster NBC Sports and the University of Notre Dame agreed a 10-year rights deal extension, from 2016 to 2025, for the university's home games. The agreement is worth \$15m (€11.5m) per year and covers all platforms.
- **American Football:** US women's competition the Legends Football League expanded its partnership with Total Sports Asia to allow the agency to distribute rights to the tournament worldwide, excluding Brazil, Japan, and Central and North America. The agency previously distributed the league's rights in Asia only.
- **Basketball:** Spanish commercial broadcaster Mediaset acquired rights for the 2014 Basketball World Cup and the EuroBasket tournaments in 2013 and 2015. Mediaset struck the three-year deal with the International Basketball Federation, which runs the competitions. Mediaset will exploit the rights via television and its Mitele.es website.
- **Cricket:** The England and Wales Cricket Board agreed a cross-platform media rights deal in North America and the Caribbean with digital media company Perform. The agreement, which includes rights for England national team home matches, will run for four years, from 2014 to 2017.
- **Cricket:** The England and Wales Cricket Board agreed a deal with YouTube for a live feed of this summer's Ashes Test matches between England and Australia to be shown on the video website in continental Europe.
- **Cycling:** Amaury Sport Organisation, which runs the Tour de France, agreed rights deals in France and the Indian subcontinent. Public-service broadcaster France Télévisions renewed its rights in France (page 8). Indian subcontinent pay-television broadcaster Ten Sports acquired free-to-air, pay-television, IPTV, pay-per-view and video-on-demand rights for the Tour for four years, from 2013 to 2016. The deal is exclusive across the subcontinent with the exception of Sri Lanka, where Ten Sports will share coverage with pan-regional sports broadcaster Eurosport Asia-Pacific.
- **Handball:** The MP & Silva agency acquired distribution rights for the German Bundesliga. The agency will distribute rights on a worldwide basis over four seasons, from 2013-14 to 2016-17, excluding Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Liechtenstein, Luxemburg and the Alto Adige region of Italy. The rights cover cable, satellite and terrestrial television, as well as online, mobile and betting platforms. The agency struck the deal with the Bundesliga and its domestic rights-holder, German sports broadcaster Sport1.
- **Ice Hockey:** The Infront Sports & Media agency, the marketing partner of the International Ice Hockey Federation, struck a deal with YouTube for the video-sharing website to show the 2013 World Championship. Every game will be shown for free worldwide via YouTube on a 30-minute delay, excluding countries where exclusive rights deals are in place. Highlights will also be available on demand.
- **Ice Hockey:** Austrian public-service broadcaster ORF acquired rights for the 2013 and 2017 Ice Hockey World Championships, in a deal with the International Ice Hockey Federation, brokered by the Infront Sports & Media agency. ORF's deal includes live rights for the tournament and second-tier national team tournament Division 1, on television, online and radio.

2013-14 and 2014-15. Mediapro is producing the new channel, which is free to existing subscribers to the Gol TV service.

- A game between English clubs Cornish Pirates and Jersey in the Rugby Football Union Championship, the country's second tier of rugby union, became the sport's first match to be streamed live via social networking website Twitter on April 20. The RFU, the sport's governing body in England, streamed the game after asking supporters to vote via Twitter for a second-tier match that they would like to watch on the website.
- Sanjay Gupta, the chief operating officer of Indian broadcaster Star India, part of media conglomerate News Corporation, criticised the Indian government for supporting regulations imposed by the country's telecommunications watchdog, the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India, on the domestic sports media market. Gupta said that current caps on television subscription prices as well as regulations forcing pay-television broadcasters to share coverage of events of "national importance" with public-service broadcaster Prasar Bharati are stifling growth.
- Qatari pay-television operator Al Jazeera denied reports that it was interested in acquiring Tennis Channel, the US pay-television broadcaster.
- Internet video technology provider Neulion agreed a deal with the Ivy League to create a digital service for the US college sports conference's member universities. The service, which will launch on a subscription basis in August, will allow viewers to access nine online channels – eight of which will be dedicated to each of the conference's member universities with the other channel operated by the league. The service will be available on PCs, smartphones and tablets and will provide live and on-demand video content from each university.

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MEDIA RIGHTS 3

Motorsport, Paralympics, rugby union, golf, snooker, tennis and more

- **Kickboxing:** US pay-television broadcaster the CBS Sports Network acquired rights for the Glory series, in a deal with series operator Glory Sports International.
- **Lacrosse:** North America's Major League Lacrosse will show 15 games live via a dedicated page on YouTube during the 2013 season.
- **Motorcycling:** US pay-television broadcaster the CBS Sports Network acquired rights to the AMA Pro Road Racing series. The agreement will take effect from the second round of this year's series, which takes place from May 31 to June 2, and will run until the end of the 2014 campaign.
- **Motorsport:** The MP & Silva agency agreed a deal with the Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile to distribute rights on a global basis for the Formula E Championship, the electric car-racing series launching in 2014. The agency will act as the championship's exclusive partner in devising and implementing a media, production and broadcast strategy ahead of the inaugural season.
- **Motorsport:** The Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile announced rights deals in Brazil, Spain, Belgium and the Middle East for the second round of the World Endurance Championship on May 4 at Spa-Francorchamps in Belgium. The FIA agreed deals with Brazilian pay-television channel SporTV, Spanish pay-television channels Canal Plus and Sportmanía, and pay-television broadcaster Al Jazeera in the Middle East. Belgian public-service broadcaster RTBF agreed to show the first and last hours of the race live and will stream live coverage of the entire event via its official YouTube page.
- **Paralympics:** The Australian Paralympic Committee acquired rights to the next two editions of the Paralympic Games for a combined fee of close to A\$400,000 (€315,000/\$410,000). The committee acquired the rights, covering the 2014 and 2016 Paralympics, in a deal with the International Paralympic Committee. The agreement includes rights to the 2013 and 2015 IPC Athletics World Championships and the 2013 and 2015 IPC Swimming World Championships. The Australian committee plans to use an agency to sell the rights to Australian free-to-air, pay-television, digital and radio platforms.
- **Rugby Union:** ESPN agreed a deal with USA Rugby that will allow the US pay-television sports broadcaster to show live coverage of the 2013 National Collegiate Championship. ESPN will produce, broadcast and stream online coverage of two of this year's events. The ESPN college sports channel and the ESPN3 online streaming platform will show live coverage of the May 18 men's Division I-A championship, and then the men's and women's college sevens championship semi-finals and finals in November.
- **Snooker:** World Snooker, the sport's world governing body, launched a dedicated page on video website YouTube offering player interviews, highlights and archive footage.
- **Speedway:** Pan-European sports broadcaster Eurosport acquired rights for the Polish Speedway Pairs event on June 8 in Toruń, Poland. Eurosport, which will also be the title sponsor of the race night, struck the deal with Polish company One Sport, the promoter of the event.
- **Tennis:** Chinese state sports broadcaster CCTV5 acquired live rights for the Wimbledon championships. The broadcaster struck the three-year deal, from 2013 to 2015, with the All England Lawn Tennis Club, which runs the tournament.
- **Tennis:** Pan-European sports broadcaster Eurosport and German public-service broadcaster ZDF acquired rights for the Gerry Weber Open in Halle, Germany. ZDF will show live coverage of the semi-finals and final.

- John Wylie, chairman of the Australian Sports Commission, the government-funded agency that distributes funding for national sports federations, said that sports that struggle to attract exposure via established broadcasters could collaborate to form their own channel. The commission will investigate the feasibility of such a channel over the next two months with a view to a possible launch next year.

MEDIA RIGHTS NEGOTIATIONS

- The Ligue de Football Professionnel, the French football league, launched a sales process for the domestic rights to the Trophée des Champions, an annual football match at the start of each season between the previous season's winners of the Ligue 1 and Coupe de France competitions. Broadcasters are able to buy rights for the 2013 edition only, for the 2013 and 2014 editions, or for the three editions from 2013 to 2015. Bids must be in by May 7.
- The French Open tennis grand slam at Roland Garros will continue to be primarily broadcast on free-to-air television in France, according to Michel Grach, director of media and partnerships at the Fédération Française de Tennis, the French tennis federation. In September, the federation will put out to tender the rights for the four years from 2014 to 2017. A winner is expected to be announced by the end of October.
- Romanian public-service broadcaster TVR is in advanced discussions with the Sportfive agency to acquire rights for the 2014 and 2016 Olympics.
- Singapore pay-television operator Singtel was ordered by the Media Development Authority, Singapore's media regulator, to offer coverage of English Premier League football to rival pay-television broadcaster StarHub. Singtel, which acquired rights to the league in a three-season deal, from 2013-14 to 2015-16, in October 2012, was told by the watchdog that the rights must be made available to StarHub as part of the

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country's 'cross-carriage' regulations. Singtel said that it would appeal.

- The Egyptian Football Association, the sport's governing body in Egypt, set a minimum price of E£120m (€13m/\$17m) on the domestic rights for the next three seasons of the Egyptian Premier League, the top division of football in the country, from 2013-14 to 2015-16.
- The International Olympic Committee is considering splitting up the next cycle of media rights to the Olympic Games in Australia so that rights to the 2014 winter Olympics and 2016 summer Olympics are sold separately, according to the *Australian Financial Review*. Broadcasters have refused to meet the IOC's asking price of A\$120m (€94.5m/\$122.8m) for a deal covering both Games.

ALSO SINCE LAST TIME

- UK public-service broadcaster the BBC appointed Sunset+Vine to produce coverage of the Uefa Women's Euro 2013 national team football tournament. Sunset+Vine will produce live coverage of 16 games plus highlights. The BBC said that 14 of the 16 live matches would be shown on the BBC3 channel, with the two other matches – including the final on July 28 – broadcast on BBC2.
- Racecourse Media Group, which manages the media rights for 33 UK horse racecourses, said that record media rights revenues of £46m (€54m/\$70m) for 2012 had been distributed to its shareholder racecourses. RMG said that revenues had been generated through: its pay-television channel Racing UK; Amalgamated Racing, which is co-owned by the group and operates Turf TV, a horse racing channel for bookmakers in UK and Ireland; media rights deals with other broadcasters, including an agreement with UK commercial broadcaster Channel 4.
- The Euroleague club basketball competition said that switching game days from Wednesdays to Fridays for the

2012-13 regular season led to higher viewing figures.

Audiences for 2012-13 games on Fridays were 75-per-cent larger than those for Wednesday games during 2011-12.

Coverage of the 2012-13 campaign reached 199 countries – up from 174 countries the previous season. The Euroleague's official page on video website YouTube attracted a 144-per-cent increase in subscribers, generating almost 11 million more views during the 2012-13 season than 2011-12.

- IMG Sport Video Archive, part of the IMG Media agency, launched a new internet sports content archive for its clients. Users are able to view and download content for which IMG controls the rights, including archive footage of sports events, interviews, and other programming.
- Major League Soccer commissioner Don Garber said that broadcasters should work together with the North American league to improve the cluttered schedule of football coverage. Garber said there was "way too much soccer on television."

INDUSTRY MOVES

- Jean-Thierry Augustin was appointed chief executive of sports broadcaster Eurosport. He was formerly managing director of distribution, rights acquisition and development. Augustin succeeds Laurent-Eric Le Lay, who stepped down as chairman and chief executive to become chief executive of TF1 Publicité, the advertising sales division of French commercial broadcaster TF1. • Eurosport named Philippe Denery as its new non-executive chairman. Denery will remain executive vice-president of group finances at TF1, Eurosport's parent company. • Paul Kind, the marketing manager at the National Rugby League, was appointed as the organisation's new head of commercial operations, with responsibility for media rights negotiations. The NRL runs the top rugby league championship in Australia. • Les Murray, the Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union sports group chairman, resigned after the regional consortium decided to hold fresh elections for his post.

EDITORIAL

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

DESIGN & PRODUCTION

Designer	Stewart Henson
Production Assistant	Carianne Whitworth
Email	carianne@tvsportsmarkets.com

SALES & COMMERCIAL

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

TV Sports Markets

Registered Office 33-41 Dallington Street, EC1V 0BB
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For more information, contact Paul Santos by email on paul.santos@tvsportsmarkets.com