

## PREMIER LEAGUE

# StarHub hits out at 'unfair' sale but looks set to emerge the winner

By Dan Horlock

Singapore pay-television operator StarHub hit out this week at the way England's Premier League conducted its latest round of rights sales in the country.

The broadcaster was talking exclusively to *TV Sports Markets* in the wake of the decision of the country's regulator, the Media Development Authority, to require rival pay-television operator SingTel to share Premier League coverage with StarHub under Singapore's cross-carriage regulation.

StarHub said that the league:

- did not hold an open tender process
- gave incumbent rights-holder SingTel an exclusive negotiation period
- agreed a deal with SingTel whose structure created a disincentive for it to agree further deals
- was then reluctant to enter into negotiations with StarHub.

SingTel acquired the rights for three seasons, from 2013-14 to 2015-16, in

October (*TV Sports Markets* 16:18).

It is understood that the company agreed to pay a fee close to US\$80m (€61m) per season should it end up as the exclusive broadcaster after the league's negotiation process. This fee would be reduced proportionately should the Premier League agree other deals. It pays US\$80m per season for exclusive rights in its current three-year deal.

The broadcaster did not want to sign an exclusive agreement, as that would have automatically triggered the cross-carriage regulation. But following a complaint from StarHub, the measure was applied anyway on April 24.

### 'Unfair barrier'

Jeannie Ong, StarHub's senior vice president of corporate communications and investor relations, said: "StarHub has made every effort to acquire the Premier

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## OLYMPIC GAMES

# Ten hopes summer will follow winter

By Dan Horlock

Australian commercial broadcaster Network Ten acquired the rights to the 2014 winter Olympic Games in Sochi this week from the International Olympic Committee as part of a strategic move for the 2016 summer Olympics rights.

"The IOC is big on partnerships, so we will see where this deal takes us," Jon Marquard, Ten's chief operating officer,

said. Ten paid about US\$20m (€15m) for the rights across all media platforms to the winter Games. Ten's last coverage of the Games was in 1988 in Seoul.

It appears to be a well-founded strategy. Timo Lumme, managing director of IOC television and marketing, told *TV Sports Markets*: "If the bids for the summer

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## RUGBY UNION

## New sevens club tournament to tap into growth market

By Robin Jellis

Premiership Rugby, the organisers of England's top rugby union league, believes its new sevens tournament, which launches in August, will be a commercial success, tapping into a growth in interest in the format.

The inaugural event will take place at Twickenham on August 17 and 18, with teams from around the world invited to take part. The teams understood to be competing are: New Zealand's Auckland Blues, South Africa's Western Province, Australia's ACT Brumbies, Argentina's Buenos Aires, at least two sides from both Russia and the United States, and three teams from the English Premiership.

The organisers believe the time is right to launch such an event, in the build-up to the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio – the first time that sevens will be an Olympic event. Rugby has not featured in the Olympics in any form since the 1924 summer Games in Paris. There will also be a build-up of interest in the sport as a whole in the UK ahead of England's hosting of the Rugby World Cup in 2015.

"Sevens is a great format," Dominic Hayes, commercial director at Premiership Rugby, told *TV Sports Markets*. "It has managed to pique the interest of the Olympic authorities and has a lot of potential. It is a great way to introduce new fans to the sport."

Pay-television operator BT Sport owns the tournament's domestic rights through a deal with Premiership Rugby. The deal is not believed to be part of BT's existing four-year agreement to broadcast the Premiership, from 2013-14 to 2016-17, worth up to £152m (€180m/\$231m), or £38m per year. BT is understood to be paying an additional rights fee.

The Pitch International agency is handling the sevens tournament's international rights. Pitch is currently in talks with broadcasters in key rugby markets. Pitch also handles the

international rights to the Premiership.

Premiership Rugby sees sevens as a big growth market, and is keen to tap into it. The establishment in 2010 of the Premiership Rugby Sevens Series, known as the J. P. Morgan series for three years from 2011 to 2013, was part of the league's aim to capitalise on the growing popularity of the sport in England. The international club tournament is seen as a natural progression.

As this year will be the tournament's first, the organisers are inviting the overseas teams. The English sides will qualify through the Premiership Rugby Sevens Series – a tournament involving the top 12 English rugby union sides. In future, the aim is for all teams to qualify through local tournaments. The league's long-term ambition is to create "a Champions League of sevens."

The league wants the tournament to become a yearly event, with Premiership Rugby planning for the 2014 and 2015 competitions to take place in the US and Brazil respectively. It is unclear yet who the commercial rights-holder of future editions of the tournament will be.

### Doubts

Some rugby rights experts doubt whether the tournament will be a commercial success. They are sceptical as to whether the clubs and provincial teams involved will embrace the tournament and whether top players will take part.

One expert said: "Inviting teams from around the world is an attempt at generating global appeal, to sell more tickets and to make it look better on the market. But I can't see some of the teams sending anything more than a development squad – they are not going to abandon their domestic season. I don't think they will do anything more than pay lip service to the new competition."

With the English domestic season beginning about two weeks after the two-day tournament, clubs may not be willing to risk their top players. Premiership Rugby is banking on the lure of an Olympic medal to attract the big names. Rugby sevens will be an Olympic event for at least the 2016 and 2020 Games. ■

## PREMIER LEAGUE

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League broadcast rights in Singapore. Preparations were made to participate in the tender for the rights in October 2012, only to be informed shortly before the tender that our competitor had secured the non-exclusive Premier League TV broadcast rights, exclusive mobile and broadband rights, and that Singapore had been excluded from the tender."

She said that because there had been no open tender, the only option for the broadcaster was to try to acquire the rights in direct negotiations with the league. But the "exclusive negotiation period, the high rebate structure put in place by our competitor, and the subsequent refusal by the Premier League to commence negotiations made this impossible."

StarHub, which held the league's rights in the last cycle, from 2007-08 to 2009-10, told the league that it was keen to acquire the rights to all matches across all platforms, or "a sub-set of the rights." It said that the league only opened discussions with it in mid-March.

It is understood, however, that the league had informal discussions with the broadcaster in July 2012, prior to the sales process.

Ong said that the structure of the contract – with a rebate for SingTel in the event of the league agreeing further deals – had "materially diminished the financial incentive for the Premier League to sell the broadcast rights in Singapore to another operator."

She said that this created "an unfair barrier to acquisition, which is contrary to the objectives of Singapore's cross-carriage regime. This was the reason why StarHub filed a complaint with the regulatory authority."

### Appeal

The Media Development Authority said that SingTel's deal with the league "contained certain clauses which prevent

or restrict or are likely to prevent or restrict the same content from being acquired or otherwise obtained for transmission on selected platforms in Singapore by other pay-television retailers.”

SingTel last week launched an appeal. The broadcaster has also asked the Minister for Communications and Information for a delay on the regulator’s decision, pending the outcome of the appeal.

In its appeal, the broadcaster will argue that it has bought the rights on a non-exclusive basis and that there is nothing to prevent StarHub from acquiring the same rights directly from the league. It believes that the rebate mechanism is not a barrier to a second operator acquiring rights.

One source close to the broadcaster said that the structure of the deal meant that the cross-carriage regulation had served its purpose by preventing rights-fee escalation. Whether one broadcaster or two acquired the rights, the total fee was not going to be much above the US\$80m per season in the current deal. By contrast, across much of the rest of Asia, Premier League rights fees rose dramatically for the new cycle.

### Impact

If SingTel loses its appeal, the ruling could have serious repercussions for the

broadcaster. Informed insiders say that it could result in SingTel making heavy losses on the deal, unless the league were prepared to share some of those losses.

The crux of the problem is that StarHub now does not have to acquire the league’s rights. As the league has not signed a second deal, the rebate to SingTel does not apply. So SingTel has ended up paying US\$80m per season for non-exclusive rights.

SingTel said last week that it would move Premier League coverage from its sports package to a stand-alone league service and that the cost of the service would be “significantly higher” than planned following the regulator’s order.

Singtel is now required to provide the league channel to StarHub. It has to be sold at the same price on both platforms and SingTel will keep all of the subscription revenue. However, it will have to pay StarHub a one-off start-up cost and an annual carriage fee.

For the Uefa Euro 2012 tournament, when the roles were reversed, and StarHub had to supply its Euro 2012 channel to Singtel, the start-up cost was about S\$200,000 (€123,000/\$161,000) and the carriage fee S\$200,000 per year.

StarHub had paid US\$8m for the

exclusive rights to the tournament and is thought to have lost money on the deal. It was the first time that cross-carriage regulation was implemented.

### Cooling relationship

The relationship between StarHub and the league is said to have cooled in recent years. StarHub was the rights-holder coming into negotiations for the current deal, which has just expired.

It decided to make a joint bid with SingTel to reduce the US\$50m per season it was paying in the 2007-08 to 2009-10 contract because it was making a heavy loss on the rights. A joint bid was rejected by the league. At the last minute, SingTel broke ranks and bid for the rights independently of StarHub.

SingTel has over 400,000 subscribers. In 2009, before it won the rights to the Premier League, it had about 100,000 subscribers. At the end of March this year, StarHub had 532,000 subscribers.

StarHub has said that the ruling would help to counter the company’s recent loss of pay-television customers, as they would now be able to watch Premier League football on its platform. StarHub lost 13,000 subscribers in the 12 months to the end of March. ■

## OLYMPIC GAMES

# Winter sports are growing but Rio is the real target

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Olympics are equal we would side with the incumbent rights-holder but we don’t grant our current partners preferential rights.”

Marquard and Lumme said that Australia was a growing market for winter sports. “Australia’s performance at the winter Games is improving. We see the value in it and people will be surprised by how well it does for us,” Marquard said.

In the 2010 Vancouver Games the country won three medals, two of which were gold. It finished 13th in the overall medal table. At the 2006 winter Games

Australia won two medals, a gold and a bronze, finishing in 17th place.

Australia will be sending 56 athletes to Sochi, its largest-ever winter Games team. The Australian Olympic Committee president, John Coates, said that the country had ambitions to establish itself in the top 15 nations in the medal table.

The vast majority of the value of the IOC’s deals in the country is attached to the summer Games. It is understood that it was unable to attract any offers at its asking price of about A\$126m (€98m/\$123m), the same value as in the deal covering the 2010 and 2012 Games. This meant falling back on a one-Games deal. It was the first time the committee had split the rights in the country since the 1998 Games. Australia was the first market where the IOC bundled its rights together, doing so for the 2000 summer and 2002 winter Games.

Incumbent rights-holders the Nine

network and pay-television broadcaster Foxtel are understood to have made a loss on the rights. Local reports estimated that Nine had incurred losses of A\$25m broadcasting the London 2012 Games. Nine dropped out of the bidding at the start of the year. The Seven network dropped out at the start of last month which left only Ten at the table.

Ten does not have premium sports rights such as rugby league, Aussie rules or cricket, but by acquiring the rights to the Olympics it would create a “halo effect” and allow the broadcaster to “get in the door with advertisers,” one expert said. He said that Ten might lose money on the rights fee but it could leverage advertising against other properties.

Ten is the smallest network of the big three, with a 22-per-cent share of advertising spend in 2012. Seven had the biggest market share, at 40 per cent, while Nine had 38 per cent.

## Keeping the market alive

The IOC's struggle to get a satisfactory value for a two-Games deal is in marked contrast to the recent experiences of other rights-holders.

Recent deals for premium sport have shown the Australian sports-rights market to be in good health. At the end of last year Nine and Fox paid A\$1.025bn over five years, from 2013 to 2017, for the rights to National Rugby League, an increase of over 100 per cent on the previous deal.

In 2011, the Aussie rules Australian Football League achieved nearly a 50-per-cent increase in the value of its rights with a new five-year contract, covering the period 2012 to 2016, worth A\$1.118bn, with Foxtel, Seven and mobile operator Telstra.

Lumme said the IOC had found Australia to be a challenging market. The committee had tried and failed to extract value from the market by offering both a two-Games and a four-Games deal. "We had to fix the immediate issue of the winter Games and then look to come back to the market to do a deal for the summer Games," he said.

Market conditions were not in the IOC's favour, with two of three big networks recently signing big value, long-term rights deals for the rights to Aussie rules and rugby league.

Lumme conceded that with the far more valuable Cricket Australia rights also on sale at the moment the IOC had to understand its position in the marketplace. "There is a huge focus on the big three sports in Australia. Cricket will be a big bet for someone," he said. The big three sports were the "backbone" of the Australian rights market.

Some experts believe that the IOC has made a smart move. One executive said that it had "kept the market alive" by awaiting the outcome of the Cricket Australia deal – which is likely to be by far the biggest deal of the year – before coming back to the market with the summer Olympic rights.

## Cricket deal

Marquard said that Ten was interested in securing more top sports rights which would "re-energise" the network. The broadcaster is in negotiations to acquire

the Cricket Australia rights.

Ten is understood to have matched Cricket Australia's asking price of A\$500m for the rights to the Australia national team's Test matches, One Day Internationals and Twenty20 matches, as well as domestic T20 competition the Big Bash League. The deal covers the governing body's rights over the five-year period from 2013-14 to 2017-18.

Marquard said enhancing the network's sports-rights portfolio was key to lifting viewing figures and attracting new advertisers. He said that top sport was important for a number of reasons: live sport is event television; it is the fabric of Australian society; in a world of fragmentation, premium sport is one of the few things that guarantees high viewing figures; and it drives a high level of "digital engagement."

Ten's sports-rights portfolio currently includes Formula One motor racing, the 2014 Commonwealth Games, and Australian rugby union national team matches. ■

## HANDBALL

# Ufa battle to hold on to rights could be good news for IHF

By Kevin McCullagh

A strong line-up of broadcaster and agency bidders looks set to deliver the International Handball Federation an increase in the value of its rights to the World Championships in 2015 and 2017.

The Ufa Sports agency is the global media rights-holder in the current deal, worth around €33m (\$43m), covering the 2011 and 2013 World Championships.

Ufa is planning to bid again. Also understood to be weighing up a bid are international pay-television broadcaster Al Jazeera, the European Broadcasting Union, the Infront Sports & Media agency, and French pay-television broadcaster Canal Plus. IMG Media is also said to be interested. Sportfive, which bid for the 2011-13 rights, is not thought to be interested this time.

The rights cover four championships –

a men's and a women's championship each in 2015 and 2017. The last tournament of the current cycle, the 2013 women's championship, takes place this December in Serbia.

The federation will sell the rights in direct talks, without a formal tender process. This is its traditional sales method. A winner is expected to be announced at the IHF congress in Doha, Qatar, this October, although it could be earlier, during the summer.

## Markets and values

Qatar's hosting of the 2015 men's championships and an increasingly competitive media-rights market in North Africa is increasing the value of the rights in the Middle East and North Africa region, one expert said this week. Strengthening economies and economic liberation in North Africa following the 'Arab spring' revolutions is resulting in increased investment in content by private television operators in markets such as Morocco and Tunisia.

Al Jazeera is understood to be paying between €3m and €4m for exclusive rights in the region in the current cycle. A renewal will be a high priority for the broadcaster due to Qatar hosting the 2015 men's tournament. The broadcaster is thought to have discussed a deal with the IHF at a meeting at the men's World Championships in Spain in March.

Europe is expected to deliver a mixed bag of increasing and decreasing values. Demand for handball is strong in Scandinavia, where the rights are traditionally sold in one deal covering the region – the single biggest deal for the property. In the current cycle, a commercial broadcaster consortium – TV4 in Sweden, TV2 in Denmark and TV2 in Norway – is understood to be paying about €15m.

In Germany, the second most valuable market in the current cycle, broadcaster interest is falling because of poor performances by the national teams. Public-service broadcasters ARD and ZDF acquired the rights in the current cycle in a deal that was linked to the performance of the teams, and eventually worth about €5m.

Handball is popular in Spain, and the

men's national team are the current world champions, but the country's media-rights market has been hit hard by the weak national economy.

Handball is relatively big in France, and the national teams have been successful recently, but broadcaster interest was not particularly strong the last time the World Championships rights were sold. France's men's team won the 2009 and 2011 championships, and its women's team finished runner-up in 2009 and 2011.

The final of the competition is covered by listed-events legislation if France is involved. Pay-television broadcaster Canal Plus is the current rights-holder, and sublicenses the listed matches to free-to-air television.

Elsewhere in Europe, there is some interest from broadcasters in Russia, Poland, central and eastern Europe and the Balkans. Outside Europe, there is interest in North and South Korea, Japan, Brazil and Argentina. One expert estimated the value of the rights outside Europe, the Middle East and North Africa in the current cycle at about €2m.

### Splitting up the rights

The federation is said to be considering splitting up its rights by territory this time and selling to more than one buyer. Possible configurations include a deal with Al Jazeera for the Middle East and North Africa coupled with an agency deal for the rest of the world; or deals with Al Jazeera, the EBU in Europe, and an agency for the rest of the world.

Some sources say Al Jazeera could work with one of the agencies it has close relationships with on a global bid, with Al Jazeera keeping rights in the territories where it broadcasts and the agency selling the rights elsewhere. This model was used for rights for the handball qualifying tournament for the 2012 Olympics. Pitch International sold the rights in markets where Al Jazeera did not use them.

Canal Plus is thought to have been speaking to potential bidders about a partnership. It is keen to retain its rights in France, where it is engaged in a fierce battle for subscribers with Al Jazeera's beIN Sport. Al Jazeera would be expected to add the rights in France to any deal it did for the Middle East and North Africa.

### Ufa-IHF relationship

Long experience selling World Championships rights and strong relationships between its top executives and the IHF could count in Ufa's favour in the bidding.

Ufa executives Robert Mueller von Vultejus and Philip Cordes have been selling handball World Championships rights for nearly 10 years, first at Sportfive, then at Ufa, which they left Sportfive to help launch in 2008.

However, the relationship has been at times controversial. IHF president Hassan Moustafa was investigated by German prosecutors, and criticised by the International Olympic Committee, for taking a fee from Sportfive for helping the agency with sales of the 2007-09 World Championships rights. ■

## DIGITAL MEDIA

### Eyes on newspaper sports video clip 'experiments'

By Kevin McCullagh

Two newspaper sports-rights deals starting this summer are being watched by the industry for signs of increased potential in content that has historically been difficult to monetise – internet clips.

English Premier League internet and mobile highlights clips in 2013-14 will be exclusively available in the UK to paying subscribers of News International newspapers. News Corporation-owned News International acquired the rights, for 2013-14 to 2015-16, in a deal worth £12m (€14m/\$19m) per season with the Premier League in January (*TV Sports Markets* 17:3).

German Bundesliga internet and mobile highlights clips from 2013-14 will be available in Germany via a mixed paid-for and free service from *Bild*, the country's leading tabloid. *Bild's* owner Axel Springer, Europe's biggest publisher, acquired the rights for 2013-14 to 2016-17 in a deal worth €6m (\$7.9m) per season with the Bundesliga in April 2012.

Buyers of clip rights have struggled to monetise even hugely popular content

such as the Premier League. Advertising rates for internet video mean that tens or hundreds of millions of views are required before serious revenue is generated. And there have been few successful attempts to monetise clips through subscriptions.

This could be all about to change, as newspaper publishers gradually migrate their titles from free online services to subscription services. Most newspapers have failed to drive adequate advertising revenues from free online versions. At the moment, the number of newspapers behind a paywall is small, but some in the industry believe that all newspapers will be within five years.

"It's experimentation time, they are looking for game-changing opportunities," William Field, media consultant at Prospero, told *TV Sports Markets*.

Sports video, he said, is set to be a particular target for experimentation: "It is a certainty that online newspapers will make greater use of better-quality, better-integrated sports video than they have before."

Internet clip rights will always be worth a fraction of the value of live and highlights rights, and, where they remain a separate category, television rights. As one expert put it this week, the Premier League clips "are never going to be the £1bn-per-year business that the live TV rights are." But there is a belief that clips values could be improved through better exploitation.

### Monetising the content

News International this week said that its Premier League clips will be part of a £2-per-week subscription to internet and mobile content from News International's *The Sun*, the UK's best-selling tabloid. *The Sun's* content is currently free online and on mobile.

The content includes in-game clips for all matches other than 3pm Saturday kick-offs, and extended highlights clips of all matches on a Monday morning following a weekend match round. The clips are limited by an English FA ban on the broadcasting of football during 3pm-5pm Saturday matches.

This is not the first time News International has tried to monetise Premier League clips. It acquired mobile clip rights between 2007-08 and 2009-10

jointly with Sky, but the product it launched – 24-7 Football – failed to generate large revenues. Clips were offered for £5 per month or £0.50 per clip.

Springer is keeping *Bild*'s general news content free online, but offering the Bundesliga clips in a part-pay-per-view, part-free model. They will be available on a pay-per-view basis from one hour after matches finish until midnight on that day. After midnight, they will be free.

The publisher has for several years bought minor sports rights on an ad hoc basis and offered them via pay-per-view on the *Bild* website. This hasn't been limited to clips – in 2011 it acquired live streaming rights for Turkish Süper Lig and Dutch Eredivisie football, and last month it acquired live streaming rights for the final of the 2013 German ice hockey cup.

### New exploitation

Experts argue that clips can be made more valuable by exploiting them in new and compelling ways, and that newspapers are the organisations best placed to do this. Their expertise in text and graphic-based content is considered a key strength. "Great words, statistics, social media and sharing functions" will be at the heart of the new wave of exploitation models, one expert said.

"I'm not sure anyone is doing an amazing job online at the moment of

integrating editorial, video and statistics," an internet media expert said.

In-match clips are considered particularly valuable. One expert said he expected the clips made available by rights-holders to become richer as newspapers prove they can do a good job of using them. Rights-holders and broadcasters would also learn that this did not undermine the value of live television rights because it was "an entirely different proposition," he said.

However, some rights-holders could be reluctant to make clips available for subscription services, Oliver Slipper, joint chief executive of digital media company Perform Group told *TV Sports Markets*. "A lot of rights-holders take the view that selling clips gives an opportunity to reach a very broad audience," he said.

### Low advertising rates

Internet advertising rates are too low for most newspapers to make large revenues from advertising-funded clip models. Internet video advertisements generate between £5 and £15 per 1,000 viewers around the world. So a clip viewed by 1m people may generate only £5,000.

Google-owned YouTube takes a large cut of advertising revenue – as much as 55 per cent – around the clips it hosts, limiting rights-holders' earning potential from the world's biggest internet video platform.

One agency executive that recently marketed clip rights for a famous football goal said he could make "more money from one deal with a traditional broadcaster in Slovakia" than he would make in 10 years from YouTube. Deals with broadcasters for the clip had yielded six-figure euro fees at the top end. Despite millions of views on YouTube, the agency made less than \$500 from the platform.

But internet video advertising is growing in value. In 2013, the sector is expected to be worth about \$3bn in the US, and about £200m to £300m in the UK.

### Perform not worried

Perform does not see a threat to its business from newspapers, despite having lost out to News International in bidding for Premier League clips.

Only a few newspapers so far have acquired major sports rights, and Perform's business covers around 200 rights properties and 40 markets worldwide. Subscription models have not yet proven able to pay for themselves, and low advertising rates mean that most newspaper websites "probably don't have the scale of audience on their own, when you take into account the rights fees and production costs that we would incur, to make online video sports content pay in isolation," Slipper said. ■

## TV AFRICA

# MCS: Athletics deal will help drive expansion plan

By Robin Jellis

Last week's acquisition by French basic-tier sports broadcaster Ma Chaîne Sport of the rights in sub-Saharan Africa to the 2013 athletics World Championships is part of a wider strategy to expand operations in the continent.

The broadcaster is thought to have paid about \$100,000 (€76,336) for the rights for 48 territories in sub-Saharan Africa, excluding South Africa.

MCS's chief executive Nicolas Rotkoff

told *TV Sports Markets* this week that the broadcaster's strategy was to be "a semi-premium channel" and to develop the MCS brand in Africa.

He said that the broadcaster was seeking to position itself in the growing African pay-television market but that MCS did not want to "fight" with established pay-television operators like SuperSport or Canal Plus.

MCS acquired the rights to the 2013 championships from the TV Media Sport agency, which had acquired them from the IEC in Sports agency last October. IEC holds the European and African media rights in a four-year deal, from 2010 to 2013, agreed with the International Association of Athletics Federations (*TV Sports Markets* 13:19).

MCS believes that broadcasting the

World Championships will greatly improve its visibility across the continent. MCS channels are carried in Africa on Canal Plus's CanalSat satellite platform and pan-regional pay-television platform StarTimes. They are available in around 1m homes, of which about 70 per cent are on CanalSat. The broadcaster is currently in negotiations with one other platform, believed to be a local distributor.

### Targets

The broadcaster primarily targets football rights due to the sport's global popularity, but sees athletics as a growing sport in the region. MCS's acquisition of the 2012 African Championships in Athletics, which was held in Benin, was its first foray into the African market. The deal was also struck with TV Media Sport.

Last September, MCS agreed a deal worth €3m per season for the rights to the Women's Tennis Association Tour rights. The rights cover four years, from 2013 to 2016, in France, Belgium, Luxembourg, Israel, Portugal and selected territories in sub-Saharan Africa.

The broadcaster also has the rights to Major League Soccer until 2015 in selected territories in sub-Saharan Africa and in Israel. The deal initially covered the 2012 and 2013 seasons, but was extended for two years until the end of the 2015 season.

"We are always looking for the best content in the range of price that we can pay – these are the semi-premium events," Rotkoff said. "Rights like the football World Cup are too expensive for us. We are looking for opportunities we can afford."

The athletics World Championships rights include more than 50 hours of live

coverage, a daily highlights programme and archive material. The event will take place in Moscow's Luzhniki Stadium from August 10-18. MCS will show the tournament on its MCS Africa and MCS International channels. It will broadcast the event in English and French. In some countries it has the rights to broadcast in both languages, while in others it can only broadcast in English or French.

### Setanta Africa

MCS is, to some extent, following the path of pay-television operator Setanta as a European broadcaster identifying Africa as a growth market for sports channels.

Setanta Africa, which is owned by entrepreneur Michael O'Rourke and News Corporation's Fox International Channels, began operating a sports channel in March 2008. It is now carried on 10 platforms,

mainly as part of basic-tier packages, and is available in over 1m homes.

The broadcaster's acquisitions strategy is based heavily on football. Kelly Butler, chief executive of Setanta Africa told *TV Sports Markets*: "We feel that football is the most popular sport in Africa. There may be certain pockets across the region that may have other interests, but we think football is the strongest sport across the board."

Setanta has live football rights in the region to the Dutch Eredivisie, Scotland's Premier League, Major League Soccer, Mexico's Liga MX, and South America's regional cup competition, the Copa Libertadores. Setanta Africa also shows selected delayed football coverage from club channels, following deals with Manchester City, Tottenham Hotspur, Aston Villa and AC Milan. ■

## TV ITALY

# Mediaset mops up rights as Sportitalia looks for saviour

By Frank Dunne

Italian commercial broadcaster Mediaset is close to agreeing a deal for the rights to NFL American football and is in negotiations for a number of other rights properties, including rugby union's Pro12 and basketball's NBA.

The rights to the NFL and the Pro12 are currently held by Sportitalia, the sports channel available free on digital-terrestrial platforms and as part of pay-television operator Sky Italia's premium sports packages.

Loss-making Sportitalia is searching for fresh investors to avoid closure. Some reports claim that if fresh investment cannot be found it may close as early as next month.

Mediaset is thought to be paying about €400,000 (\$524,000) to €500,000 for the NFL rights in a deal with the IMG Media agency. The deal is for one year with an option for a further year.

The broadcaster is understood to be acquiring free-to-air rights for its youth-

## Top rugby rights could help boost Pro12 value

The rights to three rugby union properties – the Pro12, the Six Nations and Italy's autumn internationals – are currently on the market in the country.

Sky Italia holds the rights to the Six Nations and the autumn internationals. It is in the final year of a four-year deal, from 2010 to 2013, for the Six Nations worth about €3.5m (\$4.6m) per season. It is thought to be keen on renewing both.

The rights for the Six Nations and the Pro12 are held by the respective tournament organisers, the Six Nations Committee and Celtic Rugby. Both are

advised by the Bridge Television consultancy. Broadcast sources say that the rights-holders are hoping to leverage the value of the Six Nations and autumn internationals to secure exposure and a decent rights fee for the Pro12 by selling all three to the same broadcaster.

One source said that the rights value of the Pro12 on its own would be "close to zero." Getting production costs covered would be a good result. It made sense, therefore, to try to leverage the high level of interest in the Six Nations. The organisers are thought to be considering several other models too. ■

oriented digital channel Italia 2 rather than its pay-television service Mediaset Premium. It is stock-piling relatively low-cost sports which appeal to a young male audience in preparation for its loss of the rights to motorcycling's MotoGP next season, industry sources say.

This week, the channel also started to broadcast a daily magazine programme of action sports, Red Bull 2 Fast, produced by the Red Bull Media House. It is not thought to have paid a rights fee.

Mediaset may be able to pick up other

rights properties at knock-down prices, as many Sportitalia contracts are due to expire and have not been renewed.

Rights-holders whose contracts will be terminated prematurely if the channel closes include Italian football's second-tier league Serie B. Sportitalia has highlights rights in a three-year deal, from 2012-13 to 2014-15.

Basketball's Euroleague would also be hit by the closure. In October, it agreed a three-year deal, from 2012-13 to 2014-15, worth about €1m per season.

Other Sportitalia rights deals include:

- live rights to French Ligue 1 football in a one-year deal for the 2012-13 season
- live rights to the top division of French rugby union, the Top 14, in a one-year deal for the 2012-13 season
- live rights to the ACB Spanish basketball league for the 2012-13 season
- live rights to the Italian men's national basketball team's home matches in a two-year deal, from 2012 to 2013
- live rights to the Italian men's basketball league, Serie A, in the 2012-13 season
- live rights for third division football, Lega Pro, in rolling one-season deals
- live rights to Serie A U-20 football in a three-year deal, 2012-13 to 2014-15.

The broadcaster has three channels, Sportitalia 1, Sportitalia 2 and news channel Sportitalia 24. The content and editorial side of the business is run by Bruno Bogarelli, brother of Marco Bogarelli, the president of the Infront Italy agency, which acts as adviser to the top Italian football league, Lega Serie A. The channel frequencies are owned by businessman Tarak Ben Ammar. ■

## TV EUROPE

# Bidders run the numbers on ESPN America channel

By Frank Dunne

ESPN is hoping to thrash out a deal to save its US sport channel ESPN America by the end of this month, although some sources say this target is optimistic.

The three potential buyers – Chellomedia, Setanta and Eurosport – are conducting due diligence on the channel, which is distributed on pay-television platforms across Europe.

Liberty Media's cable operation Chellomedia and premium sports channel operator Setanta are looking at the whole channel business. Eurosport is primarily interested in acquiring some of its content, especially NHL ice hockey and NFL American football.

Eurosport, the pan-European sports broadcaster, had held the English-language

rights in Europe to the NHL until 2005.

That year, the rights were snatched in a last-minute deal by the North American Sports Network, which was co-owned by Setanta and the Benchmark Capital Europe fund (*TV Sports Markets* 9:18). NASN was sold to ESPN in 2006 and rebranded ESPN America in 2009.

Chello and Setanta are likely to be looking into several issues as part of their due diligence. These include audience ratings of ESPN America across Europe, whether a buyer for the channel would automatically be able to take over existing distribution agreements, and whether all of the current content would automatically be passed on to a new owner, or whether some would revert to the original rights-holders.

Two months ago, ESPN sent a letter to distributors saying that ESPN America and the archive channel ESPN Classic would cease transmission on July 31. A few weeks later it sent a second letter, saying that there were interested parties and ESPN was looking at ways of maintaining a service. ■

SportBusiness  
INTERNATIONAL

# NEWSWIRE

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## SPORTS CLIPS: News from TVSM Daily from May 2 to May 15

### MEDIA RIGHTS 1

## Football: European Qualifiers, Uefa U-21, Premier League and more

- **Football:** The CAA Eleven agency agreed two deals in the UK for qualifiers for Uefa Euro 2016 and the 2018 Fifa World Cup. Commercial broadcaster ITV acquired live rights to all England qualifiers plus 20 qualifiers not featuring the UK nations or the Republic of Ireland in a four-year deal, from 2014-15 to 2017-18. UK newspaper *The Guardian* reported the deal to be worth £100m (€119m/\$156m). Pay-television broadcaster BSkyB acquired live rights to all qualifiers of Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, highlights rights for England qualifiers over the same four-year period, plus rights for hundreds of qualifiers featuring other teams.
- **Football:** Canadian pay-television broadcaster Rogers Sportsnet acquired rights to the European Qualifiers, covering all European qualifying games for Uefa Euro 2016 and the 2018 Fifa World Cup, in a deal with Uefa, brokered by the CAA Eleven agency. The agreement covers television, internet and mobile rights.
- **Football:** German sports broadcaster Sport1 acquired rights for the 2013 Uefa U-21 Championship and 2013 Fifa Confederations Cup in sublicensing deals. The Uefa U-21 rights were acquired from commercial broadcaster Prosiebensat.1 and cover live rights to all games not featuring the German national team. Sport1 will also broadcast highlights of Germany's games and stream live coverage of the final online if Germany is not competing. The Confederations Cup rights were acquired from public-service broadcasters ARD and ZDF. Sport1 secured live rights to eight games from the tournament.
- **Football:** Pay-television broadcaster Sky Deutschland extended its exclusive live television, internet and mobile rights for the English Premier League in Germany and Austria for three seasons, 2013-14 to 2015-16.
- **Football:** The Optima Sports Management International agency acquired free-to-air rights for the English Premier League in sub-Saharan Africa in a three-year deal from 2013-14 to 2015-16. The agreement covers 50 countries, including South Africa.
- **Football:** UK public-service broadcaster the BBC acquired highlights rights for the Scottish Premier League in a three-year deal, from 2013-14 to 2015-16. Regional channel BBC Scotland will show the highlights on its Sportscene sports news programme and they will also be on the BBC Sport website.
- **Football:** UK pay-television operator BT acquired rights for the English Football Association Women's Super League, the FA Women's Cup, and England women's senior national team matches in a five-year deal, from 2014 to 2018, with the FA.

### SINCE LAST TIME

- Analysts were divided on the impact of BT's new sports pay-television service would have in the UK and on rival pay-television operator BSkyB. Pricing and new sports rights deals (see Media Rights Clips) for the BT Sport service, which launches this summer, were announced last week.

Subscribers to BT's broadband internet packages, costing between £10 (€11.90/\$15.60) and £15 per month, will get the BT Sport channels – BT Sport 1, BT Sport 2 and ESPN – at no extra cost.

Some analysts said BT's offer was not cheap enough – once costs additional to the broadband subscription were factored in – and didn't have enough strong sports content, to seriously damage Sky. "The BT Sport product is simply not strong enough to cause any but the slightest erosion of Sky Sports' residential customers," analysts at Enders Analysis said.

But some said the offer threatened Sky's growth. Its pay-television subscriptions have been slowing, but Sky has been growing particularly strongly in recent years by offering broadband internet and telephone services alongside its traditional television service. This growth has been at the expense of BT, traditionally a telephone and internet business, which has lost customers to Sky. A key goal of BT Sport is to stem this loss of broadband and telephone customers.

"We think this will put pressure on Sky's margins and

growth," Sarah Simon, analyst at Berenberg Bank, said. Claudio Aspesi, analyst at Bernstein Research, said Sky could no longer expect to increase retail prices by three per cent per year, as it had been used to doing.

BT is also looking to challenge Sky's commercial premises subscriptions business, by offering subscriptions at prices up to 80 per cent cheaper than Sky's. Again, some analysts doubt whether BT will hurt Sky in this area. "Even if BT is 80 per cent cheaper, Sky carries three times as many Premier League games, not to mention European Champions League, England international matches, plus much else in sports," Claire Enders of Enders Analysis said.

- IMG's owners rejected an unsolicited bid of more than \$2bn (€1.53bn) earlier this year for the agency from California private equity company Colony Capital, which was working with the sovereign wealth fund of Qatar. The bid was rejected because Forstmann Little, IMG's private equity owner, plans to run an auction to sell the agency. Mukesh Ambani, chairman of Indian conglomerate Reliance Industries, has also been in talks to acquire IMG.

### MEDIA INTERNATIONAL

- UK commercial broadcaster Channel 4's £29m (€34.5m/\$45.2m) loss in 2012 was due to increased investment in programming, including its coverage of the London 2012 Paralympic Games,

**SPORTS CLIPS:** News from TVSM Daily from May 2 to May 15**MEDIA RIGHTS 2****American football, basketball, cricket, golf, horse racing and more**

- **Action Sports:** UK pay-television operator BT agreed a deal with media company Red Bull Media House covering more than 100 hours of sports programming, including coverage of extreme ice skating event Red Bull Crashed Ice, four sports magazine series and feature films.
- **American Football:** The Total Sports Asia agency agreed rights deals for the Legends Football League – which was until last year called the Lingerie Football League – in several territories. Deals were agreed with Danish public-service basic-tier and pay-television broadcaster TV2, Portuguese pay-television operator Sport TV and basic-tier and pay-television sports broadcaster Ma Chaîne Sport in France, Belgium, Luxembourg, Switzerland, Israel and sub-Saharan Africa.
- **Archery:** World Archery, archery's world governing body, agreed a rights deal with digital sports video news agency Sendtonews. The agency will distribute highlights and other video content through its News Partnership Network, which comprises television, radio, print and online news companies primarily in North America but also overseas.
- **Baseball:** Online media company NDN agreed a deal with Major League Baseball's media arm, MLB Advanced Media, to place next-day match highlights clips alongside baseball articles published on local news websites across the US. NDN will distribute the clips to its network of more than 4,500 website partners.
- **Basketball:** Canadian pay-television sports channel The Score acquired rights for a set of events run by Fiba, the International Basketball Federation. The deal, covering television, internet and mobile rights, started immediately and runs until the end of 2014. It covers the men's and women's editions of the 2013 Americas Championship, U-19 World Championship, 2014 Basketball World Cup and U-17 Basketball World Cup.
- **Basketball:** Ugandan club team the Kyambogo Warriors agreed a rights deal with Ugandan broadcaster Nile Broadcasting Service. The first game covered by the agreement, against UCU Canons on May 17, was the first ever Ugandan league match to be shown live on national television in the country.
- **Cricket:** Pay-television broadcaster Taj Television's Ten Sports channel acquired rights in the Indian subcontinent for the India national team's 2017 tour of Sri Lanka. Taj acquired the rights from Sri Lanka Cricket, which is running the series, in a deal worth \$25m (€19m). The tour will feature two Test matches, five One Day Internationals and three Twenty20 matches.
- **Cricket:** Twenty20 tournament the Caribbean Premier League appointed the IMG Media agency to handle its media rights distribution and television production, and to advise on the commercial exploitation of the competition. The inaugural season of the six-team tournament starts on July 30.
- **Golf:** German pay-television broadcaster Sky Deutschland acquired exclusive live rights for the US Open, US PGA Championship and British Open. The rights cover three years, 2013 to 2015. Sky will also show highlights via its Sky Go mobile service.
- **Horse Racing:** UK pay-television broadcaster At The Races acquired exclusive multi-platform rights in the UK and Ireland for all races at UK racecourse Great Leighs. The racecourse is currently closed but is expected to reopen in 2014. The deal does not cover exclusive rights in fixed-odds betting shops.
- **Mixed Martial Arts:** UK pay-television operator BT acquired rights for the Ultimate Fighting Championship in a three-year deal, from August 2013 to August 2016, with the promoter, as reported in *TV Sports Markets* 17:6. BT will show all of UFC's live and delayed programming, including new programming specially produced for UK and Ireland audiences.
- **Mixed Martial Arts:** Yahoo agreed a deal with the One Fighting Championship to allow the Philippines version of the internet company's news website to show highlights of the series. Yahoo Philippines, as the championship's official media partner, will also show exclusive interviews and behind-the-scenes footage.

according to *The Guardian* newspaper. The broadcaster's investment in original programming reached a record high last year of £434m.

- Italian media company Mediaset's claim that pay-television broadcaster Sky Italia abused a dominant position in the Italian market in acquiring exclusive rights to the Uefa Champions League and Fifa World Cup football competitions was rejected by Italy's antitrust authority.
- Finnish pay-television broadcaster UrhoTV added new sports programming, and also for the first time non-sports programming, in deals with Fox International Channels, the channel operator owned by News Corporation, and drama series broadcaster HBO Nordic. Urho is adding the content to compensate for the loss of its cornerstone Finnish SM-Liiga ice hockey rights. Its SM-Liiga deal expired at the end of the 2012-13 season. Rival broadcaster Sanoma Media has the rights from 2013-14 onwards.
- In a deal with Fox agreed in March, Urho sublicensed rights for Dutch Eredivisie football, boxing from Golden Boy Promotions, and NCAA US college American football and basketball.
- US pay-television broadcaster beIN Sport launched an internet streaming service, beIN Sport Play. Subscribers will be able to access the beIN Sport and Spanish-language beIN Sport en Español channels, as well as live 'overflow' football games that cannot be scheduled on television.

## SPORTS CLIPS: News from TVSM Daily from May 2 to May 15

### MEDIA RIGHTS 3

## Motorcycling, Olympics, rugby union, sailing, tennis and more

- **Motorcycling:** UK pay-television operator BT agreed a five-year deal, from 2014 to 2018, for MotoGP rights with the series' commercial rights-holder Dorna Sports, as reported in *TV Sports Markets* 17:8. BT's coverage will include: live and on-demand catch-up coverage of all races from the MotoGP, Moto2 and Moto3 series; second-screen coverage allowing viewers to see races from different camera angles; and motorcycle-related programming between Grand Prix weekends.
  - **Motorcycling:** Swiss public-service broadcaster SRG-SSR extended its rights for MotoGP for the next three years, from 2014 to 2016, in a deal with the series' commercial rights-holder Dorna Sports. The deal covers the MotoGP championship and the Moto2 and Moto3 developmental series.
  - **Olympic Games:** Australian commercial broadcaster Network Ten acquired the rights for the 2014 winter Games in Sochi, Russia (page 1).
  - **Olympic Games:** Canadian public-service broadcaster CBC/Radio-Canada agreed a deal to sublicense French-language rights for the Sochi 2014 winter Games to pay-television broadcaster TVA Sports. TVA Sports will have access to CBC/Radio-Canada-produced Olympic programming.
  - **Rugby Union:** UK pay-television broadcaster BSkyB agreed a deal for rights for the Pro12 club competition for four seasons, 2014-15 to 2017-18. Sky will show 30 live games per season, plus the semi-finals and final.
  - **Sailing:** The IMG Media agency signed a long-term rights distribution deal with the World Match Racing Tour series. The agency will distribute highlights programmes from each event and a daily video news service.
  - **Tennis:** UK pay-television broadcaster BSkyB acquired rights for the US Open in a three-year sublicensing deal, from 2013 to 2015, with sports broadcaster Eurosport, understood to be worth about £5m (€6m/\$8m) per year. Sky's coverage will include exclusive live broadcasts of night matches, the semi-finals and the final. Viewers will be able to watch up to eight simultaneous matches using Sky's red button service.
  - **Tennis:** UK pay-television broadcaster BSkyB acquired rights for the Association of Tennis Professionals World Tour in a deal with the ATP covering the five years from 2014 to 2018, thought to be worth between £8m (€9.5m/\$12.5m) and £10m per year. The deal includes rights for ATP World Tour 1000 and 500 tournaments, and the World Tour Finals in London.
  - **University Sport:** Canadian pay-television broadcaster Rogers Sportsnet agreed a six-year rights deal, from 2013-14 to 2018-19, with Canadian Interuniversity Sport, the national governing body for university sport in Canada. The deal covers television, internet and mobile platforms.
  - **US College Sport:** US pay-television broadcaster ESPN extended its rights deal with the Southeastern Conference for 10 years, from 2024-25 to 2033-34. SEC Network, a new pay-television sports channel dedicated to the conference, will be launched in August 2014 under the new deal. Each year the channel will show 45 American football games, more than 100 men's and 60 women's basketball games, 75 baseball games and selected events from the other 17 conference sports. A carriage deal for the channel was agreed with pay-television operator AT&T U-verse.
  - **Wrestling:** US broadcaster NBCUniversal acquired rights for The Rumble on the Rails, an event featuring national teams from the US, Iran and Russia, taking place at Grand Central Terminal train station in New York on May 15. Coverage was on pay-television channels NBC Sports Network and Universal Sports and streamed live via the NBC Sports Live Extra service and the Universal Sports website.
  - **Various:** UK pay-television operator BT announced rights deals for rugby union from the French Top 14 and a new sevens tournament run by England's Premiership Rugby (page 2), and football from the Australian A-League.
- 
- US broadcaster Fox Sports Media Group, owned by media conglomerate News Corporation, will launch a second US national cable-television sports channel this summer to complement its first, Fox Sports 1, which launches in August. Fox Sports 2 will reportedly replace Fox's cable-television channel Fuel TV.
  - Pay-television broadcaster Gol TV and Media Networks, a division of telecommunications company Telefónica, are in talks to launch a new pay-television football channel in Peru this year. Gol Peru would broadcast all domestic football matches, and would be most likely carried on Media Networks' Movistar TV platform.
  - Viewers will be charged to access high-definition coverage of the Argentinian Primera División, the country's top football league, from the start of next season. Five different HD packages will be available through cable-television operators, but media company Clarín's Cablevision platform was marginalised in initial discussions. The Argentinian government is committed to continuing its 'fútbol para todos' ('football for everyone') scheme to show domestic league matches on free-to-air television, but it also wants to increase revenues through its 10-year rights deal for the league, from 2009-10 to 2018-19.
  - Kenyan football club AFC Leopards agreed a deal with East African pay-television operator Zuku to create a new television channel dedicated to the club. Ingwe TV will provide coverage of the club's matches and other programming.

**SPORTS CLIPS:** News from TVSM Daily from May 2 to May 15**MEDIA RIGHTS NEGOTIATIONS**

- The NBA, basketball's top league in North America, is set to open discussions over its next cycle of domestic rights this summer. Initial discussions are expected to take place after the NBA play-offs this June. The rights are expected to be awarded next year.
- US pay-television broadcaster ESPN is in talks to acquire exclusive domestic rights for the US Open tennis tournament. The CBS network has held rights since 1968. ESPN currently has pay-television rights. The current deals expire after 2014.
- The English Football Association, the sport's governing body in England, issued an invitation to tender for the domestic rights to England national team friendly matches and the FA Cup for the four seasons from 2014-15 to 2017-18. The ITT includes rights to England U-21 games and men's national development teams, the FA Youth Cup and FA Trophy knockout competitions, and the annual FA Community Shield match between the winners of the FA Cup and the Premier League. Bids must be submitted for the different packages by June 14.
- French commercial broadcaster TF1 launched a sales process to sublicense rights for the 2013 Fifa Confederations Cup national team football tournament to a domestic pay-television broadcaster. Bidders were given until May 15 to submit offers for the rights to all 16 matches, but TF1 will retain online and mobile rights to the eight-team tournament.
- will begin hearing the case on May 31. The Big Bash League did not exist when the deal was agreed. Nine has the right under the current deal to match any rival bid for the next rights cycle. Cricket Australia is currently speaking to broadcasters about domestic rights for the next cycle, from 2013-14 onwards. The Ten network has made a bid for the rights.
- Shaikh Salman bin Ebrahim Al Khalifa, the newly-elected president of the Asian Football Confederation, said that the continental governing body would continue to work with its media rights and marketing partner, the World Sport Group agency. The agency's contract with the AFC came under scrutiny last year as part of the wider investigation into the activities of former AFC president Mohammed bin Hammam.
- The Bloomberg news agency reported that Kentaro is being sued by an Italian football investment vehicle, Global Eleven, for alleged "breach of contract and for non-payment of amounts due" in relation to Brazil national football team games organised by the agency.
- The Deutsche Tourenwagen Masters, the German touring car series, launched official German- and English-language channels on video-sharing website YouTube. The German-language channel will allow viewers to watch races in full, on-demand after the event. The English-language channel will stream live race coverage outside Germany. Both channels will show previews, qualifying round-ups and clip compilations.

**ALSO SINCE LAST TIME**

- US pay-television broadcaster ESPN will show highlights of several sports events on social networking website Twitter over the next year, including international football matches and the X Games action sports series.
- Cricket Australia began legal action against domestic rights-holder the Nine network to clarify whether domestic Twenty20 competition the Big Bash League is covered by the commercial broadcaster's current rights deal. The Supreme Court of Victoria

**INDUSTRY MOVES**

- Tom Mockridge was appointed chief executive of UK pay-television operator Virgin Media. • Hillary Mandel was appointed IMG Media's head of distribution in the US. • Ben Buckley was appointed as executive director of Australian pay-television broadcaster Foxtel. He succeeds Peter Campbell, who has been appointed general manager of AFL Media, the media arm of Aussie rules organisation the Australian Football League.

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