

BASKETBALL

Flexible, digital, local: how the NBA is building its global media value

By Robin Jellis

The renewal of the National Basketball Association's domestic media-rights deal, expected later this year, is the most eagerly awaited in US sport and will no doubt be the biggest of the year.

The league is expected to enjoy a big percentage increase on the combined \$930m (€679m) per season it currently earns from sports broadcaster ESPN and pay-television operator Time Warner in eight-year deals, from 2008-09 to 2015-16.

Success at home, however, is to some extent overshadowing an equally important success story: the rapid growth of the NBA as a media-rights property around the world.

To a large extent, this is an inevitable consequence of how the league sells its rights abroad – eschewing a fixed global sales cycle in favour of a pure market-by-market approach. This denies the league the kind of headline number that the US

deals throw up at each renewal.

According to research conducted by *TV Sports Markets*, the current value of the NBA's global rights, outside the US, is thought to be about \$250m per season, and is growing at a rate of about 20 per cent per season.

Matt Brabants, the NBA's senior vice president of global media distribution and business operations, and Elsa Memmi, the NBA's vice president of global media distribution across Europe, the Middle East and Africa, this week provided *TV Sports Markets* with an exclusive and in-depth insight into the league's international sales strategy and outlined the reasons for its growth.

There are three main prongs to the strategy:

- a pure market-by-market sales process not tied to a fixed cycle

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DIGITAL MEDIA

Sport is 'slow to exploit smart TV'

By Frank Dunne

Data from the *Know the Fan – The Global Sports Media Consumption Report 2014* suggests that an opportunity for sports and media companies to engage fans and drive revenues by using internet-connected TV sets is being missed.

According to the report, sports fans using internet-connected TV sets believe they have more control over the sport they watch, that a greater range of sport is

available to them and that the sports content available is more personalised to their tastes.

Despite the benefits of smart TV, the number of people accessing sport in this way is still low, given current penetration levels of the TV sets (see tables, page 5).

A platform which enables big-screen HD coverage to be complemented by

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BASKETBALL

Flexible, digital, local: how the NBA is growing globally

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- a multi-layered rights offering tailor-made to suit the characteristics of each media market
- a strong presence in key markets through NBA offices, local partnerships with media companies, and targeted marketing campaigns.

Along with organic factors, such as the growth in penetration of pay-television in many markets, this strategy is helping to push up the league's media-rights value.

"It's hard to generalise since every market is so different," Brabants said, "but we are experiencing double-digit growth in pretty much every market. In some markets we are starting from a very low base so we are experiencing exponential growth. In India, for example, we don't have a history."

In Europe, the Middle East and Africa, the NBA last year achieved growth of 40 per cent in the value of its media rights. That was unusually high as the league was coming back after the lockout at the start of the 2011-12 season which reduced the number of NBA regular-season games from 82 to 66.

Flexibility

Unlike most major sports rights-holders, the NBA does not tie itself to a cycle of selling its rights, giving it "an extraordinary amount of freedom," Memmi said. This means the league can choose to sell its rights when it wants and can take advantage of market conditions to secure the most valuable deal possible.

As Memmi puts it, "if a company wants to launch an OTT channel in the next year and they believe the NBA will be a driver for them, they can approach us about a deal. We jump on opportunities to develop the league."

The league is "more amenable" to doing longer deals with long-term broadcast partners, Brabants said. Chinese state broadcaster CCTV is in its 28th season of showing the NBA. The league also has

The NBA's short-form content strategy

The exploitation of short-form content across multiple platforms has become a central part of the NBA's global media-rights strategy over the last three years.

Short-form content is extremely important in Europe, for example, due to the time difference. As Matt Brabants, the NBA's senior vice president of global media distribution and business operations, put it: "Not all our fans will stay up to 2.30am or 3am. Short-form content is increasingly the way we can get our message to our fans."

All NBA games are now produced, televised and edited for digital use, specifically with mobile consumption in mind.

The league uses the following platforms and products to provide short-form content: nba.com and other official websites; the NBA League Pass, the league's out-of-market sports package; NBA GameTime, the official mobile app; an NBA YouTube channel; Facebook; Twitter; Vine; and Snapchat. Tumblr, Instagram and Pinterest are also used for distributing NBA images.

Each carries different content targeting a different kind of audience.

The NBA sees its website and other official sites as the 'go-to destinations' for NBA fans who want the most complete picture. Each provides video highlights for all games and events as well as news, blogs, extensive statistics and scores. The nba.com website might carry 50 clips per day, ranging from 10 to 15 seconds to five minutes.

The NBA League Pass offers live games for hardcore fans for a subscription fee and also shows in-game highlights and archive footage. NBA GameTime offers video and

editorial content produced for a specific country, targeting the local fanbase in a particular market.

The YouTube channel reaches a wider but less targeted audience of avid, casual and connected fans, so the content focuses more on best plays, such as the Daily Top 10, and outstanding performances. For example, when LeBron James scored 61 points earlier this season, a video recap of his performance was created.

Facebook is largely a platform for off-the-court, behind-the-scenes content, as well as images and graphics. Twitter is the platform for live events and breaking news, including score updates and in-game highlights under the league's #nbarapidreplay initiative.

Vine is used exclusively during live events and shows videos of players pre- and post-game. Snapchat appeals to a younger demographic, and the league uses it to show live events from beginning to end via photos and videos. Tumblr is used to showcase more artistic photos, while Pinterest is more female-oriented, with a focus on apparel and fashion.

The NBA is the most successful US sports league in social media reach. Its YouTube channel has 5.6m subscribers, its Facebook page has 23.1m likes and its Twitter page has 10.2m followers.

The league also uses short-form content in sponsorship deals. For example, when fast food chain Taco Bell renewed as an NBA sponsor for the 2013-14 season, the two launched a digital/social media platform called Buzzer Beaters that showed highlights of last-second, game-winning shots. The clips were shown on a Taco Bell-branded section on nba.com. ■

Multi-layered offering

The NBA provides different content on different platforms. It agrees deals for live coverage, highlights, and short-form content across free-to-air, pay-television and digital media. The precise rights matrix is geared to the characteristics of the local market.

In Africa, for example, the league has many different non-exclusive broadcast

long-lasting relationships with pay-television broadcaster Sky Italia in Italy and media company Prisa in Spain.

The league used to have a multi-territory content deal for English-language rights with ESPN. When the broadcaster shut down its operations in Europe, the Middle East and Africa in July last year, the NBA began to explore alternatives on a market-by-market basis.

partners. It has two pan-regional deals: one with pay-television broadcaster SuperSport and one with Star Times, the Chinese digital-terrestrial operator.

It supplements this with free-to-air coverage in eight countries. These are: TPA in Angola; Spectrum TV in Cameroon; TV3 in Ghana; RTI in Ivory Coast; RTS in Senegal; Agape TV in Tanzania; TVM in Mozambique; and NBC in Namibia. These deals were brokered by the Ufa Sports agency.

The league also has a deal across East Africa with pay-television broadcaster Zuku, and in Angola and Mozambique with telco Zon.

Free-to-air broadcasters are able to show one live match per week and a weekly highlights show on Saturdays.

NBA TV, the league's own channel, is also licensed and distributed on a global basis. It shows one live game per night during the regular-season, as well as press conferences, match highlights and archive footage.

The NBA League Pass is the league's direct-to-consumer product. It is available in every country outside the US and provides fans access to every NBA game on-demand on mobile, on tablet, or through a connected device. European countries are the biggest users of the League Pass, with Germany top. A League Pass costs \$45 to \$55 per year.

Across Asia the league tends to agree multiple non-exclusive deals. In Taiwan, for example, it has a deal with cable channel Videoland and one with Fox Sports.

The league also looks to syndicate its highlights as widely as possible.

"Our overarching strategy is to get the NBA to as broad an audience as possible, whether by having one partner or multiple partners," Brabants said.

The choice of whether to seek free-to-air coverage, pay-television coverage, or both, is also market specific. "Exposure is absolutely crucial," Memmi said. "However, there are a lot of other competing rights for free-to-air broadcasters. A lot of other sports are shown on free-to-air, and usually the two strongest sports we are up against are football and rugby, or football and cricket. We need to make sure we get the right positioning and marketing, and the best way to do that is often to go on a pay-TV platform." In Germany, one of the biggest NBA

NBA deals across Europe, the Middle East and Africa (\$m)							
Territory	Buyer	Contract duration			Value		
		Length (years)	Starts	Expires	Per year	Total	
Africa	SuperSport	3	2013-14	2015-16	1	3	
Austria Germany Switzerland	Sport1	2	2013-14	2014-15	1.3	2.6	
Balkans	Sportklub	3	2012-13	2014-15	1	3	
Belgium	Telenet	3	2012-13	2014-15	0.8	2.4	
Czech Republic	Chello Central Europe	3	2012-13	2014-15	0.4	1.2	
Denmark Finland Norway Sweden	MP & Silva	4	2010-11	2013-14	2	8	
France	BeIN Sports	4	2012-13	2015-16	6.5	26	
Greece	OTE	4	2011-12	2014-15	3	12	
Hungary	Chello Central Europe	3	2012-13	2014-15	0.3	0.9	
Israel	Sport 5	3	2013-14	2015-16	1.2	3.6	
Italy	Sky Italia	3	2013-14	2015-16	4	12	
Poland	Canal Plus	4	2011-12	2014-15	3	12	
Portugal	Zon/SportTV	3	2012-13	2014-15	2	6	
Romania	Romtelecom	3	2013-14	2015-16	0.5	1.5	
Spain	Canal Plus	4	2013-14	2016-17	8.75	35	
Turkey	Doğan Holding	3	2011-12	2013-14	5.5	16.5	
UK	BT Sport	2	2013-14	2014-15	2	4	

Source: TV Sports Markets

markets outside of the US, the league offers free-to-air coverage outside its deal with sports broadcaster Sport1. Sport1 shows games on its US sport focused pay-television channel Sport1 Plus. The league also streams one live match per week free on nba.com in Germany.

One major advantage the league enjoys in being able to create bespoke media offerings is the volume of its content. It has 30 teams which each play 82 regular-season games, as well as the end of season play-offs.

Digital pioneers

The NBA is increasingly using digital media to boost its fan base and feels that it is ahead of the curve compared to many other leagues (see box, page 2).

"The monetisation of digital rights was the question raised by the organisation around seven years ago," Memmi said. "I think some sports properties are struggling because they asked the question at a much later stage."

It is understood that about 70 per cent of media rights revenue is for television coverage, with the remaining 30 per cent for digital. Two years ago the figures were about 85 per cent for television and 15 per cent for digital.

Keeping it local

The NBA has staff on the ground in the regions where it is selling its rights. It has over 50 staff across three offices in Europe, the Middle East and Africa and

in 2008 established its NBA China office, to conduct the league's business in Greater China, and to tap into the growing economy.

It agrees deals with local companies to provide editorial content on the nba.com website which is tailored to each specific market. The league works with digital companies such as AS.com in Spain, Spox.de in Germany and Gazzetta.it in Italy. Each provides original content, in the local language, that is relevant to fans in the respective markets. There are 17 local sites around the world.

As Memmi explains: "Our digital strategy is based on localisation, via the nba.com website. We license partners the right to exploit the nba.com destination. It's an easy way for us to monetise very efficiently as it means you can rely on a local partner which knows the market."

She added: "We need that exposure, but to get it we need to be extremely relevant. We need to be different and we need to be localised."

The NBA also hosts local marketing activations to boost broadcaster interest in the league. Recently, in Turkey, a temporary basketball court was built for the league's broadcast partner, satellite platform D-Smart, owned by media group Doğan Holding, providing the broadcaster with access to top players.

Organic growth

As with many rights-holders, the NBA is benefiting from the growth of the pay-television industry on a global basis,

with more players competing and forcing rights fees up.

In emerging economies, the growth of middle classes means people have more disposable income. Brabants pointed to Indonesia, for example, as being a “valuable proposition for the NBA” due to a rapidly-growing middle class and an evolving media landscape.

The large presence of overseas stars in the league also helps to increase rights values in certain territories. There are 55

players from Europe playing in the NBA this season. Notable examples include German forward Dirk Nowitzki, Frenchman Tony Parker, and the Gasol brothers, Marc and Pau, from Spain.

The league has identified the Middle East as a region of future growth. The rights are currently held by pay-television operator beIN Sports in a deal which expires after the 2015-16 season which is worth about \$6.5m per season. BeIN Sports provides extensive coverage across

the region, boosting awareness and interest. There is growing interest in Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon.

“There are still lots of growth opportunities in Europe – you just need a top athlete or an extraordinary talent to come through,” Memmi said. “We are always looking to take these opportunities and build something very solid and long term.” ■

[www.](#) For the full interviews with Matt Brabants and Elsa Memmi visit our website.

DIGITAL MEDIA

Smart TV is popular with fans but sport is slow to exploit it

Continued from page 1 ►

on-screen information – offering both a high-quality ‘lean-back’ experience and content for the data-hungry fan – ought to be a game-changer. So far at least, it has not been.

As Jörg Daubitzer, managing director of DFL Sports Enterprises, the commercial arm of the German Bundesliga, put it, “I don’t consider smart TV a game-changer, but it is an opportunity to widen the offerings to the fan.”

He said activation was happening slowly because: it takes time to change consumer behaviour; suitable offerings have yet to be developed; and the infrastructure required to run high-quality broadband services was not universally available. “To make progress in these three areas takes time,” he said.

Connected TV sets accounted for 39 per cent of the global market in 2013, according to research firm Futuresource, which estimates that the share will rise to 87 per cent by 2018. Over half of owners of smart TV sets in the US and Western Europe use them to access the internet.

Some industry experts say that one of the main reasons for the relatively slow growth of sport-specific applications for smart TV is that rights-holders have not yet adapted their licensing strategies to take into account the opportunities offered by the medium.

In part, this is due to the technology being young and rights often being tied into long cycles which are not responsive enough to technological change. In some cases it is also due to confusion about exactly what kind of rights are at stake: internet or TV?

Rupert Murdoch’s News Corp last year rolled out its BallBall service, a free app and website available in local languages in Japan, Indonesia and Vietnam (*TV Sports Markets* 17:15). The service combines short video clips of top football from around the world with editorial content from News-owned newspaper titles, such as *The Sun*, *The Times* and *The Sunday Times*.

Fans can access the content on smartphones, tablets and computers but not on connected TVs, something which News Corp’s global head of rights, Simon Greenberg, puts down to it being such a new medium.

“At the moment, a service like BallBall, which is on devices enabled by the internet, isn’t allowed on a connected TV. That anomaly is in all the rights agreements. It sticks out like a sore thumb and nobody can really give you a proper explanation as to why it is there.”

He said that the anomaly would probably be resolved in the next rounds of rights agreements. “The development of technology is quicker than the development of rights agreements. Connected TV is one of the things that has got caught up in that.”

The market leader in the manufacturing and distribution of smart TVs is electronics company Samsung. Billy Wright, the company’s director of European strategy, planning and

business operations, argues that the time spent by viewers on smart TV services like BBC iPlayer, Netflix, and Skype “has exploded,” and is evidence that there are already high levels of consumer engagement. There are several reasons why sport is still not maximising the possibilities offered by the platform.

“A lot depends on whether appropriate digital rights are available, or whether they have been locked away by existing deals,” he said. “Where they have been locked away, which is generally the case, is the licensee in a position either technically or commercially to exploit their rights and the underlying content through the smart TV platform?”

He added that it was difficult for non-broadcast companies to break into the market for building services around sport on smart TVs. “The key question is whether there are rights available, and, if so, whether you can afford them. As of today, the answer to both questions will more often than not be no.”

Wright also questioned whether traditional broadcasters who have acquired sports rights were exploiting them in a way that gets the best out of a smart TV’s IP connectivity.

“If you are an incumbent broadcaster, are you thinking through the best way to use the rights you have in that context, to use smart TV as a complement to the live linear broadcast?”

“It’s fair to say that a lot of the incumbents have not particularly embraced smart TV yet. Part of that is just about mind-set and where they have come from. Part of it is around protecting existing revenue models,” he said.

Data growth

US sports fans have always had a big appetite for statistics and data around live events, something which is increasingly spreading to Europe, Asia and other parts of the world. A lot of second-screen activity around sports events is driven by the need for a greater level of statistical analysis than that provided by the main broadcast feed. Connected TV allows fans to see live coverage and data together on a single screen, a development that Samsung, among others, views as an opportunity.

The company this week launched Kick, an app which overlays rich data and analytics on live sports broadcasts on connected TVs. The service covers top European and international football.

The app has been developed together with digital specialists Perform. Statistics are provided in real time by the Perform group's data services Opta and RunningBall, with supplementary editorial content from the Perform-owned Goal.com football website.

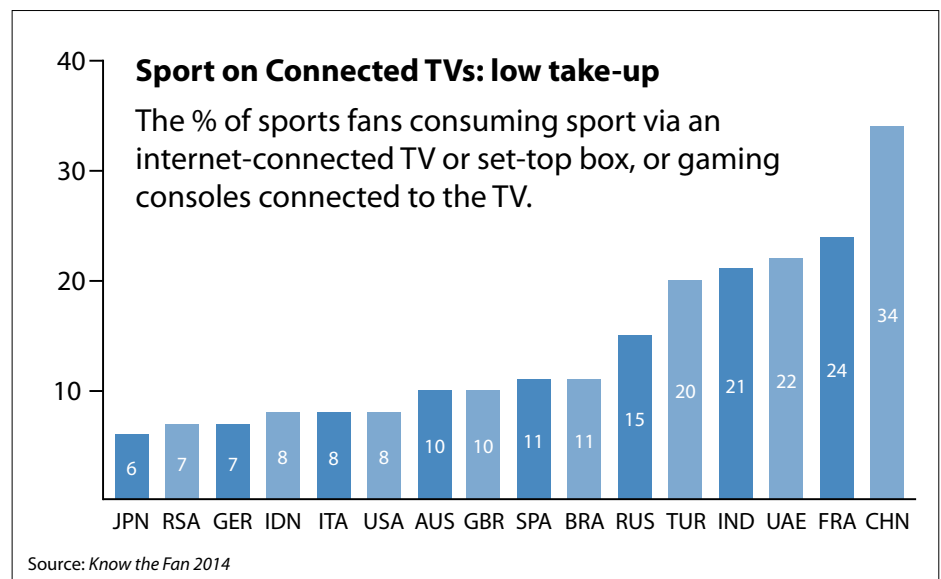
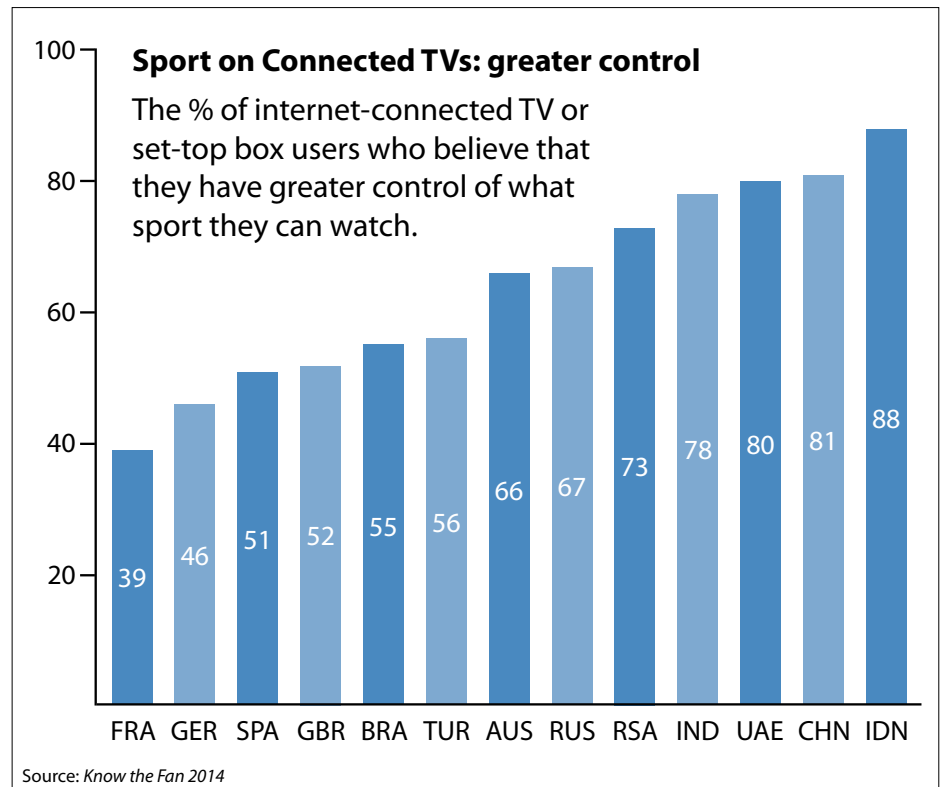
As Wright points out, "we attach real importance to data, analytics and insights to enrich the experience, from pre-match predictions to live insights to post-match analysis." The service taps into what he sees as a clear emerging trend: multi-screen viewing and interaction – watching the live match on the 'big screen' while drilling into analytics or exchanging views with fellow fans over social networks on a tablet.

Social explosion

Another area of rapid growth has been in the consumption of sports content via social media platforms. In the *Know the Fan 2014* report, the consumption of sport via social networking platforms increased in all markets that were previously surveyed (except Turkey where it has decreased slightly).

The number of hours spent by people accessing sport on social networking sites has reached remarkable levels when compared with the time spent watching sport on TV, considering that the comparison is between a way of consuming sport which is 70 years old and one which didn't exist a few years ago.

In seven of the 16 markets surveyed, fans are spending at least two hours per



week consuming sport this way. These include India (2.6 hours), Brazil (2.5), Turkey (2.3), the UAE (2.2), Italy and China (2.1), and Spain (2.0).

Rights-holders and media companies are increasingly looking at ways to work social media into the overall commercial offering. As News Corp's Greenberg points out, the advantages of doing so are great because of "the connectivity you get with the user, the speed you can get to the user, and the way you can target the football fan."

He points out that a marketing campaign could target, for example, everyone who has expressed a like on Facebook for Cristiano Ronaldo in Indonesia. "It might cost you quite a lot of money, because there are a lot of them. But in terms of growing your audience and getting them to stick with you in future, it is a very good and targeted marketing tool. It is far more effective than traditional advertising," he said.

Wright concurs, but adds a note of caution. "Social media is far more

targeted but the audience is also far more critical of overt commercialisation, relative to traditional ad-supported media channels. Brands need to approach this space carefully if they are not to alienate fans.”

Harnessing social media in the right way presents certain challenges for businesses. Social media is largely a passion of the young. And most of the

companies in sports media are run by executives aged 40 or over.

“There is a generational issue around social media,” Greenberg admits. “One of the things which we found is that you have to recruit people that understand it. That means recruiting much younger people and giving them management roles in your organisation that maybe in years gone by you

wouldn't have considered.”

The *Know the Fan 2014* report into global sports media consumption trends is published by Perform, research company Kantar Media Sport and the SportBusiness Group, parent company of *TV Sports Markets*. ■

[www. Know the Fan 2014 report is due for release in June. You can pre-order a copy here.](#)

ICE HOCKEY

IHF gets 30% increase in long term renewal with Infront

By Robin Jellis

The International Ice Hockey Federation this week secured an increase of 30 per cent in the value of the media and marketing rights to its World Championship, but some experts believe it could have earned even more.

The new deal with the Infront Sports & Media agency is for six years, from 2018 to 2023, and is worth about CHF26m (€21.3m/\$29.2m) per year. This is a 30-per-cent increase on the previous deal, from 2012 to 2017, worth about CHF20m per year.

Infront has a long-standing relationship with the federation.

The agency has sold commercial rights for the World Championship since 1981, including worldwide media rights. The World Championship is one of Infront's most important media rights properties, behind the advisory contract for Italian football's Serie A.

Bruno Marty, executive director of winter sports for Infront, told *TV Sports Markets*: “They are among the key rights in our winter sports, as well as our group-wide portfolio. The long-term partnership will allow us to further expand the event on a global level as well as to drive and develop the sport of ice hockey as a whole.”

The new deal was agreed in an exclusive period of renegotiation, so other interested parties were not able to bid. Some experts believe that by selling its rights without a tender process, and by

selling the rights so far in advance, that the federation could be undervaluing them.

It is understood that one party made an unsolicited offer for the rights of around CHF30m per year during the exclusive negotiation period. The IMG Media agency, among other parties, is thought to have been interested.

The deal is a profitable one for Infront. One well-placed source said that the agency earned about CHF28m per year from selling on the rights. After production costs of between €1m and €2m per year, that would give Infront a profit of around CHF6m per year.

The federation had not responded to questions as *TV Sports Markets* went to press. Marty declined to comment on the financial aspects of the deal.

Key markets

It is understood that the value of Infront's two biggest deals for the rights, both in the Nordics, almost covers the total level of its investment in the property.

TV4 Group holds the rights across Denmark, Norway and Sweden, from 2012 to 2017, in a deal worth an average of €11m per year (*TV Sports Markets* 15:4). About 80 per cent of the value of the deal is accounted for by Sweden.

In Finland, the rights are held by commercial broadcaster MTV3, also from 2012 to 2017, in a deal thought to be worth about €8m per year.

Ice hockey rights experts said that other markets could also produce decent rights fees, including Russia (estimated at about €1.5m per year), Germany and the Czech Republic (about €800,000 each), Slovakia and France.

Although ice hockey is popular in Canada and the US, the rights are not hugely valuable due to the time

difference, and the difficulty of top NHL players being available.

Marty pointed to the increasing reach the agency has managed to develop, having agreed new deals in the UK, the CIS region and South America. The 2014 World Championship had the highest reach in its history, with more than 150 territories covered.

The World Championship is an annual event contested by 16 teams. As well as the flagship World Championship, the Infront deal includes the two Division I tournaments, Group A and Group B. ■

COPA AMÉRICA

US could help centenary event double TV income

By Frank Dunne

The centenary version of the Copa América, which will take place in the US in June 2016, looks likely to earn at least twice as much in media rights income as the 2015 Copa América.

The media value of the Copa América Centenario is being driven both by its hosting in the US – where the huge Hispanic community will guarantee full stadiums for every match – and the participation of the US and Mexico national teams, both of which come from lucrative television markets (*TV Sports Markets* 16:14).

The deal agreed last week with Univision for the Spanish-language rights in the US was worth more than the \$60m (€43.8m) widely reported, *TV Sports Markets* understands. One well-placed source said that the

broadcaster expected audiences for the event to be bigger than those for this summer's Fifa World Cup.

The deal was agreed with the Copa América Centenario's commercial rights-holder WeMatch, a joint venture of the Traffic Sports, Full Play and Torneos y Competencias (TyC) agencies.

With strong competition between beIN Sports, ESPN and Fox expected for the English-language rights, the value of the competition in the US alone looks set to exceed \$100m.

This compares with a total media-rights value in the US of about \$30m to \$35m for the 2015 tournament, which will take place in Chile. The US is the biggest single market for the Copa.

For the 2011 Copa América, Univision paid \$18m for the Spanish-language rights in the US. The English-language rights went unsold.

The global media rights value of the Copa has increased sharply from its 2007 level of \$45m. The 2015 event is thought likely to generate between \$100m and \$150m. Deals have not yet been agreed in all territories.

The other high-value markets for the competition in the Americas are Mexico, Brazil, Argentina and Colombia. Outside the region, the most important markets are the Middle East, Spain, Italy and the UK.

With the obvious exception of Mexico, the participation of Concacaf teams will have a modest impact on media-rights values. There is no great tradition of rivalry between countries from the two continents. However, as one local rights expert pointed out, interest in South America generally will be fairly strong, as this is the first time that teams will have the chance to be crowned champion of both North and South America.

The centenary event will be jointly run by the governing bodies for football in South America (Conmebol) and North and Central America and the Caribbean (Concacaf) (see panel).

If successful, the pan-American event could become, as one well-placed source put it, "institutionalised." Some insiders think it could replace the existing Copa América from 2019, when it is due to be hosted by Brazil. No formal discussions have yet taken place about how this might happen.

Univision bounces back

The deal was vital to Univision, which in the last couple of years has lost out on the Spanish-language rights to Fifa events, including the World Cup, to NBCUniversal's Telemundo from 2015, and the 2015 Copa América to Al Jazeera-owned beIN Sports.

The broadcaster was determined not to miss out again. It is understood that Univision held discussions about the rights as far back as April 2012. At the launch of its 24-hour sports channel – Univision Deportes Network – in New York, Univision met Full Play and the heads of the 10 federations which make up Conmebol. Some Concacaf federations were also present.

Centenary Copa

The Copa América Centenario has been created to celebrate the 100th anniversary of Conmebol. The US was confirmed earlier this month as the host nation.

The competition will feature all 10 Conmebol nations – Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela – and six from Concacaf. Along with the US and Mexico, the four further Concacaf participants will be determined by the results of the 2014 Copa Centroamericana, 2014 Caribbean Cup and 2015 Concacaf Gold Cup.

In its usual format, the Copa América is made up of the 10 South American federations and two guest teams invited from other confederations, usually Concacaf. There is no qualification process for the tournament.

The centenary event will be held in cities across the US from June 3-26, 2016.

Agency truce

The WeMatch agency which is selling the commercial rights to the tournament was created just over a year ago as a way out of the long-running legal battle between Traffic and Full Play/Conmebol over the rights to the Copa América.

In 2011, Brazil-based Traffic filed a lawsuit in the US against Conmebol, its 10 member associations and Uruguay-based Full Play to protect its claim to the exclusive commercial rights to the 2015

Copa, after Conmebol announced it was awarding them to Full Play.

Traffic claimed it had a renewal option for the 2019, 2023 and 2027 editions of the tournament, which were also awarded to Full Play (*TV Sports Markets* 15:22).

Under the joint-venture agreement, Full Play will handle the sale of all media rights and Traffic the sponsorship rights. TyC will be responsible for production. Costs and revenues will be shared equally, one third each.

The agreement covers the unsold commercial rights to the Copa América of 2015, the centenary event of 2016, and the Copas of 2019 and 2023. The company is also thought to have a matching-rights clause covering the three editions of the Copa after 2023.

TyC was not involved in the legal dispute. It was brought into the new company because of its production expertise, its knowledge of the key Argentinian market, and its excellent relationship with the Argentinian football association. ■

SWIMMING

Fina happy with long term deal and modest increase

By Robin Jellis

The world swimming federation earned a small fee increase in its renewal last week with Japanese commercial broadcaster TV Asahi.

Fina, the Fédération Internationale de Natation, agreed a six-year deal, from 2014 to 2019, worth about \$1.5m (€1.1m) per year. This is a small increase on TV Asahi's previous deal, from 2011 to 2013. The deal was brokered by Japanese advertising agency Dentsu.

There was no tender for the rights as TV Asahi had the right of first negotiation. Discussions over a new deal began at the end of the previous deal in 2013, and a new deal was verbally agreed early in 2014.

The deal is for a longer period this time because TV Asahi wanted to commit to a longer-term deal according to Peter Hall, Fina's head of marketing and TV.

“This seems to be a trend with our broadcast partners and also our sponsors – they are looking to have longer-term commitments,” Hall told *TV Sports Markets*.

“We had no concerns about agreeing a long-term deal. TV Asahi are one of our most important broadcast partners – in terms of the revenue we receive from them, but also because the Japanese market is important for us.”

Swimming is popular in Japan, and there is interest in the performance of top swimmer Kosuke Kitajima.

The TV Asahi deal includes the World Championships (50m), the World Swimming Championships (25m), and synchronised swimming events. These are the same rights as included in the previous deal.

The deal is the federation’s second most valuable, only behind its deal with the European Broadcasting Union, the consortium of public-service broadcasters (*TV Sports Markets* 17:19). That deal is from 2014 to 2017, and is thought to be worth about €2.5m per year.

The federation’s other valuable deals are with: commercial broadcaster Rede Record in Brazil, from 2011 to 2014; media group NBCUniversal in the US, from 2015 to 2021; and state broadcaster CCTV in China, from 2013 to 2016. It will announce a deal in Hong Kong in the coming months.

Growth

Hall said that interest in aquatic sports was growing because of the way in which it was presented, the creation of new disciplines and the fact that the sport was throwing up its own stars.

“There has also been a growth of interest in the media in the swimmers,” he said, “not just in the pool but outside the pool too. There are some personalities, and this attracts a wider audience. Japanese swimmers had a period where they were a little bit off the boil, but they have some promising talent coming through now.”

Hall said that sports fans were “looking for alternatives” to a constant diet of football. “Aquatic sports provide something different for people to watch. TV Asahi, specifically, likes aquatic sports, and it traditionally shows and promotes Olympic sports – it also shows ice hockey and track and field events.”

Production

TV Asahi will not have any host production commitments in the lifetime of the contract as there are no events foreseen to take place in Japan. However, it is still expected to invest heavily in production. TV Asahi takes about 80 to 100 people to the World Championships, for example.

The broadcaster makes use of Fina’s unilateral production arrangements,

taking the international feed and tailoring it on-site to suit Japanese audiences.

“It means they can tailor their programming completely,” Hall said.

“The people they are broadcasting to want to see how their swimmer is doing, and where they have finished in their race.” Other broadcasters which do the same thing include French public-service broadcaster France Télévisions, German public-service broadcasters ARD and ZDF, and US media group NBCUniversal.

Events

The TV Asahi deal includes three World Championships (50m): in 2015 in Kazan, Russia; in 2017 in Guadalajara, Mexico; and in 2019 in Gwangju, South Korea. It also includes three World Swimming Championships (25m): in 2014 in Doha, Qatar; in 2016 in Windsor, Canada; and one in 2018. Two synchronised swimming World Cups are included: in 2014 in Quebec, Canada; and in 2018.

Dentsu markets the broadcast and sponsorship rights to Fina’s major events including the World Championships (50m) and the World Swimming Championships (25m). The deal runs until 2017. Dentsu is paid on a commission basis. ■

[www.](#) For the full interview with Peter Hall visit our website.

RUGBY UNION

Clubs double their money as the 'new' IMG shows its teeth

By Frank Dunne

The IMG Media agency won the rights to the competitions of European Professional Club Rugby, the new European governing body for club rugby, after bidding went to a third round late this week. Sources close to the process put the value of the deal at about €14m (\$10.2m).

The deal includes worldwide rights, excluding the UK, Ireland, France, Monaco and Andorra, for four seasons from 2014-15 to 2017-18, and rights in Italy for three seasons, from 2015-16 to

2017-18. It covers the new European Rugby Champions Cup and European Rugby Challenge Cup, and the qualifying competition for the Challenge Cup.

The value is about double that of the last deal for the international rights to European club rugby but an exact like-with-like comparison is not possible.

Incumbent rights-holder the Pitch International agency paid €6.4m over four years, from 2010-11 to 2013-14, or €1.6m per year, for the global rights to the old Heineken Cup and Amlin Cup. However, this did not include the territories of the competing clubs, such as Italy. The rights in Italy were worth €500,000 per season.

Other bidders included Pitch, US sports broadcaster ESPN, a joint bid from the IEC in Sports and RDA Television agencies, and the MP & Silva agency. ESPN is said to have wanted the rights

primarily for its Latin American broadcast operations. IEC/RDA hold the global rights, outside the UK, for the World Club 7s tournament, which was launched in 2013. The MP & Silva bid was surprising given that the agency rarely competes head to head with Pitch, with whom it has a joint venture in Asia.

It is the third rights deal that IMG has signed in just over a month since the completion of the takeover by talent agency William Morris Endeavor and suggests that the agency will continue to be aggressive under its new owners where it identifies rights of strategic value. IMG also sells the global rights to the Rugby World Cup.

The tender process was handled by David Kogan, the joint managing director of the global media division of the Wasserman Media Group. ■

SPORTS CLIPS: News from TVSM Daily from May 15 to May 28

MEDIA RIGHTS 1

Football: World Cup, European Qualifiers, Champions League and more

- **Football:** Vietnamese public-service broadcaster VTV acquired rights for the 2014 Fifa World Cup. VTV's deal with the MP & Silva agency is worth \$7m (€5.1m), according to the *Thanh Nien* newspaper. The agreement comprises live coverage of all 64 matches plus a daily 45-minute highlights programme. The rights cover free-to-air, pay-television, internet and mobile platforms. VTV heads a pool of broadcasters in the country that was created in order to reduce competition and drive down rights fees.
- **Football:** The Full Play agency acquired rights in Bolivia for the 2018 Fifa World Cup in a sublicensing deal with the FBF, the sport's governing body in the country. The deal is worth \$6m (€4.4m).
- **Football:** Spanish public-service broadcaster TVE struck a deal for all Spain qualifiers for the Uefa Euro 2016 and 2018 Fifa World Cup tournaments. The deal will run for four years, from 2014-15 to 2017-18, and includes television, online, mobile and radio rights. The agreement, comprising live rights and highlights, was agreed with the CAA Eleven agency. TVE will produce coverage of Spain's home games.
- **Football:** Italian telco Telecom Italia will show the 2014 Fifa World Cup via its Timvision video-on-demand service after agreeing a sublicensing deal with the tournament's pay-television rights-holder in the country, Sky Italia. Tim subscribers will be able to watch 56 matches live and the other eight games on a delayed basis via their smartphones or tablet devices.
- **Football:** Polish pay-television broadcaster NC Plus acquired rights for the Uefa Champions League in a three-year deal, from 2015-16 to 2017-18. NC Plus struck the deal with the Team Marketing agency, which was acting on behalf of the sport's European governing body, Uefa. Group stage games featuring Polish teams and the final of the tournament will be available on a free-to-air channel.
- **Football:** Pay-television broadcaster Ten Sports, which operates in the Indian subcontinent, acquired rights for the DFB Cup, the German club tournament. The agreement will run for four years, from 2014-15 to 2017-18. The deal includes exclusive live and delayed coverage of at least 11 matches per season and covers Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, the Maldives, Nepal, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Ten Sports struck the deal with the Infront Sports & Media agency, which brokered the deal on behalf of the DFB, the sport's governing body in Germany.
- **Football:** US pay-television broadcaster Univision acquired Spanish-language rights for the Copa América Centenario national team tournament, which will take place in the US in June 2016. Univision agreed the deal with WeMatch, the tournament's commercial rights-holder (page 6).
- **Football:** The IMG Media agency struck a deal to distribute global media rights for the seven-match 'Road to Brazil' series ahead of the 2014 Fifa World Cup. The agency, which will also produce the coverage, agreed the deal with Soccer United Marketing, the North American commercial organisation that operates the series in the US. The series features Spain, Honduras, El Salvador, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Greece, Ivory Coast and Nigeria, which will all participate in the World Cup.
- **Football:** French digital-terrestrial television channel L'Équipe 21 acquired rights for several international friendly matches ahead of the 2014 Fifa World Cup. L'Équipe 21 acquired rights for the Netherlands v Ecuador game on May 17, Russia v Slovakia and Belgium v Luxembourg on May 26, Netherlands v Ghana on May 31, Netherlands v Wales on June 4, Russia v Morocco on June 6, Belgium v Tunisia and Spain v El Salvador on June 7, and Portugal v Republic of Ireland on June 11.
- **Football:** UK public-service broadcaster the BBC acquired rights for the Uruguay v Northern Ireland friendly match which will be played on May 30. The BBC will provide live coverage via the digital red button service, the BBC Sport website and internet-connected televisions. Uruguay will be in the same group as England at the 2014 Fifa World Cup.
- **Football:** Regional broadcaster KDOC-TV acquired local English-language rights for games featuring California-based Major League Soccer team Chivas USA. KDOC-TV will show 10 regular-season matches this year, seven of which will be away games.
- **Football:** German pay-television broadcaster Sky Deutschland acquired rights for the Spanish Liga title-deciding game between Barcelona and Atlético Madrid, played on May 17.

SINCE LAST TIME

- Media company Constantin Medien's deal to sell sports production subsidiary Plazamedia and significant minority stakes in German sports broadcaster Sport1 and the Constantin Sport Marketing division to pay-television broadcaster Sky Deutschland collapsed. The €57.5m (\$78.8m) deal fell through after Sport1 and Plazamedia failed to reach a new production agreement. The proposed transaction had included Plazamedia's Swiss and Austrian subsidiaries, with Sky Deutschland having been due to acquire 25.1-per-cent stakes in Sport1 and Constantin Sport Marketing.
- Lagardère Unlimited, the sports marketing company owned by the French media and publishing conglomerate Lagardère, overhauled its management structure. A newly-appointed executive committee comprising chairman and chief executive Arnaud Lagardère, Seamus O'Brien, Andrew Georgiou, Andy Pierce and Laurent Carozzi will oversee day-to-day operations at the company and "manage the transition to a globally integrated organisation." The company owns the Sportfive, IEC in Sports and World Sport Group agencies. Pierce is currently head of the company's Americas operations, O'Brien is head of Asia-Pacific operations, and Georgiou is O'Brien's deputy at World Sport Group. Carozzi is Lagardère Unlimited's chief financial officer.

SPORTS CLIPS: News from TVSM Daily from May 15 to May 28**MEDIA RIGHTS 2****Aquatics, Fiba basketball, Bangladesh cricket, cycling, handball and hockey**

- **Aquatics:** Fina, the global governing body, renewed a rights deal in Japan with commercial broadcaster TV Asahi. The deal will run for six years, from 2014 to 2019, and extends an agreement that began in 2011. The rights cover the World Championships in 2015 in Kazan, Russia; in 2017 in Guadalajara, Mexico; and in 2019 in Gwangju, South Korea (page 7).
- **Basketball:** Fiba, the sport's global governing body, struck a long-term deal with IMG Media for the agency to distribute global rights to 3x3 competitions, which feature three players per team. The deal covers Fiba's 3x3 World Tour, 3x3 All Stars city-based events and 3x3 World and Zone Championships for national teams. The length of the agreement was not disclosed.
- **Basketball:** Euroleague Basketball agreed rights deals with UK pay-television broadcaster BT Sport and Bulgarian pay-television broadcasters TV Plus and Film Plus HD for the 2014 Final Four tournament.
- **Cricket:** Pay-television broadcaster Gazi TV acquired the Bangladesh Cricket Board governing body's worldwide rights in a six-year deal, from 2014-15 to 2019-20. The agreement is worth \$20.02m (€14.6m). Gazi emerged as the winner after rival pay-television company Mediacom failed to meet the governing body's \$20m asking price.
- **Cycling:** US sports broadcaster Universal Sports Network, a subsidiary of the NBC network, acquired live rights for La Course by Le Tour de France, a new women's race that will be staged on July 27.
- **Handball:** The Pitch International agency acquired exclusive distribution rights for the men's and women's World Championships in 2015 and 2017. The agency struck the deal with beIN Media Group after the latter's parent company, pay-television broadcaster Al Jazeera, acquired the rights in December. The men's tournaments will take place in Qatar in 2015 and France in 2017. The women's events will take place in Denmark in 2015 and Germany in 2017.
- **Handball:** Commercial and pay-television broadcaster Modern Times Group acquired exclusive rights in Sweden and Norway for the European Handball Federation men's and women's Champions League. The deal will run for six years, from 2014-15 to 2019-20. The broadcaster's agreement with the EHF Marketing division of the governing body was brokered by the MP & Silva agency. Coverage will be provided via free-to-air channels TV10 and Viasat4 in Sweden and Norway, respectively, and pay-television channel Viasat Sport in both countries. Catch-up channels TV10 Play and Viasat4 Play and online subscription service Viaplay will also show coverage.
- **Handball:** Public-service broadcaster DR and Modern Times Group acquired rights in Denmark for the men's and women's Champions League. The deals will run for six years, from 2014-15 to 2019-20. The broadcasters' agreements with EHF Marketing were brokered by MP & Silva. DR1 and MTG's commercial channel TV3 Sport will continue to show all games featuring Danish teams. TV3 Sport will show games featuring non-Danish teams.
- **Hockey:** Spanish public-service broadcaster TVE acquired rights for the International Hockey Federation's 2014 Hockey World Cup. The deal includes coverage of the Spain national team's matches in The Hague, the Netherlands.
- **Hockey:** Chinese state broadcaster CCTV acquired rights for the International Hockey Federation's 2014 Hockey World Cup.

- US pay-television broadcaster Tennis Channel opened up its TV Everywhere authentication service to customers of distribution partner and pay-television operator Cox Communications. Cox customers with a Tennis Channel subscription can now access the channel's coverage on desktop, tablet and mobile devices.
- Pay-television broadcaster beIN Sports Canada struck carriage deals in the country with pay-television operators Eastlink and Videotron.
- UK public-service broadcaster the BBC struck a deal to show its sports news, live action and highlights of sports events via online streaming service Roku.
- Eurosport agreed a deal with Telefónica for the Spanish telecommunications company to carry the pan-regional sports broadcaster's live sport multi-feed service, Eurosport 360HD.
- International pay-television broadcaster Fox Sports will launch a new channel on Dutch cable-television provider KPN this July, according to the Totaal TV news website. The channel, Fox Sports International 6, is already available online and via the Fox Sports Go mobile application.

MEDIA RIGHTS NEGOTIATIONS

- Telecommunications company AT&T will not intervene in DirecTV's talks over a new rights deal for the NFL American football Sunday Ticket programming, according to the US telco's chief financial officer, John Stephens. AT&T can cancel its proposed \$48.5bn (€35.4bn) deal to acquire DirecTV if the latter is unable to renew its exclusive Sunday Ticket deal.
- Italy's Serie A launched an invitation to tender for its domestic media rights for three seasons, from 2015-16 to 2017-18. Bids are due by June 5. Package A comprises satellite-television rights plus internet and mobile rights for the home and away games of eight teams – totalling 248 matches per season – while package B includes the DTT, internet and mobile rights to the same games. Both packages have a reserve price of €274m (\$375m) per year. Package C comprises extra material, which can be added to upgrade packages A or B, such as access to the changing rooms, the tunnel and the pitch-side for interviews, for €67m per year. Package D includes exclusive platform-neutral coverage of the 12 teams not included in

SPORTS CLIPS: News from TVSM Daily from May 15 to May 28

MEDIA RIGHTS 3

World Championship ice hockey, Olympic Games, Formula E and more

- **Ice Hockey:** The International Ice Hockey Federation renewed a rights deal with the Infront Sports & Media agency. The deal, which will run for six years, from 2018 to 2023, covers the World Championship plus the Divisional Group A and B tournaments. The agency will also provide production services (page 6).
- **Ice Hockey:** Pay-television broadcaster DirecTV acquired rights across South America and the Caribbean for the 2014 World Championship. The deal covers four editions of the annual event, from 2014 to 2017, and includes live, delayed and highlights coverage in all Spanish-speaking territories across South America and the Caribbean, including Argentina, Barbados, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Jamaica, Paraguay, Peru, Trinidad and Tobago and Venezuela. DirecTV will show a minimum of six live games per tournament, including two quarter-finals, both semi-finals and the final. The number of games will increase to 12 in 2017. DirecTV agreed the deal with the Infront Sports & Media agency, the media and marketing partner of the IIHF, the sport's global governing body.
- **Ice Hockey:** Swiss public-service broadcaster SRG and pay-television broadcaster Teleclub acquired rights for the Champions Hockey League European club competition. The three-year deal, which was brokered by the Sportsman Media Group agency, will run from 2014-15 to 2016-17. Teleclub will show live coverage of all games featuring Swiss teams until the quarter-finals. SRG will broadcast live coverage of all games featuring Swiss teams from the semi-finals and the progress of Swiss teams until the semi-final stage via summaries on its SFR, RTS and RSI channels. SRG will also produce coverage of the Swiss teams' home matches.
- **Ice Hockey:** The North American National Hockey League's Chicago Blackhawks extended a local rights deal with regional broadcaster WGN-TV for three seasons, from 2016-17 to 2018-19. WGN-TV will show 20 regular-season games per campaign on free-to-air television.
- **Mixed Martial Arts:** The NBC Sports Group division of media company NBCUniversal extended and expanded a rights deal for the World Series of Fighting. The extension will run for three years, from 2014-15 to 2016-17, and includes multi-platform rights, with events to be shown on pay-television channel NBC Sports Network and the NBC network as well as digital platforms.
- **Motorsport:** CCTV acquired rights in China for the new Formula E championship. Free-to-air sports channel CCTV-5 will show all 10 races in full during the debut 2014-15 Formula E season, including live coverage of the Beijing ePrix, the first race of the campaign, on September 13. CCTV-5 will also broadcast a regular highlights programme.
- **Motorsport:** US pay-television broadcaster CBS Sports Network acquired rights for the 2014 GT Series. CBS Sports Network will provide same-day broadcasts of all GT Sprint Series races. Repeat broadcasts and a one-hour daily highlights programme will also be shown.
- **Olympic Games:** Free-to-air and pay-television broadcaster TVB acquired exclusive multi-platform rights in Hong Kong for the 2016 summer Games in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and the 2014 summer Youth Olympic Games in Nanjing, China. The agreement was brokered by the Dentsu agency.

packages A and B, totalling 132 games per season, for €235m per year. Package E comprises OTT, internet and mobile rights for three matches per weekend, for €109m per year. The Infront Sports & Media agency is the league's adviser for rights sales.

- The tender for the next cycle of rights to the Pro League, the top division of Belgian football, entered a second phase after no winners emerged in the first round. The league had offered six packages of rights covering three seasons, from 2014-15 to 2016-17. It is advised by the MP & Silva agency.
- Invitations to tender were launched in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania for the third-party rights to the European qualifiers for Uefa Euro 2016 and 2018 Fifa World Cup. Bids must be submitted by June 10. The CAA Eleven agency is selling the rights on behalf of football's European governing body, Uefa.
- Lebanese state broadcaster Tele Liban is close to agreeing a sublicensing deal with pay-television broadcaster beIN Sports for rights to the 2014 Fifa World Cup national team football tournament, according to the *Daily Star*.
- The Confederation of African Football launched a tender for the media and marketing rights to the 2015 African U-23 Championship in DR Congo. Bids must be in by August 31.

SINCE LAST TIME

- The International Association of Athletics Federations streamed live coverage of the inaugural World Relays event in the Bahamas on May 24-25 via the Eurovision online service, operated by the European Broadcasting Union, the consortium of public-service broadcasters. The IAAF also worked with the Dentsu agency to stream live coverage of the event via the IAAF channel on YouTube to more than 100 territories worldwide.
- ESPN is considering selling online access to live Major League Soccer games to consumers who do not have pay-television subscriptions with the US sports broadcaster. ESPN president John Skipper said that the broadcaster is interested in ways of capturing "more money direct from consumers."
- Premiership Rugby reported a 40-per-cent increase in UK TV audiences in the first year of the English rugby union league

SPORTS CLIPS: News from TVSM Daily from May 15 to May 28**MEDIA RIGHTS 4****WTA tennis, US college sport, volleyball and WWE wrestling**

- **Tennis:** The Saran Media agency acquired exclusive global rights for the Istanbul Cup Women's Tennis Association tournament. The deal will run for three years, from 2014 to 2016, and includes live coverage across television, online and mobile.
- **US College Sport:** Regional US broadcasters Wave-TV and WHAS-TV acquired exclusive local rights in Louisville to show the Atlantic Coast Conference. The deal will run for three years, from 2014-15 to 2016-17, and includes at least 22 regular-season basketball games, all 14 tournament basketball games and 13 American football games per season. The rights include six pre-season American football programmes, the ACC Basketball Tip-Off magazine show and three ACC 'Kings of the Court' programmes. Wave-TV's deal includes online rights.
- **Volleyball:** German sports broadcaster Sport1 acquired rights for the 2014 women's World Championships in Italy. The platform-neutral rights, which cover Germany, Austria and Switzerland, were acquired from the IMG Media agency. Sport1 will show 15 games live on free-to-air television, including all Germany national team games. The deal also includes live coverage and highlights of the 2014 Berlin Grand Slam men's and women's event.
- **Volleyball:** French pay-television broadcaster beIN Sports acquired rights for the World Volleyball League national team tournament. The length of the deal was not disclosed, but the agreement includes the tournament's 2014 intercontinental round, which began on May 24. BeIN Sports will show live coverage of France national team games plus one other game per week and the finals of the tournament, which is operated by the sport's global governing body, the FIVB.
- **Wrestling:** US media company NBCUniversal agreed a multi-year extension to its rights deal with the WWE organisation. The WWE's Monday Night Raw property will continue to be broadcast by NBCU's Syfy pay-television channel. NBCU's USA Network pay-television channel will continue to broadcast the WWE's Friday Night Smackdown programme. The length of the deal, which will start in October, was not disclosed.

being shown live by pay-television broadcaster BT Sport. BT had an average live weekend audience of 358,000 across regular-season rounds one to 22. BT replaced rival BSkyB as UK rights-holder with a four-year deal, from 2013-14 to 2016-17.

- The Gaelic Athletic Association said that its online streaming platform developed with Irish public-service broadcaster RTÉ had greater long-term value than the association's new rights deal with pay-television broadcaster BSkyB. The subscription-based online streaming service will be available to viewers outside Ireland on any internet-enabled device.
- The DHB, handball's governing body in Germany, will launch a new television programme in August after linking up with the studio360grad agency. The agency will produce and distribute a weekly magazine show, which will focus on German handball's third tier. The programme will be available via television and online platforms.
- The Pakistan Cricket Board rejected claims by Tehreek-e-Insaf, the political party chaired by former cricketer Imran Khan, that the correct procedure had not been followed for the sale of media rights covering the national team's 'home' series in the UAE against South Africa and Sri Lanka last year. The board said that the tender process had been "absolutely transparent."

INDUSTRY MOVES

- George Bodenheimer stepped down as executive chairman of the board at pay-television broadcaster ESPN. Bodenheimer scaled back his day-to-day duties at the company after John Skipper became president and chief executive in 2012. • Yousef Al-Obaidly was promoted to the role of president of pay-television broadcaster beIN Sports France, succeeding Nasser Al-Khelaifi, who will remain chief executive of parent company beIN Media Group.

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