

FOOTBALL POLAND

Vivendi steps up with surprise bid for global rights to help NC Plus secure Ekstraklasa

By Frank Dunne

Polish pay-television operator NC Plus secured live rights to the Ekstraklasa for the next four seasons after submitting a surprisingly high bid for the league's international rights.

Poland's top-tier league has secured about PLN148m (€36m/\$40m) per season for its global rights – a 35-per-cent increase on the PLN110m per season NC Plus pays in its current deal for domestic rights only. The new deal will run from 2015-16 to 2018-19, and NC Plus has an option to extend the deal by two seasons until the end of 2020-21.

Late last month, the league put its rights out for a final round of bids for the 2015-19 cycle (*TV Sports Markets* 19:10). An anticipated head-to-head battle

between NC Plus and Andrea Radrizzani's Eleven Sports Network failed to materialise. NC Plus was the only bidder.

Rights agency MP & Silva, which is advising the league, has put up a minimum guarantee of PLN150m per season for six seasons, from 2015-16 to 2020-21 (*TV Sports Markets* 18:17).

The international part of the deal has been underwritten by Vivendi, the parent company of multi-territory broadcaster Canal Plus. NC Plus was created in March 2013 following the merger of Canal Plus's Polish operation and rival N.

A significant proportion of NC Plus's fee is for international rights. In the last cycle they were only worth about €1m

Continued on page 3 ►

FOOTBALL SPAIN

Spain on the brink of collective Liga sales

By Richard Welbirg

Spanish football's ongoing rights shake-up continued during a fortnight in which collective selling was brought forward by the league and Mediapro was appointed its international marketing partner.

Collective selling of the rights to the top two divisions, enabled by a Royal Decree last month and planned for the 2016-17 season, will now start from 2015-16 – just two months away (*TV Sports Markets* 19:9).

Its advancement is possible because the Mediapro agency agreed to cancel its one-season deals with 38 of the 42

Primera and Segunda División clubs for 2015-16. This allowed these rights to be passed to the league, the Liga de Fútbol Profesional.


In a partly, if not wholly, reciprocal move, the LFP appointed Mediapro as its exclusive international marketing partner for five seasons, from 2015-16 to 2019-20. The contract will be extended to a sixth season, 2020-21, contingent on success.

It is thought that Mediapro will guarantee the league €400m (\$450m) per season for its international rights. The

Continued on page 4 ►

CONTENTS

- 1 Big NC Plus offer means Silva should turn a profit in Poland
The Eleven management team
- 1 Collective Liga sale imminent as Mediapro sells internationally
- 2 Fastrack 1: BeIN buys Silva stake; TSN renews CFL; Mena auctions
- 5 Sportfive renews key Caf deal, but has it paid over the odds?
- 6 Medge no more, NHL up for grabs
- 7 Canal Plus buys 16 and 20 Games
- 8 Uefa agrees new sharing model
- 8 NFL tests water with Yahoo deal
- 9 Victoria gambles on channel play
- 10 Fastrack 2: StarTimes gets Fifa rights; Discovery buys Setanta; Proxy battle for Italian rights
- 12 Sports Clips

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FASTRACK 1

NEWS IN BRIEF

BeIN breaks free in Asia with buyout of MP & Silva stake

The beIN Media Group is on the verge of acquiring full control of the beIN Sports channels in Asia, having agreed a deal with MP & Silva for the agency's 50-per-cent stake.

A deal worth between \$20m (€18m) and \$25m is expected to be finalised next month. BeIN will take full control of the beIN Sports channels in Hong Kong, Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand.

The joint venture began in 2013, as MP & Silva needed an outlet for its vast Asian rights portfolio. It is believed the agency had struggled to sell several of its properties to local broadcasters (*TV Sports Markets* 17:19).

The agreement enabled MP & Silva to use the beIN Sports brand to broadcast its properties. The agency had originally planned to launch channels under its own brand. BeIN has wanted to take full control of the channels for over a year, as its ability to acquire rights outside of MP & Silva's portfolio has been hampered by the joint venture (*TV Sports Markets* 18:5).

BeIN's April 2014 acquisition of Champions League rights in Indonesia, as well as Thailand, Laos and Cambodia, were folded into the venture. The process of doing so is believed to have been long and complex (*TV Sports Markets* 18:8).

It is thought the Indonesian market is the driver behind the deal. BeIN hopes to capitalise on the country's 4m pay-television subscribers. ■

TSN and CFL stick together

The Canadian Football League jumped at the chance to guarantee income well into the future by extending its deal with TSN late last month.

Pay-television broadcaster TSN has shown the CFL since 1986, and French-language sister channel RDS since 1989.

In its current deal, TSN/RDS pay an average of C\$40m (€29m/\$32m) per

year over five years, from 2014 to 2018.

The extension is for three years, from 2019 to 2021, in which the rights fee will rise yearly at a rate of between three and five per cent. It is thought the league will be earning close to C\$50m by the 2021 season.

For the CFL, the extension offers long-term financial security. Commissioner Jeffrey Orridge told *TV Sports Markets*: "TSN was particularly interested in extending the relationship. And we thought why not continue, when it makes great business sense and provides great stability for the league."

CFL is a key property for TSN, which has been locked out of Canada's number one sport, ice hockey, by the National Hockey League's 12-season, C\$5.23bn deal with rival pay-television broadcaster Rogers (*TV Sports Markets* 17:22).

TSN president Stewart Johnston said the CFL "provides foundation for the strength of TSN's schedule. It drives incredibly high ratings from the first day through to the Grey Cup". The Grey Cup is the championship game played by the winners of the east and west divisional play-offs.

The extension dovetails with Bell Media's acquisition of a stake in CFL franchise the Toronto Argonauts in May. Bell owns TSN and RDS.

Johnston said: "To be honest, the fact that Bell were becoming owners of the Argonauts helped promote discussions. If we are deepening the relationship then perhaps now is the time."

TSN/RDS first acquired exclusive CFL rights from 2008 to 2012, paying about C\$17m per season. It later took up an option to extend the deal for 2013. ■

[www. For the full interview with Jeffrey Orridge, visit our website.](#)

Mena hot for two big properties

BeIN Sports and Abu Dhabi Media are bidding head-to-head for two major football properties in the Middle East and North Africa – England's Premier League and Uefa's European Qualifiers.

For both, first-round bids from the

pay-television broadcasters did not produce a clear winner, which would appear to point to strong outcomes for both rights-holders.

CAA Eleven, Uefa's sales agent for its national team competitions, set a bid deadline of June 4. The rights cover the qualifier matches of European federations from 2018-19 to 2021-22, and the Nations League friendly tournament in the same period.

The Premier League set a bid deadline of June 11 for its rights over three seasons, from 2016-17 to 2018-19.

Local sources say both rights-holders had set early June dates in the hope of finalising a deal before the start of Ramadan, the Muslim month of fasting and prayer, which began on June 17.

Both offered their rights in new cycles in Mena early because, as one insider put it: "The market is hot now, but you don't know how long that will last."

ADM has European Qualifier rights in the current cycle, from 2014-15 to 2017-18. It beat beIN and at least one other bidder. ADM paid about \$85m for the four seasons covered by the deal, more than \$21m per season (*TV Sports Markets* 18:1; 18:14).

BeIN holds Premier League rights in Mena in the current cycle. It acquired them from the MP & Silva agency, which paid the Premier League \$320m (*TV Sports Markets* 17:15). ADM had held the rights in the previous cycle.

The Premier League had been widely expected to start its sales cycle in the US, where incumbent rights-holder NBCUniversal will face strong competition for the rights. First-round bids are due on July 6. NBC pays \$250m (€223m), or \$83.3m per season, in its current deal (*TV Sports Markets* 16:20).

When NBC made its presentation to the league ahead of the last deal, its bid team predicted it would do such a good job it would be back in three years and would have to pay double. One insider said this was smart – it put down a marker for the next cycle and left a favourable impression on club owners. ■

FOOTBALL POLAND

Surprise NC Plus global bid breaks league impasse

Continued from page 1 ►

per season. It is unclear why Vivendi allocated such a large amount to these. These could be sold to other Canal Plus subsidiaries but the league is not very valuable outside Poland.

One local media source said that constructing the offer in this way allowed the broadcaster to save face, having insisted for months it had no budget to increase its bid.

Eleven owner Andrea Radrizzani told *TV Sports Markets* this week that he had never intended to get into a bidding war with NC Plus. When asked by the league to make a bid, he did so. But this was because he believed the negotiation process with NC Plus at that time was exhausted. As soon as he realised this was not the case, he withdrew his offer. Radrizzani will still launch two channels in Poland this summer.

On the basis of deals done so far, MP & Silva is close to making a profit in its first cycle with domestic free-to-air highlights rights still to be sold. The league has not had a free-to-air highlights deal since 2010-11, when state broadcaster TVP paid PLN5m per season (*TV Sports Markets* 14:19). The league has also sold digital rights to Polish internet company Onet and the Polish division of media company Ringier Axel Springer for four seasons, from 2015-16 to 2018-19.

MP & Silva is happy about the outcome for two reasons. First, it has helped the league secure a big increase and there is now no risk the agency may have to cover a shortfall against its guarantee.

Second, the fact Eleven intends to launch despite not winning the Ekstraklasa rights proves it is a genuine project, not a stalking horse dreamed up by agency founder Riccardo Silva and co-founder Radrizzani to put pressure on NC Plus and other broadcasters.

“The outcome shows that throughout this process MP & Silva has behaved with

The management team of Radrizzani's Eleven business

Andrea Radrizzani has put together an experienced management team for his Eleven Sports Network.

In the London head office this includes: former Eurosport and Infostrada executive Danny Menken as group managing director; former Merrill Lynch and WPP executive André Tegner as head of strategy and investment; former general counsel Europe for Petronas Andrea Cerroni as general counsel; former Tennis Channel and Fifa executive Sonja Healy as head of marketing; and Patrick Jenkinson, formerly of Barclays bank, as vice president of corporate finance. Marc Watson, former chief executive of BT Vision, will act as a non-executive director.

In Poland, Ralf Manthey, formerly of

the Sportklub and Fight Klub channels, will be chief operating officer. Michal Roliński, formerly general manager of online bookmaker Bwin in Poland, will act as managing director. In Belgium, former MTV executive Caroline Soly will be chief operating officer.

MP & Silva's former head of media production and programming in Asia-Pacific, Alistair Roseburgh, will act as director of channels in Asia.

In Singapore, former Singtel executive Kai Tong Lim will be marketing and strategy director. Jeff Chue, formerly managing director of Ufa Sports Asia and legal counsel for Fifa, will also work in the Singapore office. In Malaysia, Stuart Ramalingam, formerly of Dentsu Asia, will be managing director.

absolute seriousness and professionalism, and so has Eleven,” Silva told *TV Sports Markets* this week.

Last month, NC Plus wrote to the league saying it had “serious concerns about the legality and validity of the process” and would be “forced to initiate a legal proceeding” against the league and the agency if its concerns were not addressed.

NC Plus recouped part of its outlay by sublicensing the rights to two live matches per week to international sports broadcaster Eurosport.

Eleven launches anyway

Radrizzani's decision to continue with a launch in Poland, without the Ekstraklasa rights, is something of a surprise. Eleven Sports Network will launch two channels, one dedicated to football and one which will show other sports.

One experienced channel syndication executive said that setting up two channels so close to the beginning of the new football season “must be considered a very high risk”.

Eleven has agreed deals in principle with MP & Silva for the rights to Italy's Serie A and France's Ligue 1 for the next three seasons, 2015-16 to 2017-18.

It has also agreed deals in principle with the agency for NFL American football and

the European Handball Federation's Champions League competition, also for three seasons. Negotiations with the agency for rights to Formula One motor racing are ongoing. Long-form agreements have not yet been signed off on all deals, but these are expected to be a formality.

Local media reports claimed Eleven had not applied for a broadcast licence for the two channels, but Radrizzani said this was false and he expected his licence applications to be approved within the next three to four weeks.

Stakes

Radrizzani is expected to sell off his 40-per-cent stake in MP & Silva later this year or early next year. A number of private investors are said to be interested.

Radrizzani declined to comment on industry speculation that Boston-based private equity firm ABRY Partners is in pole position in negotiations.

The sale of the stake will raise money for Radrizzani to run his channels, but he is also trying to bring in external investors. First, however, he wants to secure distribution deals for the channels in the four territories where it is launching – Belgium, Malaysia, Poland and Singapore – and complete the management group of the company (see panel). ■

FOOTBALL SPAIN

Mediapro in rush to sell Spanish Liga international rights

Continued from page 1 ►

agency would retain the first €50m earned above the guarantee, with further income split 75:25 in the league's favour.

Mediapro last week issued tenders for international rights globally. These are, and will continue to be, sold on a market-by-market basis.

Domestic rights will be tendered in July. In the current cycle, from 2012-13 to 2014-15, clubs sell their rights individually. The combined value of their domestic rights is €532.1m per season over the three-season period.

Plus ça change...

The deal means Mediapro is exiting its historic role as the major buyer, and one of the main broadcasters, of Spanish football rights. Its pay-television channel Gol T will be withdrawn from Spanish digital-terrestrial television on July 1.

But as the LFP's international marketing partner, the agency will remain heavily involved in Spanish football.

Mediapro was always the favourite to win the contract. It has years of experience selling the league's rights internationally, and a close relationship with LFP president Javier Tebas.

But at last Friday's LFP assembly there was criticism from some clubs – most notably Real Madrid – over the decision to award the contract to Mediapro without a competitive bidding process.

The guarantee put forward by the agency appears hugely ambitious. Mediapro earned an average of about €177.5m per season from international right sales in the 2012-13 to 2014-15 cycle. But there are a handful of reasons why it can be confident about the total.

Since the last cycle of international rights was sold, the league has increased the number of kick-off times from between four and six, to between nine and 10 per week. Rather than playing matches at 8pm for domestic audiences, top clubs

are now scheduled for earlier kick-off slots. This means matches are played at prime time in Asia and before domestic league matches kick off in Latin America.

Spanish clubs have seen considerable recent success in European competitions, increasing interest in the rights. The Primera División is the leading European league by the Uefa coefficient.

Recent years have also seen strong competition between emerging, wealthy international broadcasters such as Fox International Channels, the beIN Media Group and Discovery Communications.

No time to lose

Mediapro has little time to waste in agreeing deals ahead of the coming season. Last Friday, June 19, it invited initial bids by email from all territories.

Rights are being offered for a three-season cycle, from 2015-16 to 2017-18. The deadline for responses, initially June 26, has been extended until June 29. This is thought to be because at least one important potential rights-buyer said it would need board approval before making an aggressive offer.

Clear winners will be awarded rights in their respective territory immediately. Where there are no satisfactory bids, or where bids are close, the agency will initiate a tender or negotiate directly.

Streaming rights for betting have been carved out of all international deals. These are currently held by the Sportsman Media Group agency in a three-season deal, from 2012-13 to 2014-15.

Some sources said that given the size of Mediapro's guarantee and the short period in which it must agree deals, it is likely the agency has some pre-agreements in place. This was denied by the agency when contacted by *TV Sports Markets*.

The league remains the signatory to all deals. Final deals will be signed off by the audiovisual rights committee mandated by the Royal Decree. This consists of representatives from Primera División clubs Atletico Madrid, Barcelona, Levante and Real Madrid, as well as Segunda club Numancia and league president Tebas.

Telefónica trouble

The LFP's desire to bring forward collective selling is driven by a belief it

can earn more for clubs in 2015-16 than they would have earned from their individual one-season deals with either Mediapro or telco Telefónica.

TV Sports Markets estimates the Primera División clubs stood to earn a combined €760m from these agreements.

Tebas's stated target for the original first season of collective selling, 2016-17, was a combined domestic and international income of €1bn. A guaranteed €400m from international rights would help the league a long way toward its goal.

Remarkably, the decision to bring collective selling forward was made without any deal in place with Telefónica, which holds media rights to Barcelona, Celta Vigo, Espanyol and Real Sociedad matches in the 2015-16 season.

The LFP is currently in talks with the telco to acquire the four clubs' rights and add them to the central pot. Long-time observers of Spanish football will be unsurprised to see unanswered questions over who controls which rights so close to the new season.

It is likely a deal will be agreed with Telefónica, as four clubs would be an insufficient base for the telco's television operations. It is equally likely, though, that negotiations with the league will go down to the wire.

Mediapro is selling international rights to the complete package of Spanish league matches. If no deal can be agreed with Telefónica for 2015-16, broadcasters will pay a discounted fee in that season.

But if no deal is done, it would complicate the domestic sales process. Telefónica is expected to bid aggressively as it needs domestic football rights to drive subscriptions to its Movistar and Canal Plus pay-television platforms.

The league is awaiting approval from the competition authority, the Comisión Nacional de los Mercados y La Competencia, before launching the domestic tender.

Canal Plus pays €500m per season for rights in the current cycle. Mediapro's Gol T channel is the other main domestic live broadcaster, showing non-exclusive live rights. Commercial broadcaster Mediaset pays €10m per season for rights to one live Liga match per week, plus highlights. ■

FOOTBALL AFRICA

Sportfive pays massive increase to renew Caf rights

By Callum McCarthy

Sportfive is taking a colossal risk in signing a 12-year, \$1bn (€888m) renewal with the Confédération Africaine de Football, according to local experts.

The deal with the Lagardère-owned agency covers media and marketing rights to six Africa Cup of Nations (Afcon) tournaments in 2017, 2019, 2021, 2023, 2025 and 2027. The Afcon is by far the most valuable Caf property in the package.

It also includes exclusive rights to Afcon qualifier matches, the Caf Champions League, and other second-tier properties, from 2017 to 2028.

It is the most expensive rights deals ever struck in Africa. Sportfive will pay Caf, the governing body of African football, an average of \$83m per year. This is a 343-per cent increase on the current deal, worth a minimum of \$150m over the eight years from 2009 to 2016, or \$18.75m per year.

Sportfive has so far generated around \$300m in overall sales on its current deal, making \$80m in profit. Despite this, and the fact there is certainly room for growth, Sportfive is expected to lose money on the new contract.

The Infront Sports & Media agency, owned by Chinese conglomerate Dalian Wanda, was aggressive in its attempts to prise the rights from Sportfive. The strong competition between the two agencies is the main reason Caf has secured such a massive rights-fee increase.

As with previous Caf deals, no formal tender was issued for the rights and all negotiations took place in private. Sportfive pushed for a longer contract in the hope the rights will become more valuable over time.

Just one month ago, Sportfive and Infront's bids stood at \$50m and \$62.5m per year respectively (*TV Sports Markets* 19:9). Sportfive, however, held a matching-rights clause, and was willing to pay a premium over a longer period.

Arnaud Lagardère, managing partner of the Lagardère Group, personally signed off the deal on June 12.

Several sources described the deal as “crazy”; another said the deal was “desperate”. Caf and Sportfive were yet to respond to questions as *TV Sports Markets* went to press. Infront declined to comment when contacted.

Slim chance for profit

Infront's aggression, along with early bids from the beIN Media Group and Abu Dhabi Media, are the main factors behind the increase.

One insider said: “Africa is strategically important and Infront were determined to get in there. But I am not sure the Infront people handling it have the same understanding [as Sportfive] of how to do business in Africa. They were not able to pull it off, despite having huge resources to throw at it.”

Infront was prepared to pay a huge strategic premium for the Caf package. Its owner, Wanda, is thought to have seen any deal as a gateway to wider opportunities in Africa. Conversely, Lagardère is thought to see the deal as purely a commercial agreement.

Sportfive is banking on rights fees increasing in Africa, and internationally. But even if substantial growth occurs between now and 2028, industry feeling is that the package will not yield the revenues Sportfive needs to break even.

The agency will look to take advantage of increasing competition for sports rights, especially in developing markets. But premium sports channels are wary of rights inflation. One major broadcaster said that any future acquisition of Afcon rights “must make commercial sense” and will not be for “any price”.

It remains unclear how much of the \$1bn will be invested in improving production values and footballing infrastructure in Africa, but spending in these areas is thought to be essential to increasing the value of Caf properties, especially in non-African markets.

One local expert said: “The Africa Cup of Nations needs to market itself a lot better. Its production values are inferior, the infrastructure is poor, and both require investment. It undermines the

global reputation of Afcon and restricts its value in markets like Europe and the US.”

International potential

Sportfive's best chance at gaining some ground is outside sub-Saharan Africa, although experts remain cautious about the gains the agency can make.

The Afcon is a biennial tournament that, as of 2013, is held in odd years to avoid clashes with other major international tournaments. But as it takes place during January and February – midway through the major European and Asian domestic competitions – there is a ceiling on its market potential outside Africa.

Demand in the Middle East and North Africa is naturally high – Sportfive has a deal with pay-television broadcaster beIN Sports worth \$24m from 2009 to 2016. Competition between beIN and ADM could provide a considerable increase in the region in any new deal.

Sportfive's deal in France with pay-television broadcaster Canal Plus for the 2013 and 2015 Afcon tournaments is worth €5.4m. However, Afcon games on Saturdays and Sundays do not take precedence over Ligue 1, France's top domestic football league. While Ligue 1 games appear on flagship channel Canal Plus, Afcon games are broadcast on premium channel Canal Plus Sport, which has a significantly lower viewership.

Telco Orange has held Afcon title sponsorship and mobile rights since 2009. It paid \$8m for its sponsorship of the tournament, from 2009 to 2016; and \$5m for mobile rights in France and 55 African countries, from 2009 to 2012.

Further exploiting mobile rights in Africa will help Sportfive boost its returns. By 2020, 400m people in sub-Saharan Africa alone are expected to access the internet via a mobile device, up from 150m at the end of 2013.

Free-to-air problems

In the 2009-16 cycle, Sportfive sublicensed free-to-air media rights in sub-Saharan Africa, excluding South Africa, to the LC2 Médias-Afnex agency. The two agencies encountered numerous problems selling the Afcon, missing out on millions of dollars in revenue.

Home-nation Afcon games are listed properties in many sub-Saharan countries meaning that, in theory, a deal must be agreed with free-to-air broadcasters in those territories.

But Sportfive and LC2's decision to demand excessive rights fees has often backfired, leading to protracted negotiations and disputes with most sub-Saharan free-to-air broadcasters (*TV Sports Markets* 17:2).

Free-to-air broadcasters in Kenya and Nigeria – two of the most valuable

markets in the region – have previously elected not to show the Afcon due to Sportfive and LC2's demands.

State broadcasters in Botswana, Ghana, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe all required government or private investment to meet Sportfive's valuations in the current cycle.

South African state broadcaster the SABC has also struggled to meet Sportfive's demands. The SABC bought free-to-air and pay-television rights in South Africa for around \$55m, from 2009 to 2016, in a deal

that was cancelled by the broadcaster's board of directors for being too expensive. The SABC renegotiated a new deal with Sportfive in 2010, worth around \$50m. The SABC has sublicensed pay-television rights to SuperSport since 2010.

One local expert said Sportfive should lower its asking prices in the region, as sponsorship revenues have suffered from a lack of free-to-air coverage. It is understood that at least one African company will not renew its sponsorship beyond the 2015 Afcon for this reason. ■

AGENCIES

Medge problems raise questions about NHL rights

By Robin Jellis

Medge Consulting Sports has ceased to exist as a media rights agency, and its rights to the National Hockey League have reverted to the league after it missed payments, *TV Sports Markets* understands.

Ice hockey's NHL was Medge's only sports rights property. The agency failed to build on its lucrative deal for Premier League rights in the Nordics in 2009.

In November last year, the NHL took back the rights it had sold jointly to the Advisers Media International agency and Medge in July 2011.

The league has offered the rights to other agencies, but has not yet agreed a deal. Any broadcast deals agreed by AMI/Medge will remain in place until the end of the 2015-16 season, with rights fees paid directly to the league.

The AMI/Medge deal covered Africa, Europe and the Middle East over five seasons, from 2011-12 to 2015-16, and was worth \$20m (€18m) per season. AMI and Medge are thought to have shared the fee evenly (*TV Sports Markets* 15:13).

The two agencies set internal sales targets of \$10m per season for the Nordics and \$10m per season for the remaining territories. Medge was responsible for selling in the Nordics. AMI sold the rights elsewhere.

In October 2011, Medge agreed a \$9m-per-season deal with commercial and

pay-television broadcaster Modern Times Group in the Nordics. Medge earned additional fees for news access rights, but finished €700,000 to €800,000 short of its target (*TV Sports Markets* 15:19).

AMI fared even worse, earning between \$5m and \$6m per season. One informed insider said this week that AMI/Medge had only earned between \$14m and \$15m per season – a loss of \$5m to \$6m per season. The shortfall was shared equally by the two agencies.

Court case

The NHL has taken Medge to court, claiming the agency missed rights fee payments. Medge is said to have stopped paying fees during the 2013-14 season, for which it still owes \$2.5m. The league alleges the agency also owes \$10m for 2014-15 and another \$10m for 2015-16.

Each season Medge was due to pay 75 per cent of its annual \$10m fee by September 1, with the remaining 25 per cent due by January 1.

The agency made its first payment in 2013-14, but missed the second. Medge then failed to make its first payment for the 2014-15 season, which led to the termination of the contract by the NHL.

Medge has denied breach of contract, claiming the NHL had not delivered rights to a World Cup and other unspecified properties. The league says it has upheld all obligations under its deal.

The NHL declined to comment about the AMI/Medge deal when contacted by *TV Sports Markets* this week.

AMI struggled to sell rights in Central and Eastern Europe due to the impact of the economic downturn, which led to smaller sports budgets for many broadcasters.

One industry insider said the NHL would have been reluctant to end its deal with AMI/Medge, as no rights-holder would want to admit its rights were over-valued, or that it owns a property which has been a struggle to sell on to broadcasters.

The difficulty selling NHL rights in Europe is that most matches take place during the night. One ice hockey expert said AMI/Medge had "misread the market value" of the league.

The NHL will sell its rights directly in the Nordics in the next cycle, from the 2016-17 season. It has not yet begun talks with MTG about a renewal.

The league is likely to sell rights in all other territories to an agency.

Medge history

Medge was formed by Peter Liljestrand and Tim Smart in 2007. The agency came to the fore in December 2009 when it bought Premier League rights in the Nordics, to great surprise in the industry.

It paid about €120m for the rights over three seasons, from 2010-11 to 2012-13 – a 100-per-cent increase in value on the previous cycle. Medge is thought to have made profits of over €10m selling on the rights (*TV Sports Markets* 13:23; 16:4).

About 18 months ago, Liljestrand and Smart stopped working together. Smart kept Medge Consulting Sports, and the NHL contract. Liljestrand turned his part of the agency into Medge AB, which will soon be renamed Camp Jarl.

Smart tried unsuccessfully to renegotiate the NHL deal. He has since shifted his focus to his equestrian Horse 1 channel in Sweden. Liljestrand, meanwhile, is investing in online gaming and e-sports start-up companies. ■

OLYMPIC GAMES

Canal Plus bags French rights to 2016 and 2020 Games

By Robin Jellis

Canal Plus last week sublicensed rights to the summer Olympic Games of 2016 and 2020 from France Télévisions in a deal worth about €30m (\$34m).

Pay-television broadcaster Canal Plus will cover production costs on top of its rights fee. The deal had to be approved by the International Olympic Committee.

The total fee is split evenly between the two Games. Neither is more valuable than the other as both are in non-European time zones. The 2016 Games will be in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and the 2020 Games will be in Tokyo, Japan.

Public-service broadcaster France Télévisions approached French pay-television broadcasters about a sublicensing deal in September last year. It spoke with beIN Sports, Canal Plus, Eurosport and Ma Chaîne Sport, but Canal Plus is not thought to have faced much competition for the rights.

Initial discussions were about 2016 only, but Canal Plus made an offer for both 2016 and 2020. France Télévisions was not bound to sublicense any rights, and told broadcasters it would only agree a deal if it received a strong rights fee.

The rationale for France Télévisions was simple: it wanted to recoup some of its initial outlay. In July 2011 it acquired rights to four Olympic Games (2014, 2016, 2018 and 2020) from the IOC for €171m (*TV Sports Markets* 15:13).

Canal Plus wanted to prevent beIN from adding new subscribers, which it did successfully via a sublicensing deal for the 2014 Fifa World Cup.

The state broadcaster would not have agreed a deal which restricted its own coverage. France Télévisions has retained all rights and will show complete coverage of the opening and closing ceremonies and all competitions on free-to-air television.

Canal Plus will have non-exclusive pay-television rights to all Olympic events. The broadcaster will be able to

show both editions of the Games in their entirety. It will show coverage on its Canal Plus and Canal Plus Sport channels.

France Télévisions was willing to sublicense rights as it does not expect the pay-television coverage to cut drastically into its audience. Canal Plus is not expected to add many subscribers on the back of the acquisition, as it is more of a retention tool for existing subscribers.

France Télévisions is also close to a sublicensing deal with equestrian channel Equidia for coverage of equestrian events at the 2016 Games. The deal is thought to be worth a low six-figure euro sum, and there is an option for 2020. Equidia had a similar deal for 2012.

The IOC's main consideration when approving any sublicensing deals is to maintain a high level of exposure – the standard being 200 and 100 hours of free-to-air coverage for the summer and winter Games respectively.

Defensive move

Local experts see the deal as a defensive move from Canal Plus. Its main rival, beIN, significantly increased its subscriber base with the 2014 Fifa World Cup.

beIN is reported to have added about 860,000 subscribers thanks to its World Cup coverage. beIN showed all 64 matches live, of which 36 were exclusive, following a €50m sublicensing deal with TF1. The commercial broadcaster showed the other 28 games non-exclusively.

Canal Plus wanted to prevent beIN from achieving similar results with the Olympic Games. This was also why Canal Plus sublicensed rights to the Rugby World Cup from TF1 in January for about €15m (*TV Sports Markets* 19:2).

The summer Games takes place when there is a hiatus in Canal Plus's coverage of both the top-tier domestic football and rugby leagues: Ligue 1 and the Top 14.

The deal does not include the winter Games in 2018. Canal Plus did not acquire these rights for three main reasons.

First, there is less interest in the winter Olympics in France. Second, Canal Plus has no history of broadcasting winter sport. Third, it would clash with the broadcaster's football and rugby coverage.

For the 2014 winter Games, France Télévisions agreed a sublicensing deal

with Eurosport for the basic-tier sports broadcaster to show a daily highlights magazine. Eurosport is thought likely to agree a new deal with France Télévisions for 2018 when the rights are offered to the market in the coming months. Eurosport is carried exclusively on Canal Plus's satellite platform, CanalSat.

For the 2012 summer Games, then rights-holders France Télévisions and commercial broadcaster TF1 agreed a sublicensing deal with beIN.

beIN was a relative newcomer in France at the time and was keen for content. It paid close to €6m for a daily magazine, as well as non-exclusive live rights to basketball, handball and tennis events.

Historic values

The €171m France Télévisions is paying in its current four-Games deal works out at €85.5m per two-Games cycle.

For the 2010 and 2012 Games, the rights in France were bought by the European Broadcasting Union for about €80m. France Télévisions paid about 80 per cent of that, with TF1 paying the other 20 per cent.

Before this, Canal Plus showed the summer Games in 2000, 2004 and 2008 as part of its earlier membership of the EBU, despite its expulsion in 1998 (*TV Sports Markets* 12:20).

The summer Games is the more valuable of the two. Fees are usually split two-thirds for a summer Games and one-third for a winter Games.

Euro 2016 motive

In recouping some of its fee for the Olympics, France Télévisions has strengthened its ability to acquire a package of 11 free-to-air matches at football's Euro 2016 – which will be hosted in France.

Uefa, European football's governing body, is selling the package together with beIN to get additional free-to-air exposure. beIN is paying €60m for live rights to all 51 matches. TF1 and fellow commercial broadcaster M6 have non-exclusive live rights to 11 matches each. Each is paying €25m.

The 11 additional matches are on the market, and sources expect a deal to be agreed by September or October. ■

FOOTBALL

Uefa to change revenue sharing model for big six

By Frank Dunne

Europe's top six national football associations – England, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Spain – have agreed a new system with Uefa for sharing revenues from centrally-sold national team matches, from the 2018-19 season.

Under the new system, 75 per cent of the total income from the sale of media rights in each association's domestic market will go to the home association, with 25 per cent divided among the opposing associations. Each of the big six will also be paid a minimum guarantee for rights sold outside Europe. This will cover the seasons from 2018-19 to 2021-22.

Under the existing system, which covers the four-season cycle from 2014-15 to 2017-18, each federation is paid a minimum guarantee over the period by Uefa, European football's governing body.

Each of the other 48 national associations will continue to receive a minimum guarantee for its rights. The level of the guarantee is said to be more realistic in terms of market value than what Uefa paid from 2014-18. Having just completed the sales cycle for this period, Uefa has a much clearer idea of the value of the European Qualifiers property.

The new model for the big six – which together account for the bulk of the commercial value of the competition – is designed to ensure European football's governing body does not repeat the losses it incurred in the current cycle, when it centralised the rights to Fifa World Cup and Uefa European Championship qualifier matches. These are estimated at over €200m (\$225m).

Income from the sale of rights to the new friendly competition, the Nations League, to be introduced in the 2018-22 cycle, will be divided according to the same criteria as income from the qualifiers.

Arguably, the adapted top six model is similar to the system that existed before the rights were centralised. Federations

previously sold their own first-party rights, sold third-party rights via an agency, and sold second-party rights either through reciprocal agreements with opposing federations or through agencies.

The 75:25 split in the new system has been chosen because under the previous system a federation would earn the domestic rights income from 30 out of 40 matches in a four-season cycle – 10 home qualifier matches and 20 friendlies.

The model was not extended to smaller federations because in many cases, where there are small television markets, they would have ended up with far less than Uefa is guaranteeing.

Uefa will still be able to leverage all the benefits of selling a single media product and can therefore bring in a higher total than if each federation sold its rights individually.

In most European markets, Uefa's sales agency CAA Eleven has sold the rights in two packages – one covering national team matches, designed for free-to-air television, and one with all other games, designed largely for pay-television.

One potential complication for CAA Eleven in the new system will be the UK, which is a single media market but contains four national associations – England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Uefa is still talking to the associations about how the rights will be sold.

To centralise the qualifier rights in the current cycle Uefa committed between €1.1bn and €1.2bn to its member federations. Sales of qualifier rights are thought to have brought in only €900m. However, Uefa was able to meet its commitments by bundling unsold rights to the Euro 2016 finals into the qualifiers package in some markets.

All associations have signed up to the new scheme, which does not require approval from Uefa's executive committee. Uefa will continue to sell rights centrally using CAA Eleven. The agency is already in the market for the 2018-22 cycle (see separate story, page 2).

Meanwhile, Uefa agreed deals in Finland and Germany for its third-party European Qualifiers last month. In Finland, telco Elisa will pay about €100,000 per season. In Germany, basic-tier broadcaster RTL Nitro will pay a total of about €2m. ■

AMERICAN FOOTBALL

NFL testing the waters in online deal with Yahoo

By Richard Welbirt

The NFL's deal with Yahoo for the 2015 International Series game earlier this month was driven by a desire to test the online waters.

Internet company Yahoo paid about \$20m (€18m) for global streaming rights to the Buffalo Bills v Jacksonville Jaguars game on October 25. Yahoo will not charge viewers to watch via the Yahoo and Yahoo Sports sites, on-demand streaming service Yahoo Screen, or microblogging platform Tumblr.

Vishal Shah, NFL vice-president of digital media business development, said the deal was the league's "first foray" into international OTT delivery.

The NFL sees three main benefits in the one-off deal. First, a successful broadcast will prove the necessary infrastructure is in place to stream games in high definition. Second, since inviting expressions of interest in March it has spoken with a number of major online players to discuss distribution models and methods, laying the groundwork for potential future partnerships. Third, the broadcast will reveal the size of the streaming audience, and its viewing habits.

The game will air in the afternoon in Europe and in prime time in Asia, but early in the morning on the US east coast. Consumption figures outside the US will be the key metric of interest, Shah said.

Yahoo was among a number of firms, including Google and Twitter, to bid. Yahoo will sell advertising inventory around the stream and keep all revenue. It is unlikely to make money on the deal, but will benefit from two key opportunities.

First, a huge audience on which to test advertising methodologies. Second, a relationship with the holder of the most valuable sports property in the world.

If the deal with Yahoo is a success, the next step for the league would be to make a package of regular-season matches available to online players. ■

HORSE RACING

Racing Victoria gambles on the power of free-to-air

By Richard Welbirg

The thoroughbred racing clubs of Victoria eschewed an immediately lucrative offer for their rights from Sky Racing in favour of launching a new channel with commercial broadcaster Seven.

The deal was announced on June 21 after months of negotiation and a week in which Victorian racing was not shown in Australian pubs and clubs. Under the agreement, Australia's premier thoroughbred racing state will have a dedicated digital channel, which will launch on August 29.

But the Victorian clubs – Moonee Valley Racing Club, the Victoria Racing Club, Melbourne Racing Club and Country Racing Victoria – and Racing Victoria, the state's premier racing authority, will have to shoulder the channel's considerable costs.

There is also the opportunity cost of turning down a guaranteed yearly income from pay-television broadcaster Sky, historically Australia's predominant racing broadcaster. By going into business with Seven, Racing Victoria is banking on increased wagering – the main source of income for the racing industry – as a result of greater free-to-air coverage.

Victoria's choice

Racing Victoria, acting on behalf of the four Victorian clubs, agreed a five-year deal, from 2015 to 2019, with Seven for the launch of a new channel on the broadcaster's digital spectrum.

Seven will not pay a fee for the rights. Racing Victoria will pay A\$12m (€8.3m/\$9.3m) to establish the channel. Thereafter, it will also cover running costs – estimated at A\$8m to A\$10m per year – as well as production costs of all state racing, worth about A\$10m per year. Advertising revenue will be split between Seven and Racing Victoria.

To ensure live coverage of Victorian racing before the channel launches in full,

it will broadcast the feed from Racing Live, Racing Victoria's streaming service.

The channel will be available in metropolitan areas next week. It will take longer for the channel to be available in rural areas as Seven must agree carriage with regional affiliates.

Eventually, domestic Victorian racing will be exploited in three ways: free-to-air rights on the new channel; streaming rights with online bookmakers; and non-exclusive rights with Sky.

Sky was prepared to pay about A\$300m for exclusive rights over 10 years from 2015 to 2024, or A\$30m per year. Half would have been for domestic broadcast rights, and the other half for digital and international rights.

The rights fee would have been immediately helpful to Victorian clubs' ability to host races and increase prize money. But Racing Victoria believes the deal with Seven could increase wagering enough to mitigate, and eventually exceed, the income forgone from Sky.

Despite turning down Sky's offer for exclusive rights, Racing Victoria will continue to seek a non-exclusive deal with the pay-television broadcaster.

Sky is currently the sole provider of racing coverage to betting shops, as well as outlets in pubs and clubs. It will be some time before all outlets – particularly rural ones – tune in to the new channel. And it is in the interests of both the industry and Seven that Victorian racing is not blacked out in betting shops.

One source said that without exclusivity, any deal with Sky would be unlikely to involve a fee. But Racing Victoria has offered to include international rights, which retain significant value.

Wager on wagering

Wagering is the biggest source of income for Australian horse racing. Racing Victoria received just over \$292m from wagering distributions in the financial year ending June 30, 2014.

Over 90 per cent of wagering income comes from two sources. First, the state TAB. These are betting shops and outlets in pubs and clubs that are licensed by the states to a single monopoly operator.

Second, from online and telephone betting through 'corporate bookmakers'

such as William Hill and Bet365.

The Victorian state TAB licence is held by gambling conglomerate Tabcorp in a 12-year deal, from August 2012 to August 2024. It can be extended by two years at the discretion of the state government.

Tabcorp also owns Sky, whose channels transmit racing coverage directly to TAB agencies and TAB outlets in pubs and clubs, as well as to pay-television.

In Victoria, the licence forms the basis of a joint venture between Tabcorp and the Victorian racing industry, which has two key conditions.

First, that Tabcorp pays some of its income back into Victorian racing.

Second, that Victorian racing provides coverage to the state's 92 TAB agencies.

These 92 agencies are still receiving coverage of Victorian racing via Sky. Races are currently blacked out on Sky's pay-television channels and in pubs and clubs.

Behind Racing Victoria's decision to launch a new channel with Seven is the belief that it will grow wagering.

But as coverage in TAB outlets will be unchanged under the new deal, any increase in viewership will likely come from households. This means any increase in wagering is likely to come primarily through corporate bookmakers.

This is a challenge for Racing Victoria. About eight cents in every dollar wagered on racing through the Victoria TAB comes back to the industry. Corporate bookmakers pay only two cents in every dollar wagered in Victoria on Victorian races.

Whether corporate bookmakers take bets away from the TAB is a matter of some dispute. As such, there is some doubt Racing Victoria's deal with Seven can increase wagering enough to be viable beyond its initial term.

One source told *TV Sports Markets* in-state wagering would have to grow by between 20 and 30 per cent before Racing Victoria would see a return. Outside of major events, horse racing is a minority sport in Australia. The source was dubious that simply putting races on free-to-air television would entice many viewers outside the hardcore audience who would likely have a Sky subscription. ■

[www. For more information on Australian horse racing, visit our website.](#)

FASTRACK 2

NEWS IN BRIEF

StarTimes nets Fifa rights and builds relationship

StarTimes secured exclusive rights in sub-Saharan Africa to four Fifa tournaments late last month in an attempt to build new relationships and expand its football coverage.

The deal includes the 2015 edition of the women's World Cup, as well as the 2015 and 2017 editions of the U-20 World Cup, the U-17 World Cup and the Beach Football World Cup. It also includes the draw for the 2018 men's World Cup.

Pan-African pay-television broadcaster StarTimes will pay just over \$1.5m (€1.3m) in total. The U-20 World Cup is the most valuable property, followed by the women's World Cup.

All competitions are operated by Fifa, football's global governing body. Fifa did not issue a tender for the rights.

Pay-television rival SuperSport also bid, but is understood to have offered about five times less than StarTimes. SuperSport did not bid strongly due to the less-than-favourable time zones for the 2015 U-20 and women's World Cups, hosted in New Zealand and Canada respectively.

The tournaments are usually sold as part of a wider package including the men's World Cup, but Fifa is keen for its second-tier tournaments to receive maximum exposure. The ongoing 2015 women's World Cup is being broadcast in almost 150 countries.

This is the first time StarTimes has acquired a Fifa property. The broadcaster was keen to establish a relationship with Fifa ahead of future tenders for the men's World Cup.

StarTimes also wants to acquire more football content as it expands its range of sports channels. Earlier this month, StarTimes finalised a five-season deal for rights to the Bundesliga, Germany's top football league, for about €7m per season (*TV Sports Markets* 18:18).

StarTimes is also seriously considering a strong bid for English

Premier League rights later this year. A tender is expected in October.

The Premier League opted not to issue a tender when it sold rights in the current cycle due to problems with African broadcasters.

Two of the league's previous rights-holders in sub-Saharan Africa – pan-African pay-television provider Gateway Television and Nigerian pay-television operator HiTV – folded during their contracts. On both occasions the league was bailed out by SuperSport.

SuperSport remains the strong favourite to renew. It pays \$113m per season for exclusive pay-television rights in all sub-Saharan territories in the three seasons from 2013-14 to 2015-16 (*TV Sports Markets* 16:18). ■

Discovery snaps up Setanta

Discovery Communications last week acquired Setanta Sports Asia in an attempt to grow its sport business in the region.

Discovery Networks Asia-Pacific, a division of US media and entertainment company Discovery, is understood to have paid slightly less than \$10m (€9m) for the pay-television broadcaster and its portfolio of sports rights.

The acquisition gives Discovery a second pay-television sport channel in the region, alongside Eurosport Asia. Having two channels will allow Discovery more flexibility in scheduling its content.

Setanta is a rugby-focused channel. Local experts say it is well-run and profitable, and a channel which Discovery will find simple to integrate into its existing operations. It is broadcast in all major markets in Southeast Asia, excluding Japan.

It has an established audience of rugby fans, particularly expatriates from Australia and New Zealand.

Peter Hutton, Eurosport chief executive, told *TV Sports Markets* this week that buying Setanta was "another step" in Discovery's move into sport,

rather than an opportunistic acquisition or one based on a particular property owned by Setanta.

Since taking a controlling stake in Eurosport in June last year, Discovery has shown aggressive intent in Asia. It acquired premium rights in the region for the first time with deals for the Uefa Champions League and Europa League in Singapore in recent months (*TV Sports Markets* 19:8; 19:11).

In the short term, Setanta will remain a rugby-focused channel. In the long term, it is likely to be rebranded as a Eurosport channel, but Discovery has no immediate plans to push through the change. ■

[www](#) For a full list of Setanta properties that Discovery has acquired as part of the deal, visit our website.

Battle by proxy in Italy

The bidding for the international rights to Italian football's Coppa Italia and Supercoppa is seen by many as a battle by proxy between the two major Middle Eastern pay-television operators: Abu Dhabi Media and beIN Sports.

The winning bid of €26m (\$29m) per season by Marco Bianchi's B4 Capital agency is widely thought to have been supported by a pre-deal with ADM. ADM is likely to be awarded the rights in the Middle East and North Africa.

B4 faced strong competition from beIN in the second, and final, round of bidding. In the first round B4 made the highest offer – €17.3m per season – with beIN second on €16m per season.

Well-placed sources say Bianchi was furious when the league went to another round of bidding (*TV Sports Markets* 19:9). Bianchi was unavailable for comment this week.

The new deal covers the three seasons from 2015-16 to 2017-18. In the current three-season deal, from 2012-13 to 2014-15, B4 pays about €4m per season. The rights were sold by Lega Serie A, which operates the Italian top tier, which is advised by the Infront Sports & Media agency. ■

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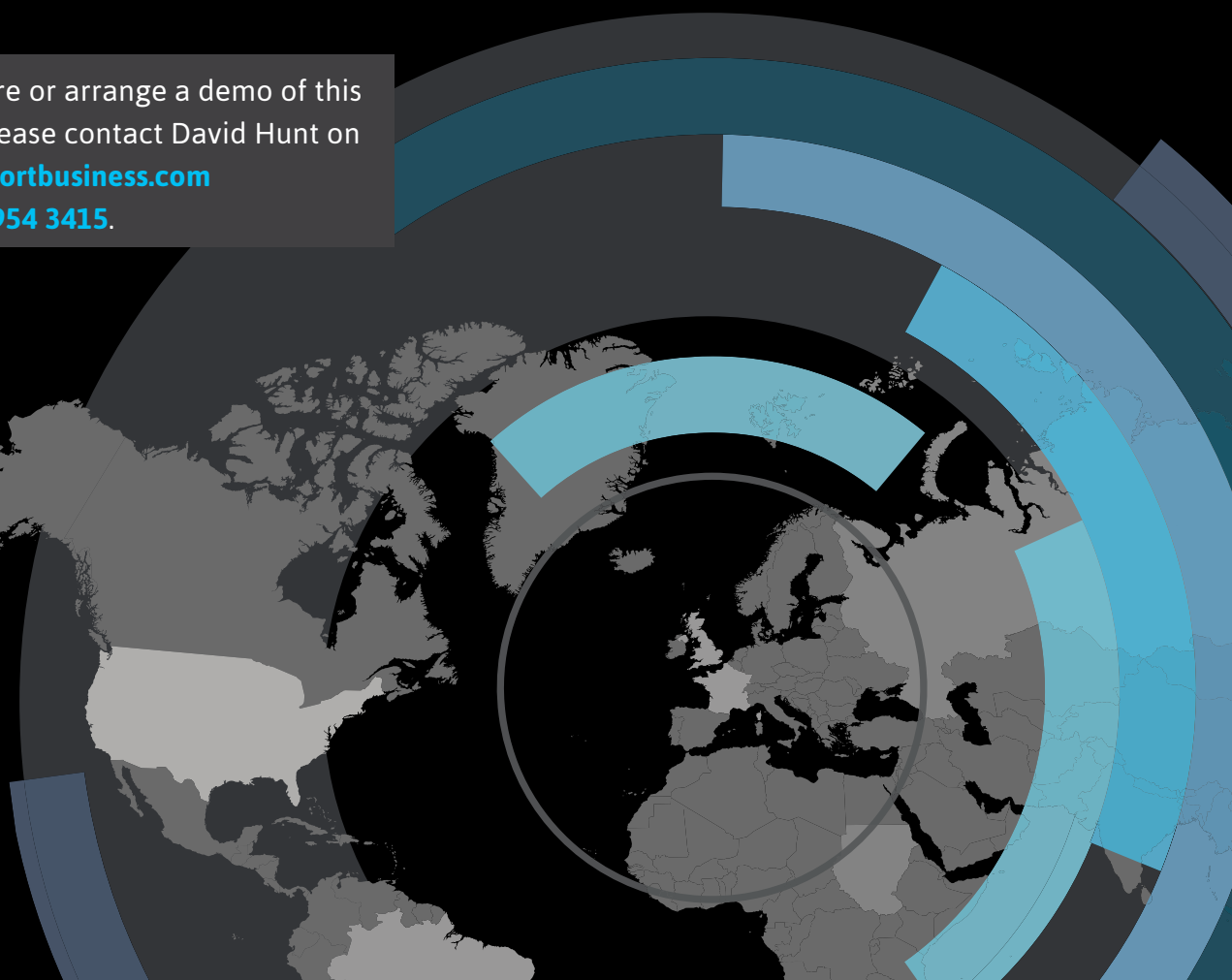
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SPORTS CLIPS: News from TVSM Daily from June 11 to June 24**MEDIA RIGHTS 1****Football: Euro 2016, LaLiga, Ekstraklasa, Coppa Italia, Caf and more**

- **Football:** The European Broadcasting Union consortium of free-to-air broadcasters agreed a deal with European governing body Uefa for exclusive multi-platform rights in 26 countries to the Euro 2016 national team tournament. The deal was first reported by *TV Sports Markets* in April.
- **Football:** The Mediapro agency struck a deal to serve as the international rights distribution partner of LaLiga, the new brand name of the Spanish Football League, for a minimum of five seasons, from 2015-16 to 2019-20. A sixth season is contingent upon success. Mediapro tendered the rights worldwide for the three seasons from 2015-16 to 2017-18, with interested parties able to bid until June 29 (page 1).
- **Football:** The B4 Capital agency agreed a sublicensing deal with Italian state broadcaster Rai to distribute rights for Italian senior and U-21 national team home friendly matches in the Americas, the Middle East and North Africa for three seasons, from 2015-16 to 2017-18.
- **Football:** B4 Capital retained international rights for the Coppa Italia club tournament and annual Supercoppa in a new three-season deal, from 2015-16 to 2017-18 (page 10).
- **Football:** Polish pay-television operator NC Plus extended its deal with the Ekstraklasa, the sport's top division in the country. It agreed to sublicense some of the rights to international sports broadcaster Eurosport, which will show two matches per round (page 1).
- **Football:** The Belgian Football Association agreed three-season deals, from 2015-16 to 2017-18, with pay-television broadcaster Telenet, commercial broadcaster RTL and public-service broadcaster VRT for the Belgian Cup knockout club competition. RTL and Telenet will each broadcast nine games from the tournament's latter stages. VRT's Sporza channel will broadcast live coverage of one quarter-final, one semi-final and the final.
- **Football:** The South African Football Association extended a deal with pay-television broadcaster Siyaya TV by four years, from 2021-22 to 2024-25.
- **Football:** The Confederation of African Football extended its media and marketing partnership with the Sportfive agency in a new 12-year deal, from 2017 to 2028 (page 5).
- **Football:** BeIN Media Group acquired rights in France to qualifying matches for the 2017 Africa Cup of Nations.
- **Football:** Spanish pay-television operator Canal Plus acquired rights for the 2015 edition of pre-season club competition the International Champions Cup.
- **Football:** Basic-tier sports broadcaster Sport1 acquired rights in Germany for the 2015 International Champions Cup plus other pre-season games featuring German Bundesliga clubs Werder Bremen, Bayern Munich and Borussia Dortmund. Sport1 will offer live coverage of 10 games from the tournament plus Bremen v Hansa Rostock on July 7, Bayern v Inter Milan on July 11 and Dortmund v Juventus on July 25.
- **Football:** German public-service broadcaster ZDF acquired rights for the 2015 Audi Cup pre-season club competition.
- **Football:** Afghan free-to-air broadcaster Ariana Television Network acquired rights for coverage of Afghanistan national team qualifiers for the 2018 Fifa World Cup. ATN secured exclusive rights in the country for all Afghanistan second-round Asian Group qualifiers. ATN will show Afghanistan's games against Cambodia, Japan, Singapore and Syria.

SINCE LAST TIME

- The acquisition of the Ufa Sports agency by the Lagardère Unlimited sports marketing division of media conglomerate Lagardère has been approved by German competition authorities. The deal is expected to be finalised by the start of July. Ufa executives Stefan Felsing, Robert Müller von Vultejus, Nikolaus von Doetinchem and Karsten Mahlmann will remain in place. Current managing director Philip Cordes will serve as a consultant.
- Discovery Networks Asia-Pacific, a division of media and entertainment company Discovery Communications, struck a deal to acquire rugby-centric pay-television broadcaster Setanta Sports Asia (page 10).
- Australian pay-television operator Foxtel agreed a deal to acquire a 15-per-cent stake in commercial broadcaster Ten. Ten will take a 24.99-per-cent stake in Foxtel's advertising business, Multi Channel Network, which will also become a sales representative for the commercial broadcaster. Ten will have an option to become a 10-per-cent shareholder in Foxtel's online streaming venture, Presto, within the next two years.
- The beIN Media Group could finalise a deal to take over Turkish pay-television broadcaster Digiturk in an agreement worth up to \$1.5bn (€1.33bn) "within weeks," according to the Bloomberg news agency.
- Controlling principals of the Full Play agency Hugo and Mariano Jinkis, charged with corruption in relation to the sale of rights surrounding certain football matches and tournaments in the Americas, handed themselves in to Argentinian authorities.

MEDIA INTERNATIONAL

- North America's National Basketball Association will expand its out-of-market live game service, NBA League Pass, to allow fans to acquire single-game and individual team packages from the 2015-16 season. The new offerings will be made available by the NBA Digital division to broadband and mobile subscribers on iOS Apple and Android devices.

SPORTS CLIPS: News from TVSM Daily from June 11 to June 24

MEDIA RIGHTS 2

Canada Basketball, Huck v Glowacki, Super League Darts and more

- **Basketball:** Canadian pay-television broadcaster TSN and French-language sister channel RDS sealed a rights deal with the Canada Basketball national governing body for coverage of the men's and women's national teams in events operated by Fiba, the sport's global governing body. The agreement covers this year's Fiba Americas Women's Championship in Edmonton, Canada; Fiba Americas Championship in Mexico City, Mexico; and Fiba U-19 World Championship in Heraklion, Greece. The 2016 Olympic qualifying tournaments will also be shown.
- **Boxing:** German pay-television broadcaster Sky Deutschland acquired exclusive rights for German fighter Marco Huck's World Boxing Organisation cruiserweight title defence against Polish boxer Krzysztof Glowacki on August 14. The fight in New Jersey, US, will be shown live on the broadcaster's pay-per-view service, Sky Select.
- **Boxing:** US pay-television sports broadcaster ESPN acquired rights for the heavyweight clash between New Zealander Joseph Parker and German Yakup Saglam on June 13 in Palmerston North, New Zealand. It was shown on the ESPN3 online streaming service.
- **Cricket:** Broadcast group Asian Television Network acquired exclusive rights in Canada for the Bangladesh v India cricket series, consisting of one Test and three One-Day Internationals.
- **Cycling:** Norwegian commercial and pay-television broadcaster TV2 struck a sublicensing agreement with pay-television broadcaster Viasat for rights to the 2015 and 2016 International Cycling Union (UCI) Road World Championships in Richmond, US and Doha, Qatar. The UCI is expected to ratify the deal in the coming weeks.
- **Darts:** Pay-television broadcaster Sky New Zealand acquired rights for the 2015 Super League Darts tournament, which will feature the top eight players in the country across four nights in July and August, starting on July 10. Viewers will be able to see delayed coverage of the first three nights plus live coverage of the final on August 1.
- **Gridiron:** FilmOn Networks agreed a global rights deal to provide online coverage of the 2015 edition of North America's Arena Football League. The FilmOn.com website will stream live coverage of every game to viewers outside the US via multiple channels. UK viewers will be able to access the coverage via the FilmOn channel on pay-television operator Sky.
- North America's Major League Baseball launched an authenticated stream for MLB Network, allowing subscribers to access the pay-television service via desktop computer and mobile devices. The stream will be available via the MLBNetwork.com website and via the MLB.com At Bat application.
- The National Hockey League will allow fans to purchase single-team out-of-market packages following a preliminary settlement in a US lawsuit. The NHL will offer 'Game Center Live' single-team packages for at least 20 per cent less than the cost of the full package. The league will also offer a 17.25-per-cent earlybird discount on full-season Game Centre Live prices for the 2015-16 season. The settlement is subject to approval by New York district judge Shira Scheindlin.
- Attorneys representing the bankrupt Comcast SportsNet Houston pay-television channel filed a lawsuit against media company Comcast claiming significant sums – reported to be in excess of \$500m (€444m) – on behalf of the venture's investors. The suit, filed by MLB's Houston Astros and the NBA's Houston Rockets, alleges conspiracy, breach of contract and fraudulent misrepresentation, amongst other violations. It is expected to run for more than a year.
- Euroleague Basketball and the Chinese media and entertainment group HBN formed a new company to manage the rights of the pan-European club competition in China. The agreement will run for five seasons, from 2015-16 to 2019-20, but could be extended by a further five seasons. The deal was agreed in partnership with 11 Group, which has managed the Euroleague's commercial operations in China for the past five seasons.
- UK pay-television broadcaster Sky launched a monthly sports pass for users of its online streaming service Now TV, costing £31.99 (€44.20/\$49.80).
- The late afternoon Saturday kick-off slot in Spanish football's top-tier Liga will be pushed back "to accommodate the UK audience" next season, according to Spanish league president Javier Tebas. The 6pm kick-off in Spain will be switched to 6.15pm for the 2015-16 season. In the UK, broadcasting law prohibits live football being shown on television from 2.45pm to 5.15pm on Saturdays. On Sundays, the 5pm kick-off time will be moved to 4.30pm and the 9pm match will be brought forward to 8.30pm. There will continue to be games on Saturdays at 4pm, 8pm and 10pm, and on Sundays at 12 noon and 7pm. Friday and Monday games will still start at 9pm.
- The Infront Sports & Media agency will restructure its Nordic operations before the end of 2015. The national sports portfolios within Finland and Sweden that are currently handled by Infront's subsidiary in Helsinki will be integrated into a new company – a joint venture owned by Infront Finland chairman Harry Harkimo and sports executive Mika Sulin. Infront Finland will enter into a "preferred partnership" with the joint venture. The collaboration will include local Champions League Hockey games.
- Swedish communications company Ericsson signed a multi-year broadcast and media services deal with BT Sport to help the UK pay-television broadcaster launch three new channels and an interactive red button service. Ericsson will design and build the new channels – free-to-air digital channel BT Sport Showcase, pay-television channel BT Sport Europe and BT Sport Ultra HD.

SPORTS CLIPS: News from TVSM Daily from June 11 to June 24

MEDIA RIGHTS 3

Hockey India, World Touring Cars, Olympic Games, Sanzar and more

- **Hockey:** Indian pay-television broadcaster Star Sports signed a three-year extension, from 2016 to 2018, to its rights deal with the Hockey India governing body. The rights cover Hockey India's major events, including the Hockey India League club tournament.
- **Motorsport:** World Touring Car Championship promoter Eurosport Events agreed a rights deal in Slovakia with media group Central European Media Enterprises. The company's free-to-air channels TV Markíza and TV Dajto provided coverage of the Race of Slovakia from June 19 to 21.
- **Multi-Sport:** DD Sports, the free-to-air channel operated by Indian public-service broadcaster Doordarshan, acquired live rights for the 2015 summer Universiade in Gwangju, South Korea. DD Sports will provide more than 180 hours of coverage from the university sports event from July 3-14.
- **Olympics:** French public-service broadcaster France Télévisions agreed to sublicense rights for the 2016 and 2020 summer Games to pay-television broadcaster Canal Plus. The 2016 Games in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil and the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo, Japan will be shown on Canal Plus, Canal Plus Sport and associated digital services. France Télévisions will continue to provide free-to-air coverage (page 7).
- **Rugby Union:** Pay-television broadcaster Setanta Sports Asia agreed a five-year renewal, from 2016 to 2020, for events operated by Sanzar, the body that represents the sport in South Africa, New Zealand and Australia. The rights include international home matches plus the Super Rugby franchise tournament.
- **Rugby Union:** The Discovery Italia division of media and entertainment company Discovery Communications agreed a three-year deal with the Italian Rugby Federation, from 2015-16 to 2017-18, for the rights to the national team's autumn Test matches and Rugby World Cup warm-up games. The matches will be broadcast by Discovery's digital-terrestrial channel DMAX.
- **Rugby Union:** UK pay-television broadcaster BT Sport acquired exclusive rights for three of Scotland's 2015 Rugby World Cup warm-up games. The deal with governing body Scottish Rugby includes fixtures against Italy in Turin on August 22, Edinburgh on August 29 and France in Paris on September 5.

- Colombian pay-television channel Win Sports, which shows coverage of the country's top-tier football league, Categoría Primera A, struck a carriage deal with telco ETB, to begin on July 11.

MEDIA RIGHTS NEGOTIATIONS

- The beIN Media Group plans to bid aggressively for rights to games featuring Spanish Liga football clubs Real Madrid and Barcelona, according to Spanish newspaper *Marca*. The broadcaster would be prepared to bid €250m (\$282m) to show 20 Barcelona and Real Madrid games apiece per season on Saturday evenings.
- Australian telco Optus and internet company Google expressed an interest in acquiring premium digital sports-rights in the country. Optus chief executive Allen Lew said the company would bid for the Australian Football League's digital rights, while Google has been in talks with several Australian sporting codes with regard to forming joint ventures to show coverage via video-sharing website YouTube.
- Michal Roliński, the commercial director of Eleven Sports Network, said the soon-to-be-launched broadcast service in Poland has exclusive rights for "Italian and French football leagues from August". Eleven Sports Network confirmed that it would start operating in August through the launch of the Eleven and Eleven Sports channels, but reports in Poland questioned whether the platform had acquired rights to some of the properties that it said it will show. The broadcaster said earlier in June that its coverage would include the Italian Serie A and French Ligue 1 football top divisions, the Formula One motor-racing world championship, NFL American football and the European Handball Federation's Champions League (page 1).

ALSO SINCE LAST TIME

- The Fox Sports division of US network Fox worked with technology company NextVR to introduce live streaming virtual reality content into coverage of golf's 2015 US Open. The virtual reality content was available to spectators visiting VIP tents at the event.
- Delia Bushell, managing director of television and sport for UK telco BT, defended its new pricing strategy for pay-television service BT Sport and said the company is not on a "trolley dash" to acquire sports rights.
- The All England Lawn Tennis Club banned spectators attending this year's Wimbledon Championships from using mobile devices to stream live video coverage of the tennis tournament.
- LaLiga, the new brand name of the Spanish Football League, welcomed a decision by a commercial court in Madrid to block transmissions of games by the Rojadirecta.me website.
- Spanish top-tier Liga football club Real Madrid submitted a proposal to make its pay-television channel, Real Madrid TV, available on digital-terrestrial television in the country.
- Media company Constantin Medien, which operates German sports broadcaster Sport1, the Sport1 Media sports marketing company and the Plazamedia production company, is anticipating a "clear sales and earnings increase" for its sports division for the remainder of 2015, according to chief executive Bernhard Burgener.
- The International Shooting Sport Federation launched a dedicated channel on Chinese video-sharing platform YouKu. The channel will show the federation's major events on demand, including the World Cup Series and World Championships.

SPORTS CLIPS: News from TVSM Daily from June 11 to June 24**MEDIA RIGHTS 4****Wimbledon, Patriot League, US college sport and TNA Wrestling**

- **Tennis:** Pay-television broadcaster ESPN Brasil acquired rights for the Wimbledon Championships in a sublicensing deal with the tournament's rights-holder in Brazil, pay-television broadcaster Globosat. The deal will run for three years, from 2015 to 2017.
- **Tennis:** The Saran Media agency expanded its multi-year partnership with the All England Lawn Tennis Club to include rights to the Wimbledon Championships in a further nine markets. It added exclusive rights across all platforms in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, starting in 2015.
- **US College Sport:** US pay-television broadcaster CBS Sports Network agreed a multi-year extension to its rights deal with the Patriot League. It will show men's and women's basketball, men's lacrosse and other sports. At least 24 events will be shown live per year, including the semi-finals and final of the men's basketball and lacrosse tournaments, plus the women's basketball tournament championship game.
- **US College Sport:** The Learfield Sports agency signed a 10-year multimedia rights deal with the athletics division of Virginia Commonwealth University, from 2015-16 to 2024-25.
- **US College Sport:** The Fox Sports division of US network Fox acquired exclusive rights for events operated by Georgetown University's department of intercollegiate athletics. The length of the long-term agreement was not disclosed.
- **Wrestling:** The Total Nonstop Action Wrestling organisation struck a deal for the 2015 Slammiversary event on June 29 to be broadcast live on Challenge, a UK digital-terrestrial television channel owned by pay-television broadcaster Sky.
- The Board of Control for Cricket in India withdrew its national team from a proposed tour of Zimbabwe due to a dispute with the series' host broadcaster Ten Sports. The series, which was due to feature three One-Day Internationals and two Twenty20 matches from July 10, could be rescheduled for next year.
- Several Australian and New Zealand news agencies and media companies will boycott the 2015 Rugby World Cup in England due to coverage restrictions relating to video match highlights of the rugby union national team tournament.
- Premiership Rugby reported a six-per-cent increase in audience figures for its live matches on UK pay-television broadcaster BT Sport. English rugby union's top flight attracted almost 8.9m viewers during the 2014-15 season.
- Welsh Culture and Sports Minister Ken Stakes urged the UK government to press for the annual Six Nations rugby union championship to remain protected as a free-to-air television event beyond the expiration of public-service broadcaster the BBC's current deal in 2017.
- The International Paralympic Committee will stream live coverage of its 2015 Swimming World Championships via the event's official website, Glasgow2015.com. The coverage will be blocked in certain territories.

INDUSTRY MOVES

- Sports media executive David Hill will step down from US media company 21st Century Fox to launch a new production venture, Hilly. • The NFL appointed senior Microsoft executive Jordan Levin to the new role of senior vice-president and chief content officer. Levin will oversee the development of the NFL's media assets, including pay-television channel NFL Network, the NFL Digital Media division, the NFL Films production division and external media partnerships. • The Sportfive agency appointed Krzysztof Świergiel as co-managing director of its operations in Poland. Świergiel previously served as managing director at the Eurosport Poland division of the pan-European sports broadcaster.

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