

FOOTBALL

Pay-television battles in four of Europe's big five help Uefa to healthy increase

By Richard Welbirg and Robin Jellis

Strong pay-television competition in four of Europe's big five markets helped Uefa significantly increase the media rights value of its club competitions in the 2015-16 to 2017-18 cycle.

According to *TV Sports Markets* research, Uefa will earn at least €1.468bn (\$1.644bn) per season in Europe for its Champions League and Europa League rights from 2015-16 to 2017-18. This is a 37-per-cent increase on the €1.07bn per season it earned in the previous cycle, from 2012-13 to 2014-15.

Outside Europe, its income will rise 49 per cent, from \$373m per season in the old cycle to \$556m per season in the new cycle. Uefa saw particularly strong growth in the Americas.

Dramatic changes in the euro/dollar exchange rate over the past year make a comparison of total income difficult. Uefa strikes deals in dollars outside Europe as it is easier for buyers and it provides protection against currency devaluation.

Guy-Laurent Epstein, Uefa's marketing director, told *TV Sports Markets* that competition in individual markets had been the main driver of increased fees, and highlighted two secondary drivers.

First, broadcaster desire to hold both Champions League and Europa League rights. He said: "[UK telco] BT, for example, felt it was very important to have both because it covers the full midweek schedule."

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FOOTBALL

Bundesliga celebrations dampened by rivals

By Frank Dunne

Germany's Bundesliga entered August pleased with itself for having secured a 146-per-cent increase in the value of its global media rights – an exceptional result by any normal measure.

The league will earn €160m (\$179m) per season from its television rights in the next two seasons, 2015-16 and 2016-17, with a further €15m per season from betting rights (see table, page 5).

The €175m total is up from €71m per season in the current cycle, from 2012-13 to 2014-15. But following the conclusion of the sales cycle, two things dampened

the celebratory mood at the Deutsche Fussball Liga headquarters.

First, Spain's LaLiga completed its global sales cycle in just over six weeks between July and August with a far better result – a 177-per-cent increase, from €235m per season to €650m per season (*TV Sports Markets* 19:15).


Second, by the end of the transfer window the Bundesliga had been stripped of many top players, with several moving to English Premier League clubs.

The first deals in the Premier League's

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FASTRACK 1

NEWS IN BRIEF

Sky adds NFL games as BBC picks up marquee matches

Fewer NFL American football matches will be shown free-to-air in the UK in the 2015 season, but the league has secured deals which it believes will still reach a wide audience.

The Sunday Night Football package of rights held by commercial broadcaster Channel 4 in the last cycle has been awarded to pay-television broadcaster Sky for two years, 2015 and 2016.

Sky is thought to have paid a small fee to add the rights into its wider deal with the NFL. One expert estimated the deal to be worth in the low hundreds of thousands of dollars per year.

The deal means all NFL matches will be broadcast live by Sky. Sky last September agreed a five-year deal, from 2015 to 2019, thought to be worth more than \$12m (€10.7m) per year, for all other live games.

Sky is an important partner for the league; it has shown the NFL in the UK since 1994. Sky will show a minimum of six Sunday Night Football games on its lower-tier entertainment channel Sky One each season, as well as some games on free-to-air channel Pick TV.

Commercial broadcaster Channel 4 held a package of NFL rights in a two-year deal, from 2013 to 2014. The deal covered Sunday Night Football, the International Series games and the annual Super Bowl championship game. Channel 4 paid a total of about £1m (€1.4m/\$1.5m) per year, covering production costs and a small rights fee.

The league has ear-marked the UK as a market it wants to develop, so was keen to retain a free-to-air presence in a country where American football is a niche sport. As such, the NFL this week struck a two-year deal with public-service broadcaster the BBC, for 2015 and 2016. The BBC is not thought to be paying a rights fee.

The BBC deal covers three International Series games held at Wembley each year, and the Super

Bowl. These games are non-exclusive as they will also be broadcast by Sky. The BBC last held NFL rights in 2012.

“There is an ongoing balancing act between revenue and exposure. We feel that having deals with Sky and the BBC is the best possible outcome,” Alistair Kirkwood, NFL UK managing director, told *TV Sports Markets* this week.

The BBC’s interest is thought to have been piqued by the likelihood of a franchise being established in the UK. ■

Sky hits back with PCB rights

UK pay-television broadcaster Sky last week bought rights to the upcoming England v Pakistan cricket series for \$10m (€8.9m) in an attempt to shore up its cricket content.

The deal is a 100-per-cent increase on the value of England’s last away series against Pakistan in 2012, when Sky paid \$5m. Sky faced no competition at the time, and forced the price down from the \$7m it paid for England’s previous away series against Pakistan in 2005.

The deal was agreed directly between Sky and Indian subcontinent pay-television broadcaster Ten Sports. The two have a good relationship, with Ten having previously sold Pakistan Cricket Board and Sri Lanka Cricket rights in the UK to Sky.

Ten and Pakistani state broadcaster PTV hold rights to Pakistan’s home matches in a five-season deal with the PCB, from 2015-16 to 2019-20, worth \$150m. PTV broadcasts in Pakistan, while Ten sells rights outside the country. Ten is paying the lion’s share of the fee (*TV Sports Markets* 19:7).

Sky’s deal came one week after it was replaced as the broadcaster of Cricket Australia content by pay-television rival BT Sport in a five-season deal, from 2016-17 to 2020-21, worth £75m (€103m/\$115m).

BT was not interested in acquiring the Pakistan tour rights. Its agreement with Cricket Australia doesn’t begin for over a year and BT has not yet decided how it will cover cricket. Sky, on the

other hand, was keen to renew having lost the Cricket Australia package.

Sky’s deal covers three Test matches, five one-day internationals and three Twenty20 games. All matches will be hosted in the United Arab Emirates. The first Test begins on October 13.

Pakistan has been forced to play its home matches abroad due to security concerns following an attack on the Sri Lankan team bus in 2009. ■

BBC renews Challenge Cup deal

Rugby league’s domestic Challenge Cup rights were renewed by the BBC last week in a deal worth just over £1.25m (€1.7m/\$1.9m) per year.

The deal is for four years, from 2017 to 2020, and covers live and highlights rights. The fee is about 14 per cent up on the £1.1m per year the public-service broadcaster paid in its previous five-year deal, from 2012 to 2016.

The deal was agreed by the Rugby Football League, the commercial rights-holder. The RFL spoke with other free-to-air broadcasters but opted to renew with the BBC.

The final of the Challenge Cup is protected by listed-events legislation and must be shown live on free-to-air, limiting the number of potential buyers.

The new BBC deal covers the same rights as the current deal. It will show live coverage of seven Challenge Cup matches per season: two from each of the sixth round, quarter-finals and semi-finals, plus the final. The deal also includes Super League highlights programme the *Super League Show*.

The BBC paid about £2m per year in a three-year deal from 2009 to 2011. That package included rights for two exclusive live Challenge Cup matches per year, plus highlights from the annual Four Nations international tournament.

The fee paid by the BBC fell to £1.1m per year in the following deal as live coverage was shared between the BBC and pay-television broadcaster Sky. Four Nations rights were excluded from the contract and sold separately. ■

FOOTBALL

Pay-television battles boost Uefa fees at home and away

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Second, Epstein said digital rights were becoming increasingly important for broadcasters looking to “own the homes that are watching” across multiple devices. Uefa sells its rights almost exclusively on a platform-neutral basis.

“We are delivering additional services to broadcasters that were not in the previous cycle,” he added. “A lot of feeds – data and unseen camera angles – to really populate the second-screen.”

About 85 per cent of Uefa’s total income comes from Champions League rights, with the remaining 15 per cent from the Europa League.

The governing body views the Europa League as a less mature product than the Champions League, and as such believes it has potential for rapid growth.

All Champions League and Europa League deals are negotiated on behalf of Uefa by the Team Marketing agency.

The big five

The big five European television markets will provide Uefa with about €1.128bn per season, slightly less than 77 per cent of its total income across the region.

The most eye-catching deal in the big five was in the UK, where pay-television broadcaster BT Sport acquired exclusive rights to both competitions.

In the new deal, BT will pay just under €359m per season for both competitions, a staggering 104-per-cent increase on the value of previous deals. BT’s knockout first-round offer took the incumbent rights-holders by surprise.

In the previous cycle, commercial broadcaster ITV and pay-television broadcaster Sky paid a total of just under €157m per season for Champions League rights, while ITV and BT paid €19m per season for Europa League rights.

In Italy, total fees for both competitions rose by about 37 per cent, from €190m per season in the previous cycle to about

Champions League and Europa League media rights values (per season)			
Region	2015-16 to 2017-18 cycle	2012-13 to 2014-15 cycle	Percentage change
Europe	€1,468m	€1,070m	37
The Americas	\$178.7m	\$85.2m	110
Asia & Oceania	\$147.1m	\$92.5m	59
Middle East & Africa	\$230m	\$195m	18
Total¹	€1,964.4m	€1,402.8m	40

Source: TV Sports Markets Rights Tracker ¹ Total based on current exchange rates

€260m per season.

Mediaset will pay just over €230m per season for exclusive Champions League rights, up from the €160m per-season total previously paid by Mediaset and Sky.

Pay-television broadcaster Sky Italia bought Europa League rights for about €30m per season, the same amount Mediaset paid in the previous deal.

In Spain, Uefa earned an increase of just over 33 per cent for both its competitions, thanks to an aggressive winning bid from the beIN Media Group ahead of a rollout of its beIN Sports channels in the country.

This helped Champions League fees to a total of €170m per season in the new cycle, up from €127m per season. BeIN also acquired the Europa League, together with the Mediapro agency, boosting its value from €16.5m per season to €21.5m per season in the new cycle.

The French market delivered a total increase of about 30 per cent in the value of both competitions. Uefa will earn about €173m per season for the Champions League and Europa League, up from about €133m per season in the previous cycle.

BeIN and pay-television broadcaster Canal Plus will pay about €148m per season for the Champions League, up from €111m per season in the previous cycle. The Europa League increased slightly from €22m per season to €25m per season.

An increase of 18 per cent in Germany may seem underwhelming compared to the growth seen in the other territories. But industry observers saw it as an excellent result from a market where Sky Deutschland faces little or no competition for pay-television rights.

Total Champions League and Europa League fees in the territory rose from about €122.5m per season to about

€144.5m per season. The Champions League will be worth about €122m per season in renewals with public-service broadcasters ARD/ZDF and Sky, up from €102.5m per season. The Europa League increased in value from €20m per season to €22.5m per season.

Middle East and Africa

Uefa surprised many observers by opening its 2015-16 to 2017-18 sales cycle in the Middle East and North Africa, at a time when beIN’s local rival, Abu Dhabi Media, was increasingly reluctant to compete for premium rights.

Increasing beIN’s fee for both competitions from \$85m per season to \$90m per season in the new cycle was seen as a success compared to the \$10m-per-season decrease suffered by the English Premier League in its deal with the MP & Silva agency, signed about six months earlier.

In sub-Saharan Africa, Uefa secured a 45-per-cent increase in the value of its English- and Portuguese-language rights, by selling both free-to-air and pay-television rights exclusively to SuperSport for about \$130m per season.

SuperSport paid \$90m per season for pay-television rights alone in the 2012-13 to 2014-15 cycle. Pan-African rival StarTimes bought free-to-air rights in all territories, except South Africa, for between \$6m and \$8m per season.

Americas

The Americas were particularly lucrative in the new cycle, with fees in all major markets at least doubling.

In Brazil, free-to-air broadcaster Esporte Interativo – financed by investment from US broadcaster Turner – made a move into the pay-television

market, paying \$45m per season for pay-television Champions League rights.

Esporte Interativo beat a joint offer from pay-television broadcasters ESPN and Globosat. ESPN paid \$16m per season for the rights in the 2012-13 to 2014-15 cycle.

Across the rest of Latin America, pay-television rights to both competitions were renewed by the partnership of ESPN and Fox Sports Latin America. The two were forced to double the \$25m per season paid in the 2012-13 to 2014-15 cycle in order to defeat beIN and telco Telefónica in a second round of bidding.

Fox's US branch was also forced into a big increase to hold on to rights to both competitions in the US. It will pay between \$50m and \$55m per season, up from \$27m per season in the past cycle.

beIN won rights to both competitions in Canada in separate deals, where joint bids with Bell Media unseated incumbent telco Rogers. Bell and beIN will pay a combined \$5.8m per season in the new cycle, up from the \$2.2m per season Rogers paid in the old cycle.

Asia & Oceania

Rights fee inflation in Southeast Asia has cooled somewhat since Uefa sold its club competition rights across the region in the previous cycle.

In Singapore, cross-carriage regulation has prevented rival telcos Singtel and StarHub from acquiring exclusive rights, reducing their willingness to pay big fees.

This has left an opening for channels which are not subject to the regulation: international sports broadcaster Eurosport gave notice of its aggressive plans in the region, beating Fox Sports Asia to the Champions League and Europa League rights for a total fee of \$4.6m per season.

This is only marginally more than the \$4.5m per season paid by Singtel for both competitions in the previous cycle.

An absence of competition in neighbouring Malaysia meant Uefa took a hit in the value of its rights in a renewal with pay-television broadcaster Astro.

Astro will pay about \$8m per season in the new cycle, down 34 per cent on the \$12.2m per season it paid from 2012-13 to 2014-15. It was the only bidder.

Elsewhere, Uefa saw strong rights-fee increases. In a deal covering Thailand,

Laos and Cambodia, beIN paid a three-fold increase to take rights to both competitions from incumbent pay-television operator TrueVisions. It will pay just under \$20m per season.

Myanmar provided Uefa with the biggest proportionate increase in income: state-owned broadcaster S Media upped its per-season fee from \$1m to \$10m.

Across the Indian subcontinent, incumbent pay-television broadcaster Ten Sports doubled its fee despite the absence of competition from regional pay-television broadcasters MSM or Star. Ten will pay about \$13.2m per season in the new cycle for both properties.

In Oceania, beIN acquired rights to both competitions in the new cycle for a fee of between \$7.5m and \$8m per season. The Australian market accounted for about \$6m per season of the total.

beIN has sublicensed free-to-air rights to public-service broadcaster SBS in Australia. beIN has also sold on all rights in New Zealand to pay-television broadcaster Sky, as beIN does not operate in the country.

Unsold rights

Uefa is yet to complete deals for either competition in three markets: Russia, the Philippines and Switzerland.

In Russia, total fees are likely to fall from the €30m per season paid by free-to-air broadcaster NTV and pay-television broadcaster NTV Plus from 2012-13 to 2014-15. Both are owned by Russian energy company Gazprom (*TV Sports Markets* 15:4).

Market conditions have worsened in the country in recent months. Pay-television has been weakened by a ban on advertising and limits on foreign ownership of media companies.

Most broadcasters are either directly owned by the state, or by Gazprom, in which case they are indirectly controlled by the Russian government.

Fees in Switzerland are expected to rise slightly. *TV Sports Markets* understands deals have been agreed in principle with public-service broadcaster SRG SSR and Sky.

In the Philippines, Uefa has struggled with an uncompetitive market and underdeveloped pay-television sector.

The next cycle

Uefa renewed Team's contract to distribute the Champions League and Europa League competitions in April.

The existing contract ends after the 2015-16 to 2017-18 cycle. The new deal runs from 2018-19 to 2020-21, with the possibility of extending until the end of the 2023-24 season if Uefa is satisfied with the agency's performance.

Discussions between Team and Uefa over the form of the commercial offering for the 2018-19 to 2020-21 cycle began in November 2014. Team has this month begun preparing for the cycle, and is likely to begin offering the rights to the market between April and July 2016.

Team creates an order of markets to approach, but this is flexible and reactive to market conditions. It is not guaranteed the process will again begin in Mena.

Uefa and the agency will have to consider two recurring questions ahead of the next sales cycle.

The first is the balance between pay-television and free-to-air coverage. They have thus far been dogmatic about attempting to ensure some free-to-air coverage, at least for the Champions League, but market conditions forced deviation from the plan in the 2012-13 to 2014-15 cycle.

In December 2011, Uefa and Team agreed deals in France with beIN and Canal Plus which took all Champions League matches – apart from the final – exclusively to pay-television. In doing so, fees jumped from €56m per season in the 2009-10 to 2011-12 cycle to €111m per season in the 2012-13 to 2014-15 cycle.

The second consideration is duration. Many broadcasters outside Europe are willing to pay big fees to lock down rights in the long term. This has led the Premier League, for example, to agree a six-season deal with NBCUniversal in the US.

Epstein told *TV Sports Markets* that nothing about the next cycle was set in stone, but on the question of longer-term deals, said: "So far we don't see why we should increase the duration.

"Some broadcasters will say they can do more with the product over that time, but so far it's true that our value has increased significantly every time we go back on the market." ■

FOOTBALL

Spain and England dampen German rights celebrations

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new global sales cycle – in the US, sub-Saharan Africa and Hong Kong – suggest it will pull further away from Europe's other leagues in terms of total media rights income. The Premier League earns £763m (€1.047bn/\$1.172bn) per season for its international rights in the three seasons from 2013-14 to 2015-16.

Pressure on the DFL to review its sales model is likely to come from Germany's biggest clubs, especially Bayern Munich, which is becoming increasingly frustrated at the wealth gap being opened up between it and the top clubs from England and Spain. The club has even begun calling for a switch to individual selling.

The league's chief executive Christian Seifert has already indicated the league may move away from a market-by-market approach in Europe and agree a single pan-European deal. Rights in Europe are due on the market early next year, and are expected to command good increases.

Some rights experts say the German league, through its commercial arm DFL Sports Enterprises, needs to go further and copy the methods of the Premier League and LaLiga if the Bundesliga is to match their rate of growth. One experienced football rights distributor said this week the DFL would be "stupid" if it were not now having an internal discussion about its own methods.

Models

The rights to the English and Spanish leagues are both sold for the forthcoming three-season cycle within a relatively short time frame – usually a few months. The sales process in each market is often condensed into a few days, or even hours, putting maximum psychological pressure on broadcasters.

The DFL sales model is more flexible and often involves negotiations over a long period of time. It is designed to allow the league to have a greater control over

Bundesliga international rights deals in 2015-16 and 2016-17 ¹		
Territory	Rights-holder	Per-season value
80 territories	Fox International Channels	€62m
Middle East and North Africa	BeIN Media Group	€42m
Central/Eastern Europe	Eurosport	€25m
Global betting rights	Sportsman Media Group	€15m
Sub-Saharan Africa	StarTimes	€7m
Turkey	Eurosport	€4m
Spain	Canal Plus	€3.5m
France	BeIN Media Group	€3m
UK and Republic of Ireland	BT Sport	€3m
China ²	CCTV/China Sports Marketing	€2.75m
Central/Eastern Europe	Sportsman Media Group	€2.5m
Greece	OTE	€2.5m
Indian subcontinent	Star	€1m
Australia	BeIN Media Group	€500,000
Israel	Charlton	€500,000
Portugal	Sport TV	€500,000
Cyprus	CyTAvision	€150,000
Malta	Melita	€100,000
Total		€175m

Source: TV Sports Markets Rights Tracker
¹ Deals in Europe for two seasons only. Longer deals outside Europe.
² Deals for Chinese-language rights. Fox holds English-language rights as part of its multi-territory deal.

its own destiny and to tailor-make solutions – be it the level of exclusivity offered or duration of the contract – best suited to the strength of the Bundesliga in a given market at a given time.

The strategy means the league can decide not to agree a deal in a certain territory, and to come back to market later if it feels bid levels are unsatisfactory.

Selling rights directly also enables the league to build developmental projects (privileging exposure over fees) which are unlikely to have come to fruition had its rights been sold by a third party – such as an agency or media group – focused on its margins. One clear example is the way the league has increased coverage in China.

Breaking China

The Bundesliga views China as a market with massive potential from which it has not been able to secure market value. Its priority has been building reach, with a view to creating value long term.

To do this, it agreed two three-season deals, both from 2015-16 to 2017-18. One deal is with state broadcaster CCTV for three live matches per week, the other

with the China Sports Marketing agency for the other six matches.

CSM agreed deals with eight regional free-to-air broadcasters and the four main internet players – PPTV, Sina, Tencent and LeTV. Star Sports also has English-language rights, as part of the DFL's wider deal with Fox International Channels.

The league earns about €2.5m per season from CCTV and just over €250,000 per season from CSM. The coverage is extensive and reaches a huge audience.

For the opening weekend of the current season, all nine Bundesliga matches were shown live in China. CCTV showed three, regional broadcasters a further three and the remaining three were shown by the internet operators. CCTV's coverage is national. The regional broadcasters have audience reaches ranging from 2m to 30m homes. The four internet operators have 340m unique users per month in total.

It's the product

Many rights experts play down the potential impact a change in methodology could have on the Bundesliga's rate of growth compared to other leagues.

Phil Lines, who was responsible for the global distribution of Premier League rights from 2002 to 2010, said: “A change to the Premier League system might help but it wouldn’t lead to a sudden jump in revenue. The fact is the Bundesliga has been the fourth most popular of the European leagues for a long time.

“The gap in revenue will continue to grow as broadcasters spend a higher percentage of their programme budgets on the Premier League, LaLiga and the Uefa Champions League.”

Another experienced football rights distributor said: “The DFL has done a tremendous job over the last years in order to put the Bundesliga on the international TV map. But the property is still not at the must-have level like the Premier League and LaLiga in many markets. The sales process is not the issue and the clubs are being unrealistic if they think it is.”

By comparison, Italy’s Serie A earns an average of €185.7m per season from its international rights in a deal with the MP & Silva agency. France’s Ligue 1 earns €32.5m per season from its international rights in a deal with beIN Media Group.

Talent drain

The biggest difficulty for the Bundesliga remains securing value from a domestic market with only one real pay-television player – Sky Deutschland.

Sky pays an average of €485.7m per season for live domestic Bundesliga rights to all matches in a four-season deal, from 2013-14 to 2016-17. The league is expected to tender its domestic rights in a new cycle early next year.

This summer, even the best-funded Bundesliga clubs found themselves unable to refuse the money Premier League clubs were offering for their star players. They fear that without a big increase in their media-rights income this will become a common occurrence.

High-profile deals included Kevin de Bruyne’s move from Wolfsburg to Manchester City, Bastian Schweinsteiger’s switch from Bayern to Manchester United, Roberto Firmino’s transfer from Hoffenheim to Liverpool, Abdul Rahman Baba’s move from Augsburg to Chelsea and Son Heung-Min’s sale to Tottenham Hotspur by Bayer Leverkusen. ■

FOOTBALL

Ligue 1 secures growth from key African market

By Callum McCarthy

France’s Ligue 1 has earned an increase of 20 to 25 per cent in the value of its media rights in sub-Saharan Africa following deals agreed in recent weeks.

The French top-tier league rights in sub-Saharan Africa will be worth about €12m (\$13.4m) per season in three-season deals, from 2015-16 to 2017-18. Africa is the most valuable region for the league’s international rights.

The MP & Silva agency sold rights in the region on behalf of beIN Media Group. BeIN holds Ligue 1 international rights in a six-season deal, from 2012-13 to 2017-18, worth €32.5m per season.

The bulk of the value comes from pay-television operator Canal Plus Afrique. It has bought French-language rights across the three seasons for just over €10m per season.

The deal was agreed directly between MP & Silva and Canal Plus Afrique. Canal Plus Afrique is the dominant Francophone pay-television broadcaster.

The fee is an increase of about 18 per cent on its previous three-season deal, from 2012-13 to 2014-15, when it paid €8.5m per season for the same set of rights.

The deal covers all territories in sub-Saharan Africa, but almost all of the value is in French-speaking countries, mostly in Central and West Africa.

Pan-African pay-television channel Fox Sports acquired exclusive English- and Portuguese-language rights, from 2015-16 to 2017-18, for just over \$2m per season.

This is an increase of at least 18 per cent on the previous cycle, from 2012-13 to 2014-15, when pay-television broadcaster Setanta Sports Africa – acquired by Fox in October 2013 – paid an average of \$1.7m per season for the same rights.

The deal was also completed in private negotiations, but it is believed MP & Silva held discussions with all interested parties in the region. The new deal covers all

territories across sub-Saharan Africa.

As in the previous cycle, Fox will sublicense Ligue 1 games to pan-African pay-television operator StarTimes. StarTimes will show three live matches per week for \$1m per season. Fox and StarTimes will split matches using a sequential pick system, with Fox picking first and StarTimes picking second.

In the previous cycle, StarTimes and East African pay-television broadcaster Zuku sublicensed Ligue 1 rights from Setanta. StarTimes paid just under \$1m per season. Zuku paid about \$1m across the three seasons.

African evolution

The continued growth of Ligue 1 rights in sub-Saharan Africa has surprised some experts in the region, who believe it to be of less interest than other major European domestic football leagues.

Despite this, and a lack of competition in the Francophone pay-television sector, the value of French-language rights has increased by about 770 per cent since the 2005-06 to 2007-08 cycle, when Canal Plus paid €1.15m per season. Canal Plus was the league’s domestic broadcaster and agreed a favourable deal as a result.

This increased to €4.5m per season from 2008-09 to 2011-12, a more accurate valuation of the rights which also reflected Canal Plus’s increasing market share. The large number of African players in Ligue 1, mostly from Francophone countries, is the main reason behind the high cost of French-language rights.

English-language rights have also seen impressive growth. Rights in the 2005-06 to 2007-08 cycle were worth \$100,000 per season in a deal across the region with pay-television broadcaster SuperSport.

From 2008-09 to 2011-12, English-language rights were sold to Nigerian satellite broadcaster Africa Independent Television. The deal was worth \$1m per season for rights in Nigeria only.

However, AIT defaulted on payments, allowing SuperSport to pick up English-language rights across sub-Saharan Africa. From 2010-11 to 2011-12, SuperSport paid about \$900,000 per season. SuperSport was unwilling to up its investment in the following cycle and was ousted by Setanta. ■

TV AFRICA

Local leagues drive Azam expansion into East Africa

By Callum McCarthy

Despite launching only 20 months ago, Tanzanian pay-television provider Azam TV has already become a serious player in the East African pay-television market.

Azam is available across Central and East Africa as a pay-television and digital-terrestrial service. Since launching in December 2013 it has sold just under 400,000 set-top boxes.

While this is considerably fewer than its main pay-television rivals, SuperSport and StarTimes, Azam's low subscription prices have propelled its rapid growth.

Its recent purchase of rights to Spain's LaLiga and the 2016 Olympic Games, both in Tanzania only, were marquee deals. But its acquisition of broadcast and sponsorship rights to a number of domestic East African football leagues has been the main catalyst for its expansion outside Tanzania.

In its latest local deal, for Rwanda's top-tier league, Azam has acquired exclusive broadcast and title sponsorship rights. The deal is for five seasons, from 2015-16 to 2019-2020, and is worth a total of \$2.35m (€2.1m).

It is the fifth East African football league Azam has acquired. The broadcaster also has deals for the Tanzania Premier League; the Uganda Premier League; Burundi's Ligue A; and the second-tier FKF Premier League in Kenya.

Rhys Torrington, Azam chief executive, this week told *TV Sports Markets* that acquiring local domestic football leagues is an "open sesame" to new markets in sub-Saharan Africa, where football is by far the most popular sport.

Torrington said the local leagues have huge growth potential. "It's like buying stock in a new company and hoping it'll be the next Microsoft or Google," he said.

Local leagues provide Azam with a large amount of locally-relevant content for a relatively small cost. Azam holds rights to 1,266 live matches per season across its

East African domestic league portfolio, paying a total of just over \$3m per season for their broadcast and sponsorship rights.

Controlled ambition

Azam's sports portfolio is more modest than SuperSport and StarTimes, but Torrington believes Azam's business model cannot accommodate expensive acquisitions.

"Everyone would love us if we showed the English Premier League, but it's not going to happen in the short term," he said. "Even if we had the money to outbid our competitors, to recoup that money we'd be forced to charge much higher subscription fees."

A basic subscription to Azam TV costs about \$7 a month. The new Azam Sports pay-television channel costs about \$6 per month on top of a basic subscription.

Azam's acquisition of non-exclusive pay-television rights to LaLiga in Tanzania, from 2015-16 to 2017-18, provides it with strong football content at a relatively low cost. Azam will pay just over \$3m per season for live and delayed rights to all 380 games each season. It will share rights in Tanzania with pan-regional rights-holder SuperSport, which pays about €20m per season for rights across sub-Saharan Africa (*TV Sports Markets* 19:15).

According to Torrington, the acquisition was a result of LaLiga wanting to expand its reach beyond SuperSport. Outside South Africa, a premium subscription to Multichoice's DStv pay-television service, including all SuperSport channels, costs up to \$100 a month.

Torrington is hopeful Azam can acquire LaLiga rights in other East African territories: "Right now it's a bit of a slam dunk in Tanzania because we're now dominant here. We're focusing on expanding in other territories as a business. We can take that La Liga experience into those territories and hopefully convince them of that same logic."

Local problems

While acquiring local domestic leagues has spearheaded Azam TV's expansion, the volatility of two of its deals, in Kenya and Uganda, has caused problems.

In July, Azam suspended all payments to the Federation of Uganda Football

Associations just five months after they agreed a three-and-a-half-year deal for broadcast and sponsorship rights to the Uganda Premier League. The deal is worth a total of \$1.9m across the period.

Fufa requested Azam redirect payments into private federation bank accounts that Ugandan clubs could not access. This broke the terms of its deal with Azam.

Torrington told *TV Sports Markets* he was confident the situation in Uganda could be resolved, but has greater concerns about Azam's deal with the Football Kenya Federation.

Azam pays about \$745,000 per season to show the second-tier FKF Premier League, which is reportedly on the brink of collapse. The deal is for media rights only.

Local reports say participating clubs have received little to no funding from the federation this season. One source close to the FKF told *TV Sports Markets* up to half of all participating clubs intend to withdraw from the competition as a result.

Torrington describes the FKF as "a permanent mess", but is comfortable with Azam's wider portfolio of sports content.

He said: "If I get the Kenya situation sorted out I'd say the portfolio is done. I'd only expand it by taking La Liga to other territories."

Expansion aims

Azam TV is owned by the Bakhresa Group, one of the largest conglomerates in Tanzania. Bakhresa's Azam brand is widely known in East Africa for its wheat flour and ice cream products, but this now extends to pay-television. Bakhresa claims to have turnover of more than \$800m.

Azam set-top boxes are available to buy in Burundi, Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Tanzania and Uganda. Its channels are available in Zambia as an add-on package with pay-television operator Muvi. Azam is also preparing to make its set-top boxes available in Ghana, and is in talks with distributors in both the Democratic Republic of Congo and Zimbabwe.

Azam's television operation is unlikely to turn a profit for the first few years. Torrington said the focus will instead be on expanding into new territories. ■

[www.azamtv.com](#) For the full interview with Rhys Torrington, visit our website.

BETTING RIGHTS

Perform snaps up LaLiga rights and renews Ligue 1 deal

By Robin Jellis

The Perform Group has acquired betting rights to Spain's LaLiga and France's Ligue 1 in recent weeks, affirming its position as the leading supplier of streaming rights to bookmakers.

Perform bought LaLiga rights in a three-season deal, from 2015-16 to 2017-18, worth about €15m (\$16.8m) per season. It beat rival bids from the IMG Events & Media agency and the Sportsman Media Group.

The fee is a 150-per-cent increase on the value of the league's previous deal with Sportsman, from 2012-13 to 2014-15, worth about €6m per season.

The rights were sold by LaLiga, the Spanish top tier, which is advised on its international rights sales by the Mediapro agency. It is understood that the deal will be finalised today (Friday).

Perform also retained Ligue 1 betting rights in a three-season deal, from 2015-16 to 2017-18, worth just over €10m per season. This is more than double the €5m per season Perform paid for Ligue 1 in 2013-14 and 2014-15 as part of a wider package deal with the MP & Silva agency.

The rights in the new deal were sold by the beIN Media Group, which holds Ligue 1 international media rights.

There was some confusion over who held the betting rights, however. MP & Silva, which sells on Ligue 1 rights for beIN in territories where beIN doesn't operate, sold a package of rights to IMG last December.

The package included Ligue 1 betting rights, as well as Serie A betting rights and a host of other properties sold by MP & Silva. The deal was for three seasons, from 2015-16 to 2017-18, and was worth €21m per season. Perform had held the same package of rights in the two previous seasons for about €10m per season.

In April, beIN asked MP & Silva to remove the Ligue 1 rights from the IMG deal, as beIN wanted to have direct

control over the property. IMG's fee to MP & Silva was reduced proportionally.

The rights were then put back on the market. Perform again beat bids from IMG and Sportsman to claim the rights. The deal was completed the day the league season began on 7 August.

Of the other top European football leagues, Sportsman holds German Bundesliga betting rights, IMG holds Italian Serie A betting rights, while the English Premier League does not agree a separate betting rights deal. ■

FOOTBALL

The first \$100m friendly tournament keeps on growing

By Frank Dunne

The International Champions Cup friendly tournament is thought to have broken the \$100m (€89m) income barrier this summer. Its organisers, US-based Relevant Sports, expect continued growth in the coming seasons.

The competition was launched in 2013. Income from each of its three main revenue streams – ticketing, sponsorship and media rights – more than doubled in 2014 and again in 2015, as the competition format and global footprint has expanded (*TV Sports Markets* 19:9).

This year, with the competition expanded into China and Australia, the sale of global media rights brought in about \$15m from 50 deals covering 169 territories. The sale of sponsorship rights brought in between \$15m and \$20m.

The 2014 tournament generated just over \$6m in media rights revenue.

Ticketing remains by far the biggest single income stream. A precise figure for total revenue is not available because of the complex income-sharing agreements in place with some stadium owners.

The total attendance across the 23 matches was about 1m, an average of 43,000 per match, with many tickets in US and Australian stadiums costing upwards of \$100. Relevant took a very large proportion of ticket sales.

Relevant's main costs are participation

fees for teams, which can be higher than \$3m per match for top clubs like Manchester United and Real Madrid.

Relevant and its commercial sales agent, Catalyst Media, are studying options for further expansion in 2016, with details likely to be unveiled early next year.

Oliver Duss, senior vice president at Catalyst, told *TV Sports Markets* this week: "I really believe we are just at the beginning and will grow significantly over the next few years. In 2016, we will develop the format and build the brand, giving the competition greater credibility and relevance. We are currently collecting feedback from partners about how they would like the product to develop."

Catalyst imposed standard production requirements for all host broadcasters for the first time in 2015 to ensure a high quality, uniform television product for its broadcast partners.

Global coverage totalled 9,000 broadcast hours this year, three times more than in 2014, with a total cumulative audience across the 23 matches of 100m. In the key markets, live coverage of matches outperformed their time-slot, Duss said.

In the US, average live audiences per match increased on each of the four channels carrying the competition – Fox, Fox Sports 1, Fox Sports 2 and ESPN. China, Indonesia, Thailand and Turkey also delivered big audiences.

With the exception of a small handful of markets – notably Australia, Brazil, China, France and sub-Saharan Africa – Catalyst has so far agreed one-tournament broadcast deals and will return to the market early next year.

Duss said pay-television broadcasters value the competition because it provides high-quality football during the close season. It has high marketing value, he said, because it is the first time some of the world's biggest teams can showcase new signings, and provides broadcasters with a platform to promote their services ahead of the new football season.

"If you add all that to the fact fans are now beginning to recognise the competition as something worth winning, it explains why broadcasters are prepared to pay a premium." He said the price per match for broadcasters was higher than for any other friendly football tournament. ■

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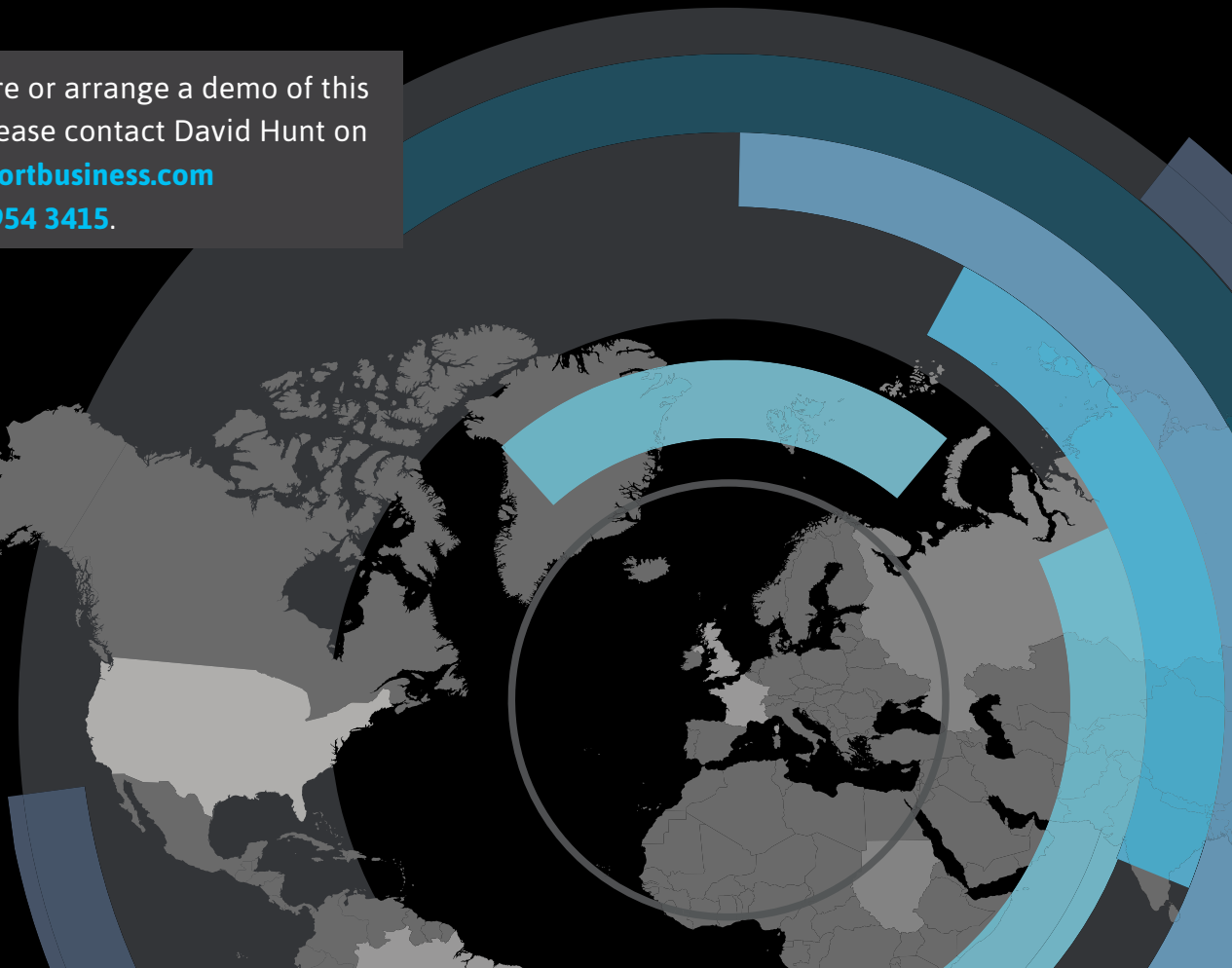
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SPORTS CLIPS: News from TVSM Daily from August 27 to September 9

MEDIA RIGHTS 1

Football: Bundesliga, German U-21s, Zambian football, Russian league

- **Football:** The German Football Association agreed a four-season extension, from 2015-16 to 2018-19, to its rights deal with international sports broadcaster Eurosport. The deal covers multi-platform rights in Germany to the country's U-21, U-20 and U-19 national teams.
- **Football:** Hong Kong pay-television operator i-Cable agreed a three-season extension, from 2015-16 to 2017-18, to its deal for the Bundesliga, the sport's top division in Germany.
- **Football:** Sub-Saharan African pay-television broadcaster SuperSport extended a rights deal with the Football Association of Zambia for five years, from 2016 to 2020, to show coverage of the country's top-tier league. The renewal is worth a total of \$5m (€4.5m), or \$1m per year – reportedly the same as the previous cycle.
- **Football:** The Russian Premier League approved a new three-season deal, from 2015-16 to 2017-18, with pay-television broadcaster NTV Plus. The deal is worth R1.98bn (€27.1m/\$30.2m) for the 2015-16 season. NTV Plus has broadcast games since the start of the season without a formal contract.

SINCE LAST TIME

- French media group Vivendi increased its shareholding in video-sharing website Dailymotion to 90 per cent. According to French newspaper *Les Échos*, Vivendi paid telco Orange €27m (\$30.2m) for a 10-per-cent stake. In June, Vivendi acquired an 80-per-cent stake in Dailymotion from Orange in a deal worth €217m.
- The Uruguayan Football Association is set to break its rights contract with the Full Play agency, which has been implicated in the corruption scandal surrounding members of Fifa, football's global governing body. A general assembly of domestic clubs resulted in 14 votes in favour of ending the contract and three abstentions, according to the *República* newspaper. This gives the association the power to put the rights back on the market.
- The Board of Control for Cricket in India was ordered to pay media and entertainment company Nimbus Communications Rs118.8m (€1.6m/\$1.8m) following an arbitration case resulting from its 2011 decision to terminate a rights and production partnership. Nimbus had a four-year deal, from 2011 to 2014, worth Rs20bn for the worldwide rights for home Test, one-day international and Twenty20 matches, as well as some domestic tournaments. In December 2011, the BCCI's working committee curtailed the agreement, with Nimbus reportedly owing Rs880m in outstanding fees.
- Mediaset complained to football's European governing body Uefa after coverage of a Champions League match was made available in Italy, apparently contravening the Italian media group's exclusive coverage of the club tournament. German public-service broadcaster ZDF showed the Bayer Leverkusen v Lazio match on August 26 on free-to-air satellite television, with the coverage accessible in Italy via pay-television broadcaster Sky Italia, which offers ZDF on channel 546.
- Warner Cable, Verizon FiOS and select National Cable Television Cooperative members. The ESPN3 online streaming service will continue to provide coverage of college sports, while blackout and regionalisation restrictions will apply across all platforms.
- The CBS Sports division of US network CBS enhanced its live streaming coverage of the National Football League, offering regular-season games from the American football league for the first time during the 2015 season. CBS Sports will provide free live streaming coverage of two regular-season games, four Playoff games and the Super Bowl.
- Online streaming service EverSport.tv struck a worldwide carriage deal with Pac-12 Networks, the content and multi-platform media company for the Pac-12 US college sports conference. The deal will run for two seasons, 2015 and 2016. All seven of Pac-12 Networks' channels will be available on EverSport.tv to more than 200 countries outside the US via online and mobile devices.
- North American pay-television broadcaster One World Sports signed a multi-year extension to its licensing agreement with English Premier League football club Arsenal. One World Sports will continue to offer the club's Arsenal TV in-house television channel on its various platforms in the US and Canada.
- UK sports production and media company Sunset+Vine was awarded the production rights for the 2017 World Athletics Championships by the UK Athletics governing body. Sunset+Vine will collaborate with FilmNova, the producer of athletics events such as the Great North Run, to cover the championships, which will take place in London, UK.
- German Bundesliga football club Bayern Munich signed a global media partnership with football-dedicated digital platform Goal.com. Tailored behind-the-scenes video content from the club will be provided to US and Chinese fans.
- Dutch cable-television operator Ziggo and pay-television broadcaster Sport1 will join forces to launch a new sports channel called Ziggo Sport. The channel will launch before the end of the year and will be available, at no additional charge, to Ziggo's subscribers in the Netherlands. Ziggo Sport will offer live coverage and highlights of football properties such as the Uefa Champions League, Spain's top-tier LaLiga and Euro 2016

MEDIA INTERNATIONAL

- US sports broadcaster ESPN launched a new college sports service, ESPN College Extra, which will provide coverage of American football, basketball, baseball and softball events. Live coverage will be available to customers of pay-television operators AT&T U-verse and DirecTV, Bright House Networks, Cox, Time

SPORTS CLIPS: News from TVSM Daily from August 27 to September 9

MEDIA RIGHTS 2

NFL, EuroBasket 2015, Australian basketball, Mayweather fight and more

- **American Football:** UK public-service broadcaster the BBC acquired rights for the National Football League. The agreement will cover two years, 2015 and 2016. The BBC will show live coverage of the NFL's International Series games at London's Wembley Stadium along with the Super Bowl championship game (page 2).
 - **American Football:** BeIN Media Group acquired rights in France for the 2015 season of the NFL. The broadcaster will show coverage of games on Thursday evenings through to Friday mornings, plus the NFL RedZone multiplex service on Sunday evenings. The deal was agreed with the MP & Silva agency.
 - **American Football:** Russian pay-television broadcaster NTV Plus acquired rights for the 2015 season of the NFL in a deal with MP & Silva. NTV Plus will broadcast up to three games per week from the regular season along with key matches from the Playoffs and the Super Bowl.
 - **Basketball:** German telco Deutsche Telekom acquired rights for the EuroBasket 2015 national team tournament, which is taking place in Germany as well as Croatia, France and Latvia. Deutsche Telekom agreed the deal with Fiba, the sport's global governing body. The rights include live coverage of the top game of the day through the telco's IPTV platform Entertain and the Telekombasketball.de website.
 - **Basketball:** Pay-television broadcaster NTV Plus acquired rights in Russia for EuroBasket 2015. The deal covers three games per day, including matches involving the Russian national team.
 - **Basketball:** International pay-television operator Eleven Sports Network acquired rights in Poland for EuroBasket 2015. The deal covers six games per day, including all group games featuring Poland's national team.
 - **Basketball:** Pay-television broadcaster Fox Sports sealed a domestic rights deal with the Australian National Basketball League for five seasons, from 2015-16 to 2019-20. The agreement will be reviewed after the first year, according to the *Herald Sun* newspaper.
 - **Boxing:** Pay-television channel Fight Sports secured rights for welterweight world champion Floyd Mayweather Jr.'s fight against Andre Berto on September 12. The agreement covers more than 35 territories across Europe, Asia and the Caribbean, including Spain, Italy, Singapore, Indonesia and India.
 - **Boxing:** German pay-television broadcaster Sky Deutschland acquired rights for the Floyd Mayweather Jr. v Andre Berto fight. Sky will show coverage on its Sky Select pay-per-view service, with the event priced at €15 (\$16.80) until midday on September 11, after which it will rise to €20.
 - **Boxing:** UK pay-television broadcaster Sky acquired rights for Briton Tyson Fury's world heavyweight title fight with Wladimir Klitschko on October 24. Sky will exploit the rights on its pay-per-view platform Sky Sports Box Office, which will show live coverage of the welterweight clash between British fighter Kell Brook and Diego Chaves on the same evening.
- national team qualifiers, along with Formula One motor-racing and golf content.
- The Mediapro agency agreed a deal for Mexican pay-television operator Totalplay to carry its Canal F1 Latin America channel, which is dedicated to the Formula One motor-racing world championship.
 - Polish pay-television operator Polsat will launch two new sports channels – Polsat Sport 2 and Polsat Sport 3 – next year as part of a wider rollout, according to the *Wirtualne Media* newspaper.
 - Norwegian pay-television operator RiksTV struck a carriage deal for a portfolio of channels operated by media and entertainment company Discovery Communications. The deal includes Eurosport Norge, a new regional version of pan-European sports broadcaster Eurosport, which launched in Norway on September 3.
 - Discovery Communications struck a deal with Russia's National Media Group to form a new company called Media Alliance, allowing it to distribute Eurosport in the country. Media Alliance will also distribute Discovery's portfolio of pay-television channels in Russia. Olga Paskina, senior vice-president and country manager of Discovery Networks in North East Europe, will serve as director general of Media Alliance.
 - Australian commercial broadcaster Seven will show a minimum of 14 San Francisco 49ers NFL American football games during the 2015 season after Australian Jarryd Hayne, a former rugby league player, was added to the team's squad. Digital-terrestrial television channel 7mate will show coverage as part of Seven's existing five-year deal, from 2014 to 2018.
 - Wang Sicong, the son of Wang Jianlin, who is chairman of Chinese conglomerate Dalian Wanda, plans to establish a new live streaming platform called Panda TV, which will be dedicated to eSports.
 - New Zealand's government agreed a deal that will allow the Pacific Islands to receive free-to-air coverage of rugby union matches. The agreement, which will provide up to eight hours of entertainment and sports coverage per day, will cover the Cook Islands, Fiji, Niue, Samoa, Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu from early next year. The Pacific Islands will be able to access coverage of the Super 15 tournament as well as the Rugby Championship and ITM Cup matches. New Zealand taxpayers will subsidise the agreement.
 - Pay-television channel Win Sports, which provides domestic coverage of Categoría Primera A, the top division of football in Colombia, secured a carriage deal in the country with telco

SPORTS CLIPS: News from TVSM Daily from August 27 to September 9**MEDIA RIGHTS 3****England v Pakistan cricket, gymnastics, handball and Olympic Games**

- **Cricket:** Sky acquired rights for the England national team's 2015 tour of Pakistan. The Pakistan v England series, starting on October 13, will take place in the United Arab Emirates and is comprised of three Test matches, five one-day internationals and three Twenty20 games (page 2).
- **Gymnastics:** French basic-tier sports broadcaster Ma Chaîne Sport agreed a rights deal with the International Gymnastics Federation. The deal will run for 10 seasons, from 2015-16 to 2024-25, and will cover Belgium, France and Luxembourg.
- **Handball:** Media and entertainment company Discovery Communications acquired rights for the sport's top division in Norway and the country's national team. The deal with the Norwegian Handball Association will run for two seasons, from 2015-16 to 2016-17. Top games from all 35 rounds of the league season will be shown as well as 50 national team games, excluding major championships. The rights will be exploited on pay-television channels Max and Eurosport Norge, the new local version of Discovery's Eurosport sports channel.
- **Handball:** Eleven Sports Network acquired rights in Belgium, Malaysia and Singapore for the Handball-Bundesliga, the sport's top division in Germany, in a deal with MP & Silva. The rights will run until at least the end of the 2015-16 season.
- **Handball:** Pay-television broadcaster Digi Sport acquired rights in Hungary for the Handball-Bundesliga until at least the end of the 2015-16 campaign.
- **Handball:** The Best4Sport.TV online platform acquired rights in Latvia for the Handball-Bundesliga until at least the end of the 2015-16 season.
- **Olympic Games:** The Saran Media agency sublicensed rights in Turkey for the 2016 summer Games from pay-television broadcaster Fox Turkey.

Telefónica. Telefónica's OTT platform Movistar Video will provide free access to Win Sports.

bid for the streaming rights, is interested in striking a sublicensing deal with Nine.

MEDIA RIGHTS NEGOTIATIONS

- French commercial broadcaster TF1 is poised to strike a deal to increase its coverage of the Uefa Euro 2016 national team football tournament, which is taking place in France. TF1 is set to acquire a package of 11 matches in a sublicensing deal with beIN Media Group, which has live rights for all matches. The deal will be worth €25m (\$28m) and will increase TF1's total coverage during the tournament to 22 games.
- The German Football Association launched a tender process for domestic rights to its DFB-Pokal knockout club competition. The rights will cover three seasons, from 2016-17 to 2018-19, of the men's and women's competitions. Broadcasters were invited to register an interest to the Infront Sports & Media agency by September 11, with tender documents set to be issued on September 14.
- Leslie Moonves, the president and chief executive of CBS, said the US network would have liked a longer deal than a one-year extension with American football's NFL for the Thursday Night Football package. CBS secured a one-year renewal for the upcoming 2015 season for a rights fee of about \$300m (€268m) following an initial one-year deal which covered the 2014 campaign.
- BeIN Media Group is considering a bid for the rights to the Australian National Rugby League, the top division of rugby league in the country. The league is hoping the apparent interest from beIN will drive up the price for the pay-television rights. The free-to-air rights have already been awarded to commercial broadcaster Nine for five years, from 2018 to 2022. Telco Telstra, which is reportedly unhappy it was not given the opportunity to
- Steve Ballmer, the owner of the Los Angeles Clippers, is considering launching an OTT streaming network to show coverage of his team's matches. The *New York Post* newspaper said Ballmer turned down an offer of \$60m (€53.6m) per year from incumbent rights-holder Prime Ticket to extend a deal for the NBA franchise's local rights beyond the 2015-16 season.
- Match TV is in talks to acquire rights for the North American National Hockey League, according to Dmitry Chernyshenko, chief executive of the Russian sports channel's parent company, Gazprom Media. Match TV is set to launch on a free-to-air basis on November 1.

ALSO SINCE LAST TIME

- The English Football League is considering introducing pay-per-view live streaming of its games for international fans, with the support of production partner ITN Productions.
- Barcelona sealed a partnership with Twitter that will allow the Spanish LaLiga football club to expand its presence on the social media website. Barcelona will introduce advertisements, featuring the club and its sponsors, via the Twitter Amplify service.
- Middle Eastern pay-television operator OSN secured a \$400m (€357m) financing facility to boost its sports programming and fund expansion plans.
- Internet video technology provider NeuLion expanded its partnership with the Ultimate Fighting Championship mixed martial arts promotion. NeuLion will support UFC.tv, the UFC's digital channel, offering access to pay-per-view events, and will rebuild and relaunch the series' over-the-top service, UFC Fight Pass. The length of the multi-year deal was not disclosed.

SPORTS CLIPS: News from TVSM Daily from August 27 to September 9**MEDIA RIGHTS 4****Challenge Cup, Rugby World Cup, NRL, America's Cup, WWE and more**

- **Rugby League:** The BBC extended a rights deal in the UK with the Rugby Football League, the sport's governing body in England, to continue broadcasting the Challenge Cup club knockout competition for four years, from 2017 until 2020 (page 2).
 - **Rugby League:** Telco Digicel acquired rights in Papua New Guinea for the National Rugby League, the sport's top division in Australia.
 - **Rugby Union:** Indian pay-television channel Sony Six acquired rights for the 2015 Rugby World Cup. The Sony Six and Sony Kix channels will show live coverage of all 48 matches.
 - **Rugby Union:** State-owned television channel Peretz acquired rights in Russia for the 2015 Rugby World Cup national team tournament.
 - **Sailing:** Swedish commercial and pay-television broadcaster TV4 acquired rights for the America's Cup World Series event in Gothenburg, Sweden, on August 29-30.
 - **US College Sport:** The Learfield Sports agency agreed a five-year extension, from 2016 to 2020, to its exclusive multimedia rights deal with the Patriot League.
 - **Wrestling:** Pay-television channel Zee Cinema acquired rights in India for the WWE promotion, starting on September 13. Zee Cinema will show coverage in Hindi on a daily basis for the first two weeks, thereafter broadcasting once per week.
- The Australian government lifted restrictions on how free-to-air broadcasters can use their digital channels following the completion of the country's digital switch-over process, allowing more sports coverage to be shown in high definition. Broadcasters had previously been bound by a government decree that high-profile sports properties must be broadcast on their standard-definition 'primary' channel to cater for analogue viewers.
 - United World Wrestling, the sport's global governing body, streamed live coverage of the 2015 Wrestling World Championships in Las Vegas, US. The service, accessible via the governing body's website, showed all four mats live plus same-day archiving of matches, highlights, interviews and features.
 - Coverage of the Handball-Bundesliga, the sport's top division in Germany, will reach more than 40 countries in the 2015-16 season following new deals agreed by the MP & Silva agency.
 - The International Netball Federation launched its own channel on video-sharing website YouTube with the support of technology company QTV Sports. The channel will show action from the federation's major events including the Netball World Cup, Commonwealth Games and Fast5 – the shortened version of the game – plus coaching tips, rules advice and player interviews.

INDUSTRY MOVES

- Armin Meier stepped down as managing director of InfrontRingier Sports & Entertainment Switzerland, the Infront Sports & Media agency's joint venture with Swiss media company Ringier. Meier, who was appointed to lead the newly-formed agency in 2011, will pursue new business interests.
- Thierry Thuillier was replaced by Thierry Cheleman as sports director at French pay-television broadcaster Canal Plus after less than three months in the role. Cheleman was previously director of sport at D8, the digital-terrestrial television channel operated by Canal Plus.
- Greg StremLaw was named as the new head of the CBC Sports division of Canadian public-service broadcaster CBC. StremLaw most recently served as chief executive of the Curling Canada national governing body and will start his role at CBC on September 15.
- Jason Lublin, the chief operating officer of WME IMG, will assume Ben Sutton's role as president of the IMG College division of the agency. Sutton will become honorary president of IMG College, which is dedicated to the US college sports industry.

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2nd Floor, 5 Thomas More Square, London E1W 1YW
© TV Sports Markets Ltd 2015.
Printed by Rapidity, Citybridge House,
235-245 Goswell Road, London EC1V 7JD



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