TVSportsMarkets

VOL 19 NUM 20

FRIDAY 6 NOVEMBER 2015

www.sportbusiness.com/tv-sports-markets

TV MIDDLE EAST

BeIN renews Premier League and snatches rights from main Middle-Eastern rival ADM

By Robin Jellis

BeIN Media Group this week finalised its acquisition of English Premier League rights in the Middle East and North Africa, and is close to taking two properties – Uefa European Qualifiers and Wimbledon – from its main rival in the region, Abu Dhabi Media.

BeIN, which operates the pay-television beIN Sports channels, acquired Premier League rights in a three-season deal, from 2016-17 to 2018-19. The deal is worth about $430m (€389m), or about $143m per season.

This is a 30-per-cent increase on the value of the league's current deal in the region with the MP & Silva agency. That deal, from 2013-14 to 2015-16, is worth about $330m, or $110m per season.

MP & Silva sublicensed the rights to beIN over those three seasons, with beIN paying a fractionally higher fee than that paid by the agency. Neither ADM nor beIN bid aggressively for the rights when the league offered them to the market (*TV Sports Markets* 17:3).

The new deal is a good one for both beIN and the league. BeIN has renewed one of its most important properties at a modest increase compared to the increases of 100 per cent or more seen in Hong Kong, Norway, Sweden, and the US (*TV Sports Markets* 19:15; 19:18).

The league, meanwhile, has reversed its decline in the region. Its last deal with MP & Silva was a slight decrease on the

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FOOTBALL

Copa partner will face race against time

By Frank Dunne

The contract for the unsold commercial rights to next year's centenary edition of the Copa América represents an opportunity for sports-rights agencies to build relationships with the two governing bodies of football in the Americas.

But the conditions of the tender, and the circumstances of the sale, will limit the potential upside for any new agency.

Last week, the rights were put out to tender with bids due on November 6. The process is being handled by Conmebol, which governs football in South America, Concacaf, which governs football in North and Central America and the Caribbean, and the local organising committee, an entity created by the US Soccer Federation.

The two governing bodies had bought out the contract from Datisa, the three-way joint venture company created by the Full Play, Torneos and Traffic agencies to handle the global commercial rights and production to the competition.

Datisa had paid $112.5m (€102m) for the rights, of which $77.5m was paid to

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TV MIDDLE EAST

BeIN consolidates position as the home of premium sport

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value of the previous three-season deal with ADM. That deal ran from 2010-11 to 2012-13 and was worth $350m, or just under $117m per season, and represented a 200-per-cent increase on the value of the previous deal (*TV Sports Markets* 18:1).

The latest auction was triggered when ADM approached the league over the possibility of agreeing an early deal. The league launched a tender with bids due by June 11 – it hoped to agree a deal before Ramadan, the Muslim month of fasting and prayer (*TV Sports Markets* 19:12).

Although nothing was announced at the time, sources close to the negotiations told *TV Sports Markets* that the league and beIN struck their deal just before Ramadan.

BeIN is thought to have requested that the league delay any announcement about the deal. One local expert said that if ADM realised it had lost out on the Premier League it may have bid more aggressively for other properties.

The Premier League is key content in the region. ADM's interest was further driven by its desire to show the matches of Manchester City – both ADM and Manchester City are owned by Abu Dhabi's ruling family. In the current cycle ADM explored the possibility of acquiring only Manchester City matches. The league, however, rejected this.

Pay-television operator OSN and OTT subscription service Starz also registered interest in the Premier League rights, but neither is thought to have bid against ADM and beIN.

It is understood that there was just one round of bidding before the league and beIN finalised terms in direct negotiations. BeIN's offer is thought to have been well ahead of ADM's.

Uefa package

BeIN is understood to have wrested a package of Uefa rights – including European Qualifier rights – in the region from ADM in a four-season deal.

CAA Eleven, Uefa's sales agent for its national team competitions, set a bid deadline of June 4. It also hoped to conclude a deal before Ramadan.

The rights cover the qualifier matches of European federations from 2018-19 to 2021-22, the Nations League friendly tournament, and other international matches. BeIN has agreed a deal thought to be worth about $175m in total for the whole package. It is understood that the deal is agreed in principle but has not yet been signed off.

ADM and beIN are thought to have been the only two bidders. After their first offers they immediately entered one-to-one negotiations.

The fee is considered a strong one for Uefa, European football's governing body, especially as no matches featuring teams from Mena are included. Interest in the properties is primarily driven by star individuals.

It is the first time this package of rights has been sold. The 2018-19 season will be the first of the new Nations League friendly tournament.

ADM holds European Qualifier rights in the current cycle, from 2014-15 to 2017-18. It beat beIN and at least one other bidder. The deal is worth about $85m over the period, or more than $21m per season (*TV Sports Markets* 18:1; 18:14).

BeIN did not bid aggressively when the European Qualifier rights were last sold. The property and Uefa's 'Week of Football' concept were untried, but both have been a success.

The deal completes beIN's football portfolio in the region – it holds rights to all other top football. Although it doesn't currently have the European Qualifiers it holds Euro 2016 rights in the region as part of a two-tournament deal that also includes Euro 2012, worth a total of $100m (*TV Sports Markets* 13:19).

Wimbledon

BeIN is also thought to be in an advanced stage of negotiations over a deal for the Wimbledon Championships in the region.

Wimbledon tennis rights in Mena were held by ADM in a five-year deal, from 2011 to 2015, worth an average of $1.7m per year. The rights were expected to be tendered due to the strong competition between ADM and beIN (*TV Sports Markets* 19:13).

It is thought that negotiations over a new deal began in July, during this year's championships. A deal is expected to be finalised before the end of the year.

Competition cools

Rights-holders now expect competition for top sports rights to cool in the region. BeIN holds rights to the top five European football leagues, the Champions League and Europa League, the Fifa World Cup and the Olympic Games, with little on the market in the immediate future.

Instead of bidding aggressively for expensive football rights, ADM's strategy is now geared toward acquiring relatively cheap second-tier content that appeals to a local audience (*TV Sports Markets* 19:18).

ADM closed its pay-television platform and migrated its channels to OSN's platform in August 2014. ADM is thought to have had less than 100,000 subscribers. Without a platform of its own it is unlikely that ADM will be able to compete aggressively against beIN for premium sports rights in the future.

BeIN has about 2.8m subscribers in the region. OSN has about 1m subscribers, of which between 400,000 and 600,000 are said to access ADM channels.

BeIN this month announced it would launch entertainment and movie channels in the region. This is seen as an attempt to steal subscribers from OSN, which operates a variety of channels, including sports channels.

The move is part of a wider goal, supported by the Qatari government, to make beIN one of the largest sports and entertainment groups in the world, on a par with Discovery Communications and 21st Century Fox.

The same is true of the country's leading news organisation, Al Jazeera. The proposals were set out during the reign of Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, in July 2008's 'Pillars of Qatar National Vision 2030'. ■

TV EUROPE

Olympic bid defeat reveals fault lines in EBU solidarity

By Frank Dunne

The European Broadcasting Union's chances of winning the rights to the Olympic Games from 2018 to 2024 were undermined by two internal splits, *TV Sports Markets* understands. One was between Nordic EBU members and the majority on bidding strategy; the other was between Rai, TVE and TRT and the other members on valuations.

Restrictions placed on US media group Discovery Communications by Nordic members torpedoed a planned joint bid for the Olympic Games by the EBU and Discovery, leaving the latter well placed for its eventual victory.

Once the joint bid collapsed and the EBU was left on its own, its position was fatally weakened by the bids from Rai in Italy, TVE in Spain and TRT in Turkey, which were less than half the value of the rights for the 2014 and 2016 Games on a pro rata basis.

Joint bid collapses

With the Infront Sports & Media agency, under its aggressive new Chinese owners Dalian Wanda, viewed as the main threat to both the EBU and Discovery, the consortium of public-service broadcasters initially teamed up with the US channel syndicator.

Discovery wanted to show coverage across Europe on its pan-regional Eurosport sports channels, but also on its basic-tier and free-to-air channels owned by SBS Discovery Media in Denmark, Norway, and Sweden.

The planned bid is said to have fallen through just days before the June 15 bid deadline, when Discovery's board rejected the conditions imposed by EBU members in Scandinavia, concerned about their audiences being cannibalised by coverage across Eurosport and SBS.

A senior figure at one Nordic broadcaster said there had been strong opposition in the region to the joint bid from the outset, and that this had been ignored within the EBU.

"For Scandinavia, it was not acceptable to make a joint bid with Discovery with them having free access to the Olympics in our region. The Eurosport use of a national broadcast signal in each market, as well as their free use of OTT services, were matters we could not accept."

He added: "There are people in the EBU who still don't understand that Eurosport is no longer a friend but a rival."

Although not technically a member of the EBU, Eurosport had acted as a guarantor of many EBU deals until it was bought by Discovery in November 2012 from owner French commercial broadcaster and EBU member TF1.

> *"Eurosport is no longer a friend but a rival."*

Many other EBU members believed a joint bid was the best strategy for winning the rights. Very few were concerned about the erosion of audiences from Eurosport coverage – it is something they are used to. However, they did not also face the threat of coverage on local free-to-air and basic-tier channels that would have affected the Nordic members.

Some Nordic members also fear that having been part of the negotiations for a joint bid left Eurosport with the advantage of an insight into EBU thinking. But one source close to the consortium rejected this. He said that Discovery was at no stage made aware of the EBU valuation of the rights for Europe as a whole, for groups of territories or for single territories.

The two parties eventually bid separately, with Discovery/Eurosport outbidding the EBU (*TV Sports Markets* 19:13). Discovery/Eurosport bid €1.3bn ($1.44bn) for the Games of 2018, 2020, 2022 and 2024, excluding the 2018 and 2020 rights in the UK and France. The EBU bid €1.09bn.

Bid breakdown

The EBU bid was broken down into four blocks of territories: Group A consisted of the UK, Germany, and France; Group B of Italy, Spain and Turkey; Group C of the Nordic and Baltic regions; and Group D of the rest of Europe.

For the 2014 and 2016 Games, the IOC sold the rights directly to broadcasters in six major markets (Germany, the UK, France, Italy, Spain and Turkey) and agreed a €236m deal for the 40 remaining territories with the Sportfive agency.

The €600m valuation of Group A for the four Games from 2018 to 2024 was in line on a pro rata basis with the 2014-16 value of €300m in the territories. The €130m valuation from the Nordics and Baltics was up on the €60m value for 2014-16. The €160m valuation for the rest of Europe was fractionally down on the €85m valuation for 2014-16.

However, the €200m valuation in Group B (Italy's Rai, Spain's TVE and Turkey's TRT) was less than half of the €245m value of the 2014-16 Games in the same territories on a pro rata basis.

Mediterranean meltdown

The EBU members in Italy, Spain and Turkey had compelling reasons for making a low offer: the value for the 2014 and 2016 Games in their territories had been inflated.

Italy: The rights for the 2014 and 2016 Games had been acquired by pay-television platform Sky Italia for €152m, which was widely considered a substantial overpayment on which the broadcaster stood to lose heavily.

In 2013, following a move away from investing in major events, Sky sublicensed the live rights to the 2016 Games to Rai, plus highlights of the 2014 Games, in a deal worth about €65m.

Rai knew Sky was not going to bid again for 2018 onwards and that it therefore faced no competitor in the market, which hugely reduced the broadcaster's valuation of the Games.

Spain: Public-service broadcaster TVE paid €70m for the 2014-16 rights at a time when Madrid was still in the running to host 2016. Given the broadcaster's funding crisis, this was widely seen as unsustainable.

Turkey: Rupert Murdoch's Fox acquired the 2014-16 rights for €23m as part of a long-term plan to roll out its sports channels in the country, which never came to fruition. It sublicensed the 2014 rights to TRT for €3m to €4m, making a heavy loss, and in September sublicensed the 2016 rights to the Saran Media agency (*TV Sports Markets* 19:17).

Long-term threat

The head of sports rights acquisitions at one major EBU broadcaster played down the significance of the splits within the organisation, both about the joint bid and on valuations.

He said that within the EBU there had always been members with very different agendas. A general entertainment broadcaster would have a very different attitude to the role of Eurosport to that of a broadcaster with a dedicated sports channel, like some Nordic EBU members.

Similarly, it had always been understood that conditions in some markets would be harder than in others. Every bid was a balancing act between the stronger and weaker markets. Most members accepted that there were good reasons why the valuations from Rai, TVE and TRT were low this time.

Another EBU source said: "Our bid reflected the actual value of the broadcast rights in Europe, as it did in 2014-16. At that time we predicted a loss for Sportfive of CHF20m (€18.4m/$20.3m), which materialised."

Another EBU head of sport said that the defeat to Discovery showed the limitations of the consortium in a changing market, admitting that such losses were likely to be repeated in future.

"We are public-service and private national broadcasters competing in an increasingly pan-European and global market", he said.

"We can only offer the market value of the rights, which is what we did. We cannot speculate or take risks. Companies like Discovery, beIN Media and, in the future, the likes of Google, will pay strategic fees to force their way into the market." ■

AGENCIES

Mediapro looks to YouTube to plug distribution gaps

By Richard Welbirg

Spanish agency Mediapro has agreed deals with video-sharing website YouTube to plug gaps in the distribution of the international rights to the Copa del Rey and the beIN Sports pay-television channels in Spain.

Deal 1: YouTube will host non-exclusive pay-per-view coverage of the Copa del Rey, excluding the final, in 17 territories. It is the first time it has shown football on a pay-per-view basis.

The deal has three benefits for Mediapro and Spain's LaLiga, who are selling the rights. In territories where there is a broadcast deal with a low value it offers greater income. It ensures coverage in territories where no broadcast deal could be agreed. And it acts as a proof of concept for the league.

Deal 2: YouTube will host the beIN Sports Live subscription channel in a bid to maximise the number of beIN Sports subscribers. The deal is designed to help compensate for the absence of a carriage deal with Movistar Plus, the country's dominant pay-television platform. Mediapro is the distributor of the beIN Sports channels in Spain.

Copa deal

Under the terms of the Copa del Rey deal, YouTube will earn commission on ppv buys, with the remainder paid to Mediapro and LaLiga. Individual matches are available for €4.99, while a tournament-long subscription costs €19.99.

Copa del Rey rights-holders, selected territories, 2015-16 to 2017-18

Territory	Rights-holder
Scandinavia	MP & Silva
The Netherlands	Sport1
Greece	Asset Ogilvy
Poland	NC Plus
Israel	Charlton
South Africa	Liquid Telecom
Indian subcontinent	Ten Sports
Central America	Sky Mexico
Caribbean	Sportsmax

Source: TV Sports Markets Rights Tracker

The deal covers the 2015-16 season. Whether it is extended, or Mediapro and the league re-tender the rights to broadcasters in following seasons, will depend on its success.

The channel can be extended to other countries without a linear broadcast deal for the Copa del Rey. Potentially, it could be available wherever YouTube has the infrastructure for advertising and billing functionality.

YouTube already carries LaLiga's clips and highlights channel, in an agreement managed by Mediapro. The decision to create a ppv channel came out of regular discussions with the agency.

The new channel began broadcasting on October 28 with the round-of-16 game between Villanovense and Barcelona. Sixty matches will be shown live, up to the semi-finals on March 15 in: Belgium, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Macedonia, the Netherlands, Portugal, Russia, Slovakia, Slovenia, the Ukraine and the UK in Europe; Hong Kong, Japan and South Korea in Asia; and Argentina and Brazil in South America.

Copa del Rey sales

Mediapro was appointed as the international marketing partner of Spain's LaLiga in June this year (*TV Sports Markets* 19:12). It earned the league about €650m ($718m) per season from deals from 2015-16 (*TV Sports Markets* 19:15).

It sold the Copa del Rey separately from LaLiga because of uncertainty over the ownership of the rights. Under the Royal Decree, which instituted collective selling of Spanish football rights, Mediapro holds Copa del Rey rights in 2015-16, but thereafter they belong to the Spanish Football Federation, the Real Federación Española de Fútbol.

The federation already holds the rights

to the Copa del Rey final, which Spanish law states must be shown free-to-air. The final is included in the package of federation rights distributed internationally by the B4 Capital agency, and held domestically by commercial broadcaster Mediaset (*TV Sports Markets* 19:2)

The federation had the option to sell the newly-granted Copa del Rey rights itself, or cede them to LaLiga in return for the greater of one per cent of the league's total media rights revenues or €10m. It chose to cede the rights, but did so after LaLiga and Mediapro had completed the league's international sales cycle.

Mediapro and LaLiga opened a separate international tender for Copa del Rey rights, which ran until September 10. The agency had struck direct single-season deals for the rights with the beIN Media Group in France, the Middle East and North Africa and North America, so these territories were excluded from the tender.

Mediapro had also agreed a deal with Sky Mexico in Central America for the 2015-16 season, and here rights were tendered only for the 2016-17 and 2017-18 seasons.

Bidders had to commit to showing at least four matches from each round.

Three-season deals, from 2015-16 to 2017-18, were agreed in certain countries (see table, page 4). In several territories, offers failed to meet the desired price.

TV Sports Markets understands the projected global value of Copa del Rey rights in 2015-16 will be close to €32.5m, once the agreement with YouTube is factored in.

BeIN deal

Mediapro has thus far been unable to agree a carriage deal with telco Telefónica for the beIN Sports channels. Discussions continue but it is thought unlikely the two will agree terms this year.

Negotiations are affected by two forthcoming rights sales: of English Premier League rights from 2016-17 to 2018-19, and domestic LaLiga rights over the same period.

Telefónica and beIN are likely to go head-to-head over both properties, and there is little incentive for the telco to pay beIN carriage fees that could advantage the media group in either tender.

It leaves Movistar Plus subscribers – estimated as 3.6m at the end of 2014 – needing an additional subscription to watch Champions League or Europa League matches involving Spanish teams. Rights to both competitions were acquired by Mediapro together with beIN (*TV Sports Markets* 18:18; 19:5).

BeIN Sports is carried on the platforms of telcos Orange, Telecable and Vodafone, but these represent only 30 per cent of the country's pay-television subscribers.

It is also available as an à la carte OTT subscription via beIN Sports Connect or Mediapro's Total Channel platform.

Total Channel has been plagued by technical problems: the platform crashed ahead of Champions League matches on September 17, leaving about 7,000 subscribers unable to watch.

Striking a deal with YouTube gives beIN Sports broader coverage and reliable infrastructure. The agreement covers the 2015-16 season.

BeIN Sports Live is the same price as beIN Sports Connect and Total Channel: €9.99 per month. ■

OLYMPIC GAMES

CBC pays small increase to extend IOC partnership

By Richard Welbirg

Canadian public-service broadcaster CBC paid a small increase to extend its deal with the International Olympic Committee to cover the 2022 and 2024 Games.

CBC will pay about $95m (€86m) for the 2022 winter Games in Beijing, China, and the yet-to-be awarded 2024 summer Games. The fee is up 5.6 per cent on the $90m it is thought to have paid for the 2018 and 2020 Games.

Greg Stremlaw, head of CBC Sports, told *TV Sports Markets* this week: "We expect at worst to break even. We exceeded expectations for Sochi and hope to do the same for these." The broadcaster is understood to have made a profit on the Sochi games.

It continues a pattern of small increases in the value of Olympic rights in Canada. CBC paid about $85m for the 2014 and 2016 Games.

There is no competition for the rights – the committee faces what is effectively a buying cartel: telco Rogers Communications and media company BCE, which operates Bell Media, struck sublicensing deals with CBC before the latter agreed a deal with the IOC.

Rogers and Bell teamed up to oust CBC as broadcaster for the home 2010 Games in Vancouver and the 2012 Games in London, UK (*TV Sports Markets* 9:2). But they are thought to have lost money on both Games, and have not bid against the public-service broadcaster for Olympics rights since.

The consistent rise in fees, despite limited competition for the rights, is based on the strength of the relationship between CBC and the IOC. The Canadian broadcaster is seen as a key partner in the distribution and support of the forthcoming Olympic channel.

Olympic rights are CBC's key sports property. The broadcaster has cut its spending on sport in recent years, and refocused its sports strategy around the Games and Olympic sports.

The situation also suits Bell and Rogers. It is unlikely either could make a serious bid for the Games without CBC. Rogers is limited financially by its C$5.23bn (€3.60bn/$3.98bn) deal with the NHL, and both Rogers and Bell have top sport to schedule in the summer. Rogers airs Toronto Blue Jays baseball games, while Bell holds the rights to the Canadian Football League (*TV Sports Markets* 17:22).

TV Sports Markets understands the sublicensing arrangements between CBC and both Bell and Rogers will be the same as the deals already in place for the 2018 and 2020 Games.

Major events will be broadcast on CBC. Less important events will be shown on the TSN, Sportsnet, TSN2 and Sportsnet One channels, in that order. ■

FOOTBALL

Datisa left with little option but to sell Copa rights back

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Conmebol and $35m to Concacaf.

Informed sources say the total commercial income for the competition – had Datisa completed its sales process – would have been between $250m and $300m, of which media rights would have accounted for about 70 per cent.

The invitation to tender covers unsold broadcast rights, sponsorship rights, broadcast services and limited digital rights. Production costs are covered by the event organisers.

One informed source said that the governing bodies would prefer to sell all rights to one partner, as there were clear advantages for both them and the seller, but that it would not rule out doing multiple deals.

Agencies expected to bid for part or all of the contract include IMG Events & Media, Infront Sports & Media, Lagardère Sports, Mediapro, MP & Silva, and Pitch International. Bidders are asked to propose valuations and also the funding model – whether based on a minimum guarantee, commission or a retainer.

Agency sources point out that the fact that such an important property is being sold as part of a transparent auction process with a detailed tender document represents a massive cultural shift in the region, one which has been driven by the ongoing corruption scandal there.

The tournament is scheduled to take place between June 3 and June 26 next year. The host cities in the US will be decided in mid-December. The tournament will include 10 teams from Conmebol and six teams from Concacaf.

Media limits

Much of the media value of the tournament has already been accounted for. Datisa agreed deals in 104 territories, including deals for the valuable Spanish-language rights in the US and the rights in Mexico (see panel).

Among the unsold territories there are only two markets where the competition will have a substantial value – the US, for English-language rights, and the Middle East and North Africa. Whoever wins the new contract will only be able to make a margin on the latter.

Prior to the US Department of Justice investigation into football corruption becoming public in May, Datisa had a verbal agreement with Rupert Murdoch's Fox Sports for the English-language rights in the US. Any new agency will be paid a "pre-determined administration fee" to finalise this deal.

2016 Copa media rights sold

Europe: Bosnia & Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovenia
North America: Mexico, US (Spanish-language)
South America: Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Uruguay, Venezuela
Asia: Thailand
Sub-Saharan Africa: 49 territories
Caribbean: 28 territories

The rights will have value in Europe and Asia, especially to pay-television platforms looking for high-quality football in the summer months, but this will be limited by the time-zone difference. In Europe there is the further problem of the competition clashing directly with the Euro 2016 tournament.

Mena remains a market from which a substantial profit could be made. Pay-television broadcaster Abu Dhabi Media was in pole position in negotiations, having made a very strong offer. But ADM will have no advantage in any new negotiations, which will allow beIN Media Group, its main rival, back into the negotiations on exactly the same footing.

Sponsorship

Datisa had conducted extensive negotiations with potential sponsors but had not signed off any agreements. It was close to a deal with one telco and the new agency will be expected to try to close that deal for a pre-determined admin fee. If the deal is not closed the rights will come back into the overall package.

The biggest challenge facing the agency selling sponsorship rights is the time available. It will have only a few months – November to May – to conclude deals, which will not put it in a strong negotiating position. Major corporations often need many months to sign off big marketing campaigns and usually do so a year or more in advance.

Legal battle

In the wake of the DoJ case, and the allegations it contained about senior executives from Full Play, Torneos, and Traffic, Datisa had tried to sell on the contracts. It held talks with a number of interested agencies (*TV Sports Markets* 19:14). But the two governing bodies refused to approve any such deals.

The three agencies which make up Datisa believed they had legal grounds to challenge Conmebol and Concacaf. But given the time constraints, and pressure from the DoJ for a quick resolution, Datisa found itself in a very weak bargaining position. In the end it had to sell back the rights at what insiders say was an extremely good price for the confederations.

Datisa had already secured income from the sale of rights to the competition but this is now in a bank account which has been frozen by the DoJ. The amount that Datisa was paid by the two confederations took into account the money held by Datisa, which was subtracted from the total.

Datisa also has a deal with Conmebol for the rights to the 2019 and 2023 editions of the Copa. The agency paid $80m for 2019 and $85m for 2023. Insiders say it will fight to hold on to this contract, and, not having the same time pressure, has a stronger position. With Conmebol unlikely to approve sales to third parties, a legal battle is looming.

In July, Traffic Sports USA handed back to Concacaf the sponsorship rights it held to the biennial Gold Cup until 2021 and the Concacaf Champions League until 2022 (*TV Sports Markets* 19:15). It had paid $60m for the rights. ■

FOOTBALL

Gazprom's grip on sport slashes Uefa rights revenue

By Callum McCarthy

Uefa is the latest rights-holder to feel the pinch from the new-look Russian sports rights market, as the income from its club competitions in the territory has plummeted well below previous cycles.

Gazprom Media, a subsidiary of state-owned energy company Gazprom, will pay about €15m ($16.6m) per season for rights to Uefa's Champions League and Europa League competitions. The three-season deal, from 2015-16 to 2017-18, was brokered by Team Marketing, Uefa's sales agent for its club competitions.

This is about half the amount European football's governing body earned for the same package in the previous cycle, and about 40 per cent less than in 2008, when Russia was badly affected by the global economic crisis.

In the previous cycle, Uefa had a three-season deal with Gazprom-owned pay-television operator NTV Plus, from 2012-13 to 2014-15, worth about €30m per season. In the cycle before that, from 2009-10 to 2011-12, NTV Plus paid about €25m per season.

In the new deal, coverage will be split between NTV Plus and free-to-air terrestrial channel Match TV, which is also owned by Gazprom Media.

Match TV will show the matches of all Russian clubs in both competitions, and a minimum of one game per week should Russian clubs be eliminated. NTV Plus will show all other games on its three NTV Plus Football channels.

Gazprom's deal with Uefa, European football's governing body, is yet to be signed. But its pay-television and free-to-air channels have already begun broadcasting matches, and the official completion of the deal is thought to be a formality.

Uefa opted to stick to its three-season cycle in Russia, a departure from the recent trend of foreign rights-holders agreeing one-season deals in the territory.

The governing body believes the market is highly unlikely to change in the near future and wanted to keep its media rights contracts in sync with its other deals in major markets.

Out of options

The depreciation of the rouble and the consolidation of sports broadcasting in Russia looks to have ended hopes of income growth for rights-holders.

Gazprom Media is currently the only company authorised by the Russian government to acquire sports content, leaving rights-holders with no competition for their rights.

Uefa is relieved the damage in Russia has been limited to a halving of its income. It is believed Gazprom Media valued the property at €3m per season at the beginning of negotiations. Even when the deal is calculated in roubles – the currency in which Gazprom Media does its business – the value of the deal has fallen slightly.

Gazprom Media will pay the equivalent of about RUB1.06bn per season in the new deal. This is a decrease of about 11 per cent on the RUB1.19bn per season its previous fee was worth at the time.

Uefa explored options to maximise its revenue, including a carve-out of digital rights and approaching other broadcasters. It chose not to exercise these options for three reasons.

First, it felt the Russian OTT market is not mature enough to support a property as big as the Champions League. There is no dominant OTT service in Russia, and the struggling advertising market means there is currently little chance for growth.

Second, rival broadcasters such as state broadcaster VGTRK have been instructed not to compete with Gazprom Media for sports properties to prevent rights fee inflation. VGTRK told Uefa it would not be able to bid, and that a sale to Gazprom Media would be its only option.

Third, Uefa felt playing hardball with Gazprom Media by carving out digital rights could jeopardise a relationship it needed to maintain. It is understood that nurturing this relationship was key to preventing the complete collapse of Uefa's income in the territory.

Euro 2016 woes

Uefa is yet to complete a deal in Russia for the Euro 2016 tournament, despite assertions of Russian Football Union president Vitaly Mutko to the contrary. The delay is thought to be due to both financial and political reasons.

The Telesport agency, which represents the RFU's commercial interests, has for some time been attempting to strike a deal for the tournament with CAA Eleven, Uefa's sales agent for its national team competitions.

Telesport was well-placed to agree a deal for Euro 2016 earlier in the year: it appeared to be in a strong financial position, with Roman Rotenberg – son of Boris Rotenberg, owner of oil pipeline construction company SGM Group – set to acquire an 80-per-cent stake in the company.

But the deal fell through in May, and Telesport, with the help of Mutko, is looking for outside investment in order to acquire the rights. Local reports suggest Uefa values the rights at about €22m.

It is believed that if Telesport is successful, it would pass on the rights to one or more free-to-air broadcasters in Russia for a fee and a share of any advertising revenue.

State-owned broadcasters VGTRK and Channel One agreed a stopgap deal for Euro 2016 qualifying matches last September, and the broadcasters are believed to be keen to show at least some of the tournament, despite Gazprom Media's monopoly on sports rights.

The Russian government prefers major sporting events to be shown on free-to-air channels, and Match TV would be unable to broadcast all 51 Euro 2016 matches.

VGTRK and Channel One cannot afford to buy the rights for themselves – the broadcasters defaulted on their payments for the Euro 2016 qualifiers during the summer, blaming the rouble's depreciation.

Match TV, Channel One and VGTRK are expected to meet to discuss how the rights could be split. Sources close to the situation believe that regardless of the outcome of these meetings, the decision over who broadcasts the tournament will be a political one. ■

PREMIER LEAGUE

Mixed results from first slate of sales in Asia-Pacific region

By Richard Welbirg

England's Premier League this week completed the first set of deals across Asia for its rights in the 2016-17 to 2018-19 cycle, with mixed results. It saw significant increases in value from Australia and New Zealand, but a decline in Thailand, Laos and Cambodia, while Malaysia and Myanmar are proving difficult.

Initial bidding for the five territories closed on October 27, but all five required at least a second round of bidding, which closed on November 2.

The league also finalised the sale of its rights in the Middle East and North Africa (see separate story, page 1). The rights for Europe were tendered on November 2 with a bid deadline of November 24.

Australia

Telco Optus shocked the market by snatching Premier League rights from pay-television operator Foxtel at a huge increase.

Optus, which is owned by Singaporean telco Singtel, will pay $50m (€45m) per season from 2016-17 to 2018-19. It is a 213-per-cent increase on the $16m per season Foxtel pays in the 2013-14 to 2015-16 cycle.

When the rights were last tendered, their value increased just three per cent as Foxtel faced minimal competition. BeIN Media Group, which launched in Australia with the acquisition of Setanta Sports in October 2014, was expected to provide the main competition.

After three rounds of bidding, Optus is thought to have outbid beIN by at least $55m across the cycle, with Fox further behind.

Optus has a significant customer base, but no existing channels or distribution mechanism. It has not announced how it intends to exploit the rights.

One media rights executive said the size of Optus's bid was a long way out of line with the market, but the telco had targeted the Premier League for its entrance into live sport for three reasons.

First, though football is the fourth most popular sport in the country, the Premier League is the must-have content for those fans. Second, it is the strongest property that could be acquired with complete exclusivity. Third, it provides nine months of content, compared to the seven-month NRL or six-month AFL seasons.

It is unlikely Optus can profit on the broadcast of a deal of this size, but the rights will be a loss leader which will help drive uptake across the telco's mobile and broadband businesses.

New Zealand

BeIN acquired the Premier League rights in New Zealand, where it is yet to launch its sport channels. It will pay $10m over the three seasons from 2016-17 to

Selected Premier League international rights deals in Asia

	2016-17 to 2018-19		2013-14 to 2015-16		
Territory	**Rights-holder**	**Value ($m per season)**	**Rights-holder**	**Value ($m per season)**	**% change**
Australia	Optus	50	Foxtel	16	213
Japan	MP & Silva	26.7	IMG Events & Media	17	57
New Zealand[1]	BeIN Media Group	3.3	MP & Silva	1.1	200
Thailand, Laos & Cambodia	BeIN Media Group	97	CTH	105	-8

Source: *TV Sports Markets Rights Tracker* [1]*Part of a deal that also included the Pacific Islands*

Telco battle drives 860% increase in the Caribbean

Competition between rival telcos in the Caribbean last month helped the Premier League earn the largest percentage increase of its sales cycle thus far.

The head to head between multi-national telcos Cable & Wireless Communications and Digicel drove an 860-per-cent increase in value.

CWC will pay about $25m (€22.6m) per season for rights in 32 Caribbean countries from 2016-17 to 2018-19. The property will help drive quad-play take-up of its Flow platform, which was relaunched in July.

The new platform incorporates the Columbus International-owned operator Lime. CWC acquired Columbus for $1.85bn in March.

Sports broadcaster Sportsmax – acquired by Digicel in September 2014 – has been the long-term home of the Premier League in the region. It has historically faced very little competition.

Oliver McIntosh, Sportsmax president and chief executive, told *TV Sports Markets* the changing market was likely to drive fees up "across the board".

In its most recent deal, from 2013-14 to 2015-16, it renewed at a slight increase, from $2.2m per season to about $2.6m per season.

The deal means Canada is the only territory in the Americas where the league is yet to sell its rights in this cycle.

Pay-television broadcasters DirecTV Latin America and Sky Mexico renewed their deals across Latin America, excluding Brazil, for a combined fee of about $55m per season from 2016-17 to 2018-19. The deal is a 65-per-cent increase on the $33.3m per season the two paid in a joint bid for the 2013-14 to 2015-16 cycle.

DirecTV will exploit the rights in South America, Sky in Central America and the Dominican Republic. DirecTV holds a 41-per-cent stake in Sky.

The Premier League's tender forbade agency or joint bids for the forthcoming cycle, so the two bid separately in their areas of operation. ■

2018-19, or about $3.3m per season.

In the current cycle, the MP & Silva agency paid $1.6m per season for the rights in New Zealand and the Pacific Islands. New Zealand is thought to have represented about $1.1m per season of the combined fee.

The fee will be difficult for beIN to recoup from the market. Sky New Zealand is the dominant pay-television operator and will have a strong base in carriage negotiations. Sky is thought to have bid for the rights.

The deal is a blow to Coliseum Sports Media, which sublicenses the rights from MP & Silva for about $1.5m per season in the current cycle. Coliseum built an online subscription service on the back of the rights (*TV Sports Markets* 17:12).

In January, Coliseum partnered with former state telco Lightbox to form Lightbox Sport, which is thought to have bid unsuccessfully for the rights.

Thailand, Laos and Cambodia

In a deal covering Thailand, Laos and Cambodia, beIN outbid the incumbent, pay-television operator CTH, paying $290m across the three seasons, or $97m per season.

It is an eight-per-cent decline from the $105m per season CTH pays from 2013-14 to 2015-16. Rival pay-television operator TrueVisions made a smaller bid.

It had been widely expected that fees would decline in the new cycle. Competition between seven bidders drove the league's rights fee up 480 per cent the last time the rights were sold for the three territories. Consolidation in the market has since dampened the competitive environment, most notably the merger between the pay-television businesses of CTH and media group GMM Grammy.

BeIN has a carriage deal with TrueVisions and is likely to seek one with CTH, which has built a strong subscriber base on the back of the Premier League.

It is a positive outcome for TrueVisions: its direct rival has lost the rights, and it increases the importance of its exclusive deal with the domestic Thai Premier League. The domestic league is a close second to the Premier League as the country's key property.

TrueVisions extended its deal for the league by four years last month, from 2017 to 2020, at a 75-per-cent increase in value. It will pay THB1.05bn (€26.8m/$29.6m) per season, up from THB600m between 2014 and 2016.

It increased its fee significantly in order to complete a new deal during an exclusive negotiating window, and avoid the rights coming to the market.

Japan and the Philippines

In Japan, MP & Silva is thought to have paid about $80m, or $26.7m per season, to win the rights for the next cycle in the first round of bidding. This is a 57-per-cent increase on the $17m per season rival agency IMG Events & Media pays in the 2013-14 to 2015-16 cycle.

Incumbent MP & Silva won the rights in the Philippines, also in the first round. Rights in the current cycle are held by the agency in a deal that also includes Chinese Taipei. MP & Silva acquired the rights after the initial winner, the KJ Sports n Media agency, was unable to sell them on and handed them back to the Premier League.

The rights were tendered at the same time in Chinese Taipei, Mongolia, the Pacific Islands, South Korea and Vietnam, with bids due on November 3. All have gone to a second round, with bids due on November 9.

Malaysia and Myanmar

Negotiations are also still under way in Malaysia and Myanmar. In Malaysia, it is understood the bidders are beIN and pay-television platform Astro, the incumbent rights-holder.

Astro pays $80m per season in the 2013-14 to 2015-16 cycle, but has taken an increasingly firm stance against increasing rights fees. The broadcaster has a dominant position in the market. Telekom Malaysia, its closest rival, has less than a quarter of Astro's subscribers. Astro has also made clear to pay-television channels that it will not pay excessive carriage fees.

In Myanmar, it is thought that bids were a long way short of the $15m per season paid by pay-television broadcaster SkyNet in the current cycle (*TV Sports Markets* 16:22). ■

TV FINLAND

Nelonen looks set to take step back from sports rights market

By Robin Jellis

Finnish commercial and pay-television broadcaster Nelonen is set to reduce its investment in sports rights, experts say, following its move to cut jobs and dismantle its sport department.

Media group Sanoma, which owns Nelonen, last month cut 241 jobs across the businesses it owns and runs – part of a €50m ($55.2m) cost-saving initiative. Sanoma has been hit hard by the economic downturn, which has affected Finland later than most other European countries. Advertising revenue has fallen year-on-year for four years.

Nelonen had a television sports department of seven people. Three of these, including head of sport Jorma Paakkari, have left the company. The four remaining staff have been relocated to different departments. Nelonen's sport content is set to be handled by its general programming team.

The move has cast doubt over Nelonen's future as a broadcaster of sport. One local expert said: "Definitely, they will buy less in Finland. When they acquired the SM Liiga it was more or less a question of their existence in the pay-TV market. But they overpaid tremendously."

The SM Liiga, the top-tier domestic ice hockey league, is Nelonen's most important property. It holds the league's rights in a five-season deal, from 2013-14 to 2017-18, worth between €16m and €17m per season. Nelonen is said to be losing between €3m and €6m per season on the contract.

The value of the current deal was a big increase on the league's previous deals, from 2008-09 to 2012-13, which were worth a total of about €10m per season (*TV Sports Markets* 16:11). Local experts expect the fee to decrease by between 25 per cent and 50 per cent in a new deal from 2018-19 onward.

Nevertheless, having the SM Liiga

rights is critical for a pay-television operator. It is the top subscription-driving property in Finland. Sports pay-television and internet service Urho TV ceased operations in early 2014 after losing the SM Liiga rights led to bankruptcy.

Nelonen's business is mostly reliant on coverage of the SM Liiga. But sources say it may sublicense some rights in the coming seasons to reduce the financial burden of the contract. It is also thought unlikely to bid aggressively when the rights return to the market.

It is likely to renew cheaper content in the short term in order to continue running its two sports channels. But in the long term it is expected to be less aggressive for sports rights.

Portfolio

Nelonen's other important properties are: MotoGP rights, from 2013 to 2015, worth just over €500,000 per year; and World Rally Championship rights, from 2014 to 2015, worth about €400,000 per year. Motorsport and ice hockey are the two most popular sports in Finland.

Nelonen also holds Uefa Europa League rights in a three-season deal, from 2015-16 to 2017-18, worth €100,000 per season – but football is of limited interest in the country (*TV Sports Markets* 19:8).

It also has deals in place for US Masters golf (2014 to 2016), NBA basketball (2014-15 to 2016-17), the English League Cup competition, Nascar stock racing, American football's NFL and FIVB World Tour volleyball. Despite the cuts and restructuring, Nelonen is expected to honour all existing contracts.

Sanoma also owns newspaper *Ilta-Sanomat*, which runs the IPTV service IS Extra. The service shows matches from the top-tier domestic football league, the Veikkausliiga, and is available for €9.90 per month.

IS Extra and Nelonen are not really seen as competitors as IS Extra is not able to match the rights fees paid by Nelonen. Local sources say there is no clear strategy to rights acquisitions between Nelonen and IS Extra. One source close to Sanoma said there have been "competitive elements" between the two, but that they "will run more cohesively in future".

Formula One finalised

Nelonen's main rival, commercial and pay-television broadcaster MTV3, last month finalised a three-year renewal of Formula One rights in Finland.

The deal will run from 2016 to 2018 and is thought to be worth close to $16m per year. MTV3's current deal, from 2013 to 2015, is worth about $15m per year.

The rights were sold by Formula One Management, the championship's commercial rights-holder. There are said to have been rival bids from both Nelonen and multi-territory commercial and pay-television broadcaster Modern Times Group.

FOM is said to have been happy to renew with a long-term broadcast partner, while also extracting an increase from a tough market.

Formula One is the second most important sports property in Finland, behind the SM Liiga. But despite MTV3's renewal, local experts say it may lose subscribers to MTG following its failure to renew English Premier League rights in the country (*TV Sports Markets* 19:18).

MTG has a strong portfolio of football rights in the country with the Uefa Champions League, Spain's LaLiga, Italy's Serie A and France's Ligue 1 from 2015-16 to 2017-18.

It will also have Premier League rights from 2016-17 to 2018-19. MTG also has National Hockey League and Kontinental Hockey League rights.

MTG has about 70,000 subscribers in the country. MTV3 has about 400,000 subscribers. MTG is not yet regarded as having a particularly strong portfolio in the country because of the limited interest in football – but the start of its Premier League contract in 2016-17 is expected to deliver strong growth in subscriber numbers. ■

FOOTBALL

Splitting English and Spanish language rewards Uefa in US

By Richard Welbirg

Uefa opened its international competition rights to the US market early in its sales cycle to take advantage of the competitive environment, and was rewarded with a significant uplift.

Uefa, European football's governing body, and its sales agent CAA Eleven, last month struck two deals: with pay-television broadcaster ESPN for English-language rights, worth just under $110m (€99.6m); and with commercial broadcaster Univision for Spanish-language rights, worth $70m.

The package includes the Euro 2020 national team tournament, European Qualifiers from 2018-19 to 2021-22, and the Nations League friendly tournament in 2018-19 and 2020-21, as well as other international matches.

In previous cycles, Uefa earned $16m in a deal with ESPN for both Euro 2012 and 2016. It sold European Qualifiers from 2014-15 to 2017-18 to Rupert Murdoch's Fox Sports for $45m. Fox sublicensed half the matches to ESPN.

The change in the package makes a cycle-on-cycle comparison difficult, but it is clear Uefa's rights have at least tripled in value. There are several reasons why.

Primarily, the competitive environment: Fox and NBCUniversal bid in the tender, which closed after a second round in mid-October.

Secondly, the decision to separate English- and Spanish-language rights for the first time. While football rights have become increasingly valuable in the US, growth in the Spanish-language market has outpaced the English-language sector.

Changes to the package also made it more appealing. Selling rights to the Euro 2020 tournament and its qualifiers together allows broadcasters to build a clear narrative.

It was important for ESPN to hold on to the rights having lost the rights to show the 2018, 2022 and 2026 World Cups to Fox (*TV Sports Markets* 19:5). Alongside domestic Major League Soccer, the European international package is its major football property. ■

TVSportsMarkets RIGHTSTRACKER

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SPORTS CLIPS: News from TVSM Daily from October 22 to November 4

MEDIA RIGHTS 1

Football: Premier League, AFC events, World Cup qualifiers and more

- **Football:** Telco Optus acquired exclusive rights in Australia for the English Premier League for three seasons, from 2016-17 to 2018-19 (page 8).
- **Football:** Le Sports acquired rights for Asian Football Confederation events in a deal that gave the Chinese internet company a 20-per-cent stake in the Lagardère Sports agency's Asia-focused division, previously known as World Sport Group. The deal with Lagardère Sports, which markets the AFC's rights, includes exclusive rights to 12 events over four years, from 2017 to 2020. Le Sports will also produce coverage of qualifiers for the 2018 Fifa World Cup, 2019 AFC Asian Cup, 2018 Women's Asian Cup, AFC Champions League and AFC Cup as well as men's and women's youth events and the AFC's two major futsal events. The rights were acquired for $110m (€100m) while the stake was valued at $75m.
- **Football:** Media and entertainment company Discovery Communications acquired rights in Denmark for the top divisions in England, Spain and Italy in a sublicensing deal with commercial and pay-television broadcaster Modern Times Group. Discovery acquired half of MTG's rights for the English Premier League, Spanish LaLiga and Italian Serie A through its Discovery Networks Europe division. The rights will cover four seasons, from 2015-16 to 2018-19. Discovery will show coverage on television and also via the Dplay and Eurosport Player streaming services.
- **Football:** BeIN Media Group agreed a three-season extension to its rights deal for the English Premier League in the Middle East and North Africa, from 2016-17 to 2018-19 (page 1).
- **Football:** Flow TV, the Caribbean pay-television operator owned by telco Cable & Wireless Communications, acquired exclusive live rights for 2018 Fifa World Cup qualifiers from the region. The deal, which starts on November 13, excludes US and Mexico national team home games.
- **Football:** New Russian sports broadcaster Match TV acquired rights for Germany's Bundesliga. Match TV, which is operated by Russian media group Gazprom Media Holding, started broadcasting on a free-to-air basis on November 1. The channel will show live sports as well as magazine shows, news, talk shows, documentary films and series about sports and healthy lifestyles.
- **Football:** Vietnamese pay-television operator Vietnam Television Cable acquired rights for South Korea's K-League top tier for two seasons, from 2016 to 2017. VTVcab will broadcast live coverage of six matches per week via its Thao TV and Bong da TV channels.
- **Football:** Media group Attassiaa acquired rights for the Ligue 1 Pro and Coupe de Tunisie club competitions in Tunisia. Attassiaa will broadcast two matches per match day plus a highlights programme and a Monday evening talk show called Attassiaa Foot.

SINCE LAST TIME

- ESPN is to cut about 300 jobs – four per cent of the US pay-television sports broadcaster's workforce. Chief executive John Skipper said that while the demand for sport remains undiminished, the landscape the company operates in has "never been more complex". ESPN's parent company Disney reduced its television profit outlook in August because of a loss of ESPN subscribers. ESPN receives money from US cable and satellite companies that carry its channels, and is the most expensive of the basic pay-television channels. Data provider SNL Kagan estimates that ESPN costs cable and satellite television companies $6.61 (€5.81) per monthly subscriber.
- US pay-television sports broadcaster Universal Sports Network will close down by the start of December, with its rights transferring to media company NBCUniversal. NBCU has an eight-per-cent stake in the broadcaster, with InterMedia Partners holding the remaining 92-per-cent share. NBCU will launch the International Olympic Committee's new channel in April 2016.
- The first global free-to-view live stream of a regular-season American football NFL game on October 25 attracted more than 15.2m unique viewers and an average audience of 2.36m viewers. The Buffalo Bills v Jacksonville Jaguars game was streamed live by internet company Yahoo! across various websites including microblogging platform Tumblr. Viewers from 185 countries watched the action.
- Modern Times Group, the multi-territory commercial and pay-television broadcaster, sold its Russian and international pay-television channel businesses in order to comply with new media regulations being introduced in the country on January 1. Sabiero Holdings, a wholly-owned subsidiary of private equity company Baring Vostok, acquired MTG's international channels business, and Russian company LLC Sinerdzhi acquired the Russian channels. The deals are worth a total of $45.5m (€41m). The Russian channel business comprises sports, factual and movie channels, while the international channel business comprises factual and movie channels.

MEDIA INTERNATIONAL

- US pay-television sports broadcaster ESPN removed its videos from YouTube due to concerns over rights issues ahead of the launch of the video-sharing website's new subscription service in the US on October 28. YouTube Red will enable users to access original and exclusive video content.
- US horseracing broadcaster TVG rebranded HRTV, a pay-television broadcaster it acquired in February from gambling and horseracing company the Stronach Group. HRTV was rebranded

SPORTS CLIPS: News from TVSM Daily from October 22 to November 4

MEDIA RIGHTS 2

Premier 12 baseball, MLB World Series, NBA, PGA Tour and more

- **Baseball:** The MP & Silva agency brokered deals in multiple territories for the 2015 World Baseball Softball Confederation Premier12 national team tournament on behalf of the WBSC. The tournament will be co-hosted by Japan and Taiwan. In Japan the rights were sold to pay-television broadcaster J-Sports and in Taiwan to internet service Camerabay.tv. Other deals included: in Australia, Indonesia and the Philippines with pay-television broadcaster beIN Sports; in the Philippines, rights were also sold to pay-television broadcaster Solar; in Belgium, Malaysia, Poland and Singapore, with pay-television broadcaster Eleven Sports Network; in Italy and the Netherlands, with pay-television broadcaster Fox Sports and public-service broadcaster NOS; in China, with online streaming services Le Sports and PPTV; in Macau, with pay-television broadcaster Macau Cable; in Hong Kong, with pay-television broadcaster i-Cable; in Vietnam, with state-owned satellite broadcaster VTC; in Myanmar, with pay-television broadcaster Sky Net; in the Middle East, with pay-television broadcaster OSN; in Canada, with pay-television broadcaster Rogers Sportsnet; and in Cuba, with state-owned broadcast association the Cuban Institute of Radio and Television.

- **Baseball:** Commercial and pay-television broadcaster Modern Times Group acquired rights in the Nordic region for Major League Baseball's 2015 World Series. The deal, which was brokered by the ESPN Media Distribution division of pay-television broadcaster ESPN, included live coverage and ESPN's Baseball Tonight highlights programme. Coverage was available on TV3 Sport 1 in Denmark, Viasat Football in Norway, Viasat 16 in Sweden and Viasat Sport in Finland.

- **Basketball:** The NBA agreed a multi-year extension to its rights deal with digital sports media company Perform in Germany, Austria and Switzerland, starting with the 2015-16 season. The agreement includes more than 250 live games per season, with the action primarily available via Perform's OTT service, which will launch in 2016. During the 2015-16 campaign, games will be available through sports broadcaster Sport1 and the Telekom Basketball platform of German telco Deutsche Telekom, under sublicensing deals with Perform. Sport1 agreed a two-season deal, from 2015-16 to 2016-17, with pay-television channel Sport1 US showing up to 120 games per season. Perform will continue to stream live coverage of one game per week for free via the NBA.com/Germany website.

- **Basketball:** Polish pay-television operator NC Plus agreed a two-season extension, from 2015-16 to 2016-17, to its exclusive rights deal with the NBA. The rights include 100 regular-season games per campaign plus 36 play-off fixtures.

- **Basketball:** The IMG Events & Media agency agreed a multi-year rights deal with the NBA that will allow games to be shown on Sport 24, the IMG-produced live sports channel for the in-flight and in-ship markets. The deal includes more than 100 regular-season, play-off and finals games plus original NBA programming, highlights and other content. Sport 24 is available on more than 250 aircraft via 10 airlines, including Emirates, Etihad Airways, Lufthansa, Qatar Airways and Turkish Airlines.

- **Basketball:** The Dallas Mavericks NBA franchise sealed a local rights deal with the Fox Sports Southwest division of US network Fox. The length of the multi-year deal was not disclosed.

- **Basketball:** US regional pay-television sports broadcaster Yes Network extended a rights deal with NBA franchise the Brooklyn Nets, starting with the 2017-18 season. The agreement is worth more than $40m (€36m) per year, up from $20m per year in the previous deal.

- **Basketball:** US telco Verizon agreed a multi-year content partnership with the NBA North American basketball league to bring daily league highlights and original series to its new mobile video streaming service Go90. The service will also offer access to live coverage of out-of-market games through the NBA League Pass service as well as selected clips and highlights.

- **Basketball:** US pay-television broadcaster CBS Sports extended a rights deal with the National Collegiate Athletic Association for the Division II men's and women's semi-finals for 10 academic years, from 2015-16 to 2024-25.

- **Cricket:** Cricket Australia agreed a three-year rights partnership, from 2015-16 to 2017-18, with telco Optus, which will offer on-demand interviews and highlights of classic matches. Optus customers will also have free access to the Cricket Australia Live Pass service, which streams live coverage of domestic and international matches.

- **Cricket:** Pay-television broadcaster Star India acquired rights for the 2015 Cricket All-Stars Series, a new three-match Twenty20 tournament in the US featuring retired stars of the sport.

- **Golf:** Online video platform iQIYI acquired rights in China for the PGA Tour for five years, from 2016 to 2020. The deal includes more than 1,500 hours of live action, highlights and interviews from more than 40 tournaments per year, including the Players Championship, all FedExCup events, the Presidents Cup and the World Cup.

- **Motorsport:** French pay-television broadcaster Canal Plus took up the option of a two-season extension, from 2016 to 2017, to its rights deal with the Formula One world championship.

- **Motorsport:** Dutch pay-television broadcaster Sport1 acquired exclusive live rights for the Formula E electric car-racing championship.

SPORTS CLIPS: News from TVSM Daily from October 22 to November 4

MEDIA RIGHTS 3

World Rugby Sevens, skiing, WTA Tour, ITTF World Tour and college sport

- **Rugby Union:** Fijian commercial broadcaster FBC acquired rights for the 2015-16 World Rugby Sevens Series.
- **Skiing:** Norwegian public-service broadcaster NRK extended rights deals with the sport's global governing body, the FIS, and the sport's national association in the country. The rights will run for five years, from 2016-17 to 2020-21. The deal with the FIS, which was brokered by the Infront Sports & Media agency, includes coverage of World Cup events in Alpine skiing, Nordic skiing and freestyle skiing. The agreement with the national governing body includes national events in cross-country, ski jumping and downhill skiing.
- **Tennis:** The Women's Tennis Association awarded iQIYI digital rights in China for 10 years, from 2017 to 2026, in a deal reportedly worth $120m (€109m). The deal includes more than 2,000 hours of live coverage plus highlights, interviews and magazine programmes. iQIYI will also have non-exclusive rights to video clips.
- **Table Tennis:** The International Table Tennis Federation agreed a multi-year rights deal in Singapore with Eleven Sports Network, which will broadcast the governing body's World Tour events.
- **US College Sport:** The athletics division of the University of California, Los Angeles extended its multimedia rights partnership with the WME-IMG agency for 10 academic years, from 2016-17 to 2025-26.

as TVG2, with the HRTV.com website also renamed TVG2.com.

- US entertainment news channel TMZ will branch out into sports programming through the launch of a new show in partnership with the Fox Sports division of US network Fox. The daily TMZ Sports programme will launch on November 9 on pay-television channel Fox Sports 1.
- James Murdoch, the chief executive of 21st Century Fox, said that the media company would bid to acquire full control of pan-European pay-television broadcaster Sky. Murdoch said 21st Century Fox would not settle for being a partial shareholder in the company. The media company has a 39-per-cent stake in Sky.
- German commercial broadcaster ProSiebenSat.1 launched a subscription-based streaming service dedicated to fight sports. The 'ran Fighting' service, which is available online and via tablet and mobile devices, will provide live coverage of boxing, mixed martial arts, Thai boxing, taekwondo, judo and karate events. Users will be able to access the service for €2.99 ($3.30) per month, with the fee rising to €4.99 per month from 2016.
- The BT TV division of telco BT attracted 106,000 new subscribers in the three months through to the end of September, ahead of the start of pay-television broadcaster BT Sport's coverage of football's 2015-16 Uefa Champions League season – up from 38,000 new sign-ups in the corresponding period last year. BT chief executive Gavin Patterson said that acquiring Champions League and Europa League rights for three seasons, from 2015-16 to 2017-18, had provided a bigger-than-expected boost. Separately, BT launched a BT Infinity Lab competition to find entrepreneurs with "innovative digital media and production solutions" that could be trialled by BT Sport.
- Dutch cable-television operator Ziggo will launch a new sports channel on November 12. Ziggo Sport will be available at no additional cost to Ziggo's digital-television subscribers. The channel will feature football, Formula One motorsport and basketball programming.
- International pay-television sports broadcaster Eleven Sports Network launched an OTT platform in Belgium. The service will be available via a weekly, monthly or annual subscription on computers, tablets and mobile devices.
- The Fox International Channels broadcast division of media company 21st Century Fox launched its Fox Sports HD channel in Greece through a carriage deal with pay-television operator Nova. The channel is available on Nova's 3Play platform.
- Latvian Kontinental Hockey League ice hockey club Dinamo Riga launched a new channel, 360TV Dinamo Riga, in partnership with telco Lattelecom. The channel will be available via televisions, tablets and smartphone devices.
- BeIN Media Group launched a new sports channel called 13 HD and will expand into entertainment and movie channels in the Middle East and North Africa, according to chairman and chief executive Nasser Al-Khelaifi.
- The WWE wrestling organisation launched its WWE Network pay-television channel in the Indian subcontinent on November 2. WWE Network is available in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Nepal for $9.99 (€9.04) per month.
- Chinese internet company LeTV, which operates the Le Sports service, is targeting a launch in India in early 2016, according to founder Jia Yueting.
- Financial losses at Australian commercial broadcaster Ten almost doubled to A$312.2m (€205m/$227m) in the 12 months through to the end of August.

MEDIA RIGHTS NEGOTIATIONS

- LaLiga, which operates the top division of Spanish football, will launch a sales process before the end of the year for the domestic rights to club football in the country for three seasons, from 2016-17 to 2018-19.
- The CAA Eleven agency launched a sales process in Turkey for the media rights to the Uefa Euro 2016 national team football tournament. Bids must be submitted by November 10.
- The England and Wales Cricket Board is considering creating

SPORTS CLIPS: News from TVSM Daily from October 22 to November 4

different rights packages for county cricket amid a proposed overhaul of the domestic game. The packages will be presented to country championship clubs in March with a view to being introduced in 2017. The ECB hopes the clubs will approve a new model that will enable the board to negotiate an individual rights deal for the county competition when its current contract with pay-television broadcaster Sky concludes after the 2019 campaign.

- Australian commercial broadcaster Ten has not held discussions with pay-television broadcaster Foxtel with regard to sublicensing rights to the Australian Football League Aussie rules tournament. Under a six-year rights deal beginning in 2017 Foxtel has the right to sell on one Saturday afternoon match per round to a free-to-air broadcaster. In October, the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission approved Foxtel's deal to acquire a 15-per-cent stake in Ten.

ALSO SINCE LAST TIME

- The International Cricket Council launched a sales process for production rights and non-live programming services for major events covering four years, from 2016 to 2019. The rights include the 2016 World Twenty20 in India; the 2017 Champions Trophy, 2017 Women's World Cup and 2019 World Cup in England and Wales; the 2016 U-19 World Cup and 2018 Cricket World Cup Qualifier in Bangladesh; the 2018 U-19 World Cup in New Zealand; and the 2018 Women's World Twenty20 in the West Indies. Documentaries, preview series, films and the ICC's magazine programme, ICC Cricket 360°, are included in the rights. Bids for the production rights were due by November 4, with the non-live programming services deadline on November 5.
- The Fox Sports division of US network Fox blamed a "rare electronics failure" after its broadcast of the opening game of North American Major League Baseball's World Series on October 27 went off air. The 20-minute outage occurred when a broadcast truck lost power.
- Atlantic Coast Conference commissioner John Swofford labelled talk of US sports broadcaster ESPN seeking to delay the launch of a dedicated network for the college sports organisation as "premature." The *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* newspaper, quoting Georgia Tech president Bud Peterson, said that the anticipated 2017 launch of ACC Network was set to be put back by "a couple of years." In exchange for a later start date, ESPN could make additional payments on top of the rights fees already paid to the conference under a deal that will run until the end of the 2026-27 academic year.
- Fox Sports struck a deal to produce and supply a new global magazine programme for rights-holders of the Formula E electric car-racing championship. Each programme will feature behind-the-scenes coverage and will be available to broadcasters in Africa, Asia, Australia, Latin America and North America.
- UK sports production and media company Sunset+Vine was awarded production rights by the Pakistan Cricket Board for new Twenty20 cricket tournament the Pakistan Super League, which will run from February 4-24 in Dubai and Sharjah in the UAE.

INDUSTRY MOVES

- Mark Shannon joined beIN Media Group as acquisitions manager. He left his role as head of broadcast at the English Football Association on October 30. Alex Wright, senior vice-president of sales for beIN Media Group, is to leave the company. • InfrontRingier Sports & Entertainment Switzerland, the Infront Sports & Media agency's 50-per-cent joint venture with Swiss media company Ringier, appointed Gian Gilli as its new managing director until mid-2018. Gilli replaces Armin Meier, who stepped down in September. Lukas Troxler, the company's director of marketing and business development, will become deputy managing director. • Ken Hershman will step down as president of the HBO Sports division of US pay-television broadcaster HBO at the end of 2015. • Patrick Walker stepped down as chief executive of Rightster, with founder Ashley MacKenzie set to replace him in the role at the online video distribution and marketing company. Non-executive chairman Mark Lieberman and non-executive directors Michael Broughton and David Mathewson will step down from the board. Sir Robin Miller will be appointed non-executive chairman, with Richard Mansell becoming chief operating officer and Mark Cranmer becoming non-executive director.

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Printed by Rapidity, Citybridge House,
235-245 Goswell Road, London EC1V 7JD

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