

FOOTBALL

Unexpected Altice bid outflanks rivals for Premier League, continuing telco trend

By Robin Jellis and Frank Dunne

Telco Altice last week blindsided French broadcasters to acquire Premier League rights in the country with a knockout first-round bid.

Its three-season deal, from 2016-17 to 2018-19, is worth about €100m (\$106m) per season. This is an increase of at least 66 per cent on the current value of the rights. Pay-television broadcaster Canal Plus is the incumbent rights-holder, in a deal worth €60.3m per season from 2013-14 to 2015-16.

The acquisition means Altice is the second telco, after Optus in Australia, to secure Premier League rights with a bold offer in the league's latest international rights cycle. Optus acquired rights for \$50m per season in a new deal, up from

\$16m per season in the current deal with pay-television operator Foxtel, a jump of 212.5 per cent (*TV Sports Markets* 19:20).

One French broadcast source said: "Perhaps these telcos have found a content monetisation model as yet undiscovered by anybody else, but the data and history suggests it is more likely they are just taking a speculative punt."

But the reality is that for Altice the acquisition is not based on a simple profit and loss equation, as it would be for a pay-television broadcaster. The rights will play an important role in helping the wider group retain and add subscribers to its various services.

Nicolas Rotkoff, Altice's entertainment

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MOTORSPORT

Formula E builds on first-season success

By Robin Jellis

Motorsport's Formula E, which began its second season on October 24, seems to be here to stay. All of the key performance indicators from the championship's inaugural season point to its commercial success, something that has eluded other motorsport challenger series.

Total commercial revenues in the 2014-15 season are thought to have comfortably exceeded €40m (\$42.4m) and are growing rapidly.

About €30m of that came from sponsorship, with €4m from the sale of media rights – an amount which has risen

to between €6m and €7m for 2015-16.

The remainder of the revenue comes from hosting fees. This season, races will be held in 10 cities – more than 150 approached Formula E about hosting a race in 2015-16.

By contrast, a long-established motorsport series like the World Rally Championship earns about €10m per season from media and sponsorship rights, split roughly €5m per season for each (*TV Sports Markets* 18:23).

The minority stake taken in Formula E

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FASTRACK 1

NEWS IN BRIEF

Canal Plus grows Top 14 international revenues

With a new round of international broadcast deals in place from the 2015-16 season of French rugby's Top 14, rights distributor Canal Plus has increased the value of the rights 10-fold in the last six seasons.

In deals beginning this season, the league will earn about €4m (\$4.2m) per season from its international rights. In 2009-10, when Canal Plus began distributing the rights, they were worth about €400,000.

The broadcaster's current deal for international rights is for four seasons, from 2015-16 to 2018-19. Canal Plus distributes the rights on behalf of the Ligue Nationale de Rugby, which operates the Top 14 top tier and Pro D2 second tier.

The Top 14 is regarded as one of the best rugby union leagues, attracting top players from around the world, which has boosted broadcaster interest in the rights. Canal Plus has worked on developing the quality of broadcast coverage in tandem with the league.

In the last season of its previous deal, 2014-15, Canal Plus agreed deals covering 208 territories. The most valuable territories are the traditional rugby-playing nations: Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and the UK.

The rights in the UK make up 35 per cent of the Top 14's total international revenue. Pay-television broadcaster Sky pays about €1.4m per season over five seasons, from 2014-15 to 2018-19 (*TV Sports Markets* 18:8).

As well as distributing Top 14 international rights, Canal Plus also holds domestic rights in a four-season deal, from 2015-16 to 2018-19, worth €74m per season (*TV Sports Markets* 19:2).

Under that deal, the pay-television operator shows coverage in other territories where it operates channels. This covers: Canada, Poland (via NC Plus), Switzerland, Vietnam (via K

Plus), and French-language rights in sub-Saharan Africa.

The international rights were initially handled by Canal Plus Events, the broadcaster's agency arm, which has since separated from the broadcaster. The Top 14 international rights have remained with Canal Plus (*TV Sports Markets* 16:22). ■

Neo picks up returning BPL

The chequered history of cricket's Bangladesh Premier League contributed to a reduced rights fee on the Indian subcontinent for the competition, which is returning after a one-year hiatus.

Pay-television broadcaster Neo Sports agreed a deal for the 2015 tournament, which began on November 22, worth close to \$200,000 (€190,000). The broadcaster has an option to extend the deal to cover 2016 and 2017.

The BPL was halted after 2013 due to allegations of match fixing. No Indian cricketers take part in the competition although it does feature some global stars including the West Indies' Chris Gayle and Pakistan's Shahid Afridi.

Rights in India were last sold in February 2012, when ESPN Star Sports agreed a three-year deal covering the 2012 to 2014 competitions, thought to be worth \$1m, or \$330,000 per year. The deal was cancelled along with the 2014 tournament.

The BPL's value has declined in part due to the tournament's reputation, but also because Neo faced no competition for the rights. One Indian rights expert said the three major pay-television broadcasters – Sony, Star and Ten Sports – would have found it hard to schedule the competition.

For Neo, the deal may presage a return to major rights acquisitions. The position of the broadcaster, and parent company Nimbus Communications, was weakened in December 2011 when its Rs20bn (€284m/\$301m) deal for global Board of Control for Cricket in India rights was cancelled two years into its four-year term. The BCCI

accused the agency of failing to pay fee instalments on time.

The broadcaster has since lagged behind its pay-television rivals in terms of both rights spending and ratings on the Neo Sports and Neo Prime channels.

But Neo has recently secured an investment of \$125m from its existing shareholders. The investment will see Nimbus's stake in the broadcaster fall from about 85 per cent to 55 per cent.

The remaining 45 per cent will be held by existing shareholders, including the Oman Investment Fund, and Nimbus shareholders – including technology company Cisco and venture capital firm 3i – taking a direct stake in Neo. Neo will be able to call on some of the funding for acquisitions, though spending over a certain level will have to be signed off by a committee of the board. ■

SuperSport renews MotoGP

Pay-television broadcaster SuperSport has renewed its deal for MotoGP rights across sub-Saharan Africa, paying a significant increase to beat competition from rival StarTimes.

SuperSport will pay just under \$1m (€945,000) per year for all MotoGP content in a five-year deal, from 2016 to 2020. The deal was agreed with series organiser Dorna Sports, which acts as MotoGP's commercial arm.

The new deal is just less than double the fee SuperSport pays in its current deal, from 2011 to 2015, worth just over \$500,000 per year.

Pay-television rival StarTimes is thought to have been interested in the property as it wants to expand its motorsport portfolio beyond the World Rally Championship, which it acquired this January. Its WRC deal covers the 2015 and 2016 seasons, and is worth a total of \$1m, or \$500,000 per season.

Other broadcasters, such as pay-television broadcaster Fox Sports, were interested in MotoGP rights, but chose not to meet Dorna's asking price. ■

FOOTBALL

Aggressive Altice ousts Premier League incumbent Canal Plus

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and sports chief executive, told *TV Sports Markets* this week that Altice was yet to decide how it will exploit the rights. He said the group will hold strategy meetings in the coming weeks.

Coverage

The only broadcast outlet Altice currently operates is Ma Chaîne Sport, a basic-tier sports broadcaster. Rotkoff said Altice had many options open for coverage – it could show content on: its MCS channels; a 4K ultra HD channel which has a working name of MCS TV Ultra HD; news channel BFM TV, which it is in the process of acquiring; or a yet-to-be-launched channel.

Regardless, MCS is set to become a more premium pay-television channel. “Of course MCS cannot be the same going forward,” Rotkoff said. “MCS today is a basic-tier channel offered on a non-exclusive basis, not a premium channel. Of course we need to change things.”

French newspaper *Journal du Dimanche* said MCS could cost between €7 and €10 per month as a premium channel. Rotkoff said nothing had been decided.

MCS is currently available in about 8m homes. It has a carriage deal with Canal Plus’s pay-television platform CanalSat, and pay-television platform Numericable-SFR – which is also owned by Altice. The CanalSat deal will expire at the end of October 2016. Content will also be available to stream to all of mobile operator SFR’s 23m subscribers.

Rotkoff added: “We are not competitors with Canal Plus or [pay-television broadcaster] beIN Sports. We distribute their channels on our platform.

“We are seeing our strategy as a more global one and as a telecommunications group. We are not trying to compete with Canal Plus or beIN Sports. Our competitors are the other [French] telecommunications groups like Orange,

Sky renews near-live and video-on-demand UK rights

The Premier League is thought to have secured a small increase in the value of the rights to near-live matches by including video-on-demand clips in the package for the first time.

It is understood Sky will pay about £15m (€21.4m/\$22.7m) per season for the rights in the new cycle, from 2016-17 to 2018-19. This is up from between £13m per season and £14m per season in the current deal, from 2013-14 to 2015-16, which covers only near-live matches.

Sky is thought to have been the only bidder. BT does not view the content as a driver for its business.

For Sky, as one insider put it, it “rounds out” the broadcaster’s Premier

League offering and has a defensive value in limiting the opportunity for rivals to exploit an association with the league in their marketing campaigns.

The increase in the number of live matches available in the UK in the next cycle, from 154 to 168, meant there was a correspondingly smaller number of matches available in the near-live package: 212 as opposed to 226.

For the current cycle, the league tendered a standalone package of VOD clips to the same matches offered near-live, but received no acceptable bids (*TV Sports Markets* 17:3).

To compensate for the smaller number of games the league added the VOD clips rights for the next cycle. ■

Bouygues or Free.”

As well as Rotkoff, Altice president Patrick Drahi and chief operating officer Michel Combes handled negotiations.

The package also included rights in overseas French-speaking territories, for no additional fee. The French-language rights cover the following territories: French Guiana, French Polynesia, Guadeloupe, Guyana, Haiti, Madagascar, Martinique, Mauritius, Mayotte, New Caledonia, Réunion, Saint Barthélemy, Saint Martin and the Wallis and Futuna Islands.

Subscriber losses

For Canal Plus, which is owned by media company Vivendi, the timing of this defeat is ironic. The loss of the rights comes after Vincent Bolloré, Vivendi president, told Canal Plus staff earlier this month that €2bn would be invested in Canal Plus – including in sports rights.

The planned investment comes in the wake of dwindling subscriber numbers. Canal Plus currently has about 5.5m subscribers, having lost 88,000 in the last year. The loss has been blamed on the arrival of beIN Sports and OTT entertainment service Netflix.

A further decrease is expected in the coming year with the loss of the Premier League rights, as well as some Champions League matches. In the current Champions League deal, which runs from

2015-16 to 2017-18, beIN Sports will show all matches of a French team in the knockout stage if only one qualifies, as with Paris Saint-Germain this season.

One pay-television expert estimated that Canal Plus could lose several hundred thousand subscribers over the next year as a result of its reduced content.

The deal is also a blow to the prestige of the broadcaster, which prides itself on showing premium sport.

Sustainable?

The deal looks like good news for rights-holders. As well as Altice, beIN Sports and Canal Plus, US media company Discovery Communications is increasingly trying to acquire more locally-relevant content in markets across Europe for its Eurosport channels. However, the increased competition for sports rights is unlikely to be sustainable in the long term.

Altice will no doubt be wary of the precedent set by Orange. In the late 2000s, Orange bid aggressively for sports rights in an attempt to attract broadband and mobile subscribers, and set up a pay-television channel: Orange Sport.

Orange Sport closed on June 30, 2012, less than four years after launching in November 2008. It suffered heavy financial losses as it struggled to establish itself – it had only 300,000 subscribers

three years after launching.

Local media reports have suggested that Canal Plus's response to losing the Premier League will be to bid strongly for the rights to the domestic league cup, the Coupe de la Ligue.

These rights are currently held by public-service broadcaster France Télévisions in a four-season deal, from 2012-13 to 2015-16, worth about €10.5m per season. The rights are on the market now, with a bid deadline of December 14.

Bidding

Local sources were this week divided as to the level of rival bids for the Premier League. Canal Plus certainly bid to renew, while beIN Sports is said to have made only a low offer.

Some sources say Canal Plus was seeking to reduce its current fee as it feels it is overpaying. The last time the rights were sold in France they increased by 123 per cent, up from €27m per season in the 2010-11 to 2012-13 cycle. The increase then was due to the arrival of beIN Sports on the French market, which scared Canal Plus into tabling a big offer.

Others say Canal Plus was offering between €70m and €80m per season for the rights in a new deal, an increase of between 16 and 33 per cent.

Either way, the incumbent was outflanked by an unexpected winner in Altice. Altice bid aggressively in the first round as it feared a reactionary bid from Canal Plus had negotiations gone to a second round.

BeIN did not bid aggressively as it is satisfied with the football rights portfolio it already has in France: Ligue 1, Uefa Champions League and Europa League, Spain's LaLiga, Italy's Serie A, Germany's Bundesliga and Euro 2016.

BeIN did not feel the number of subscribers it could add as a result of acquiring the Premier League warranted the amount it would have had to spend.

Following its launch in France, beIN had to pay strategic premiums in order to build a subscriber base. It now has between 2.5m and 2.7m subscribers and feels it no longer needs to do so.

Some sources say there is co-operation between Canal Plus and beIN Sports for major rights, and some go as far as to say

Setanta squeezed out as BT and Sky pick up Irish rights

The English Premier League is thought to have secured an uplift of about 20 per cent in the value of its rights in Ireland in the new cycle, from 2016-17 to 2018-19, earning a total of about £36m (£51.5m/\$54.4m) per season.

Sky will pay about £32m per season for the rights to 159 matches per season, with BT paying the remaining £4m per season for the rights to 42 matches. Sky's deal includes, for the first time, the rights to 33 Saturday 3pm kick-offs. Unlike deals in other EU countries, Premier League deals in Ireland are agreed in sterling.

Rights in the current three-season cycle, from 2013-14 to 2015-16, are worth about £30m per season. BT pays just under £3m per season for the rights to 38 matches, Irish pay-television operator Setanta pays just over £4m per season for the Saturday 3pm kick-offs, and Sky pays about £23m per season for 116 live games.

With the exception of Sky's new 3pm package, the rights held by Sky and BT in both the current and new cycles mirror their packages in the UK (*TV Sports Markets* 19:3).

Neither broadcaster sees any commercial logic in having a different offering in Ireland. This means they do not compete head to head, putting a ceiling on what the league can earn from Ireland. However, well-placed sources say the league is satisfied with the outcome for two reasons.

First, the total income is still high for a country with just 1.58m television homes. In a market such as Denmark,

which has about 2.6m television homes, the league will earn only €15m per season from its new three-season deal with commercial and pay-television broadcaster Modern Times Group (*TV Sports Markets* 19:18).

Second, the league recognises that Sky and BT already pay massive sums for the UK rights and is not looking to 'squeeze' their main partners. By the same token, it is said, Sky and BT see no sense in antagonising the league by lowballing.

One broadcast source said the league and the two broadcasters saw Ireland as an adjunct to the UK, rather than a completely separate market.

As in the rest of Europe, broadcasters in Ireland are not prevented from showing 3pm kick-offs, so an additional package is sold in the country which is not sold in the UK.

Losing the Saturday 3pm package is a blow for Setanta, despite the slot rarely featuring one of the weekend's top matches. However, the loss is mitigated by the company renewing its agreement with BT to carry the BT Sport channels, which will give Setanta subscribers access to the Premier League, the Uefa Champions League and Europa League, and other top sport.

Setanta has about 100,000 subscribers in Ireland. Michael O'Rourke, Setanta co-founder, told *The Irish Times* that revenues for Setanta's Irish business were about €30m per year and enjoying double-digit growth. Irish telco Eir is reportedly in talks to buy the company. ■

there is a non-compete pact between the two. Aggressive bidding between the two for top properties appears to have cooled in recent times.

Canal Plus has not been forced into big increases in any of its important renewals over the last 18 months.

It paid: a 26-per-cent increase for Ligue 1 rights, adding one match per week; a 12-per-cent increase for Champions League rights; and a 4.2-per-

cent increase for Top 14 rugby union rights (*TV Sports Markets* 18:7; 18:8; 19:2). These three sports properties are the most important in France.

But one local expert pointed to the fact that beIN Sports successfully challenged the award of the Top 14 rights last year, forcing the league to issue a tender – not the work of a collusive partner. ■

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

MOTORSPORT

Formula E takes first-year success into 2015-16 season

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in March by two of the world's major media groups, Liberty Global and Discovery Communications, is widely seen as a bet on the potential of the series as a sports media property. The stake is understood to be 30 per cent, split evenly between the two.

Another major media group, Fox International Channels, had already made a similar bet. In August 2013, it agreed a deal for media rights in 80 territories for three seasons, 2014-15 to 2016-17.

Ali Russell, Formula E's director of media, marketing and communications, told *TV Sports Markets* this week that the series had a number of strengths as a media property. These include:

- being a one-day event with a one-hour race window, making it easy for broadcasters to schedule
- taking place in the winter, meaning it doesn't compete with other motorsport series
- using iconic city-centre locations
- having a strong line-up of drivers, many drawn from other series like Formula One, Nascar and IndyCar
- providing broadcast coverage that gets viewers closer to the racing, with behind-the-scenes insights
- providing innovative interactive social media features like FanBoost – where viewer feedback can affect the outcome of a race.

Russell said: "Racing is a core part of what we do, but it's urban entertainment in terms of bringing the show to the people. This builds up an attractive event for people to go to in cities.

"We tend to target a much younger audience and a much more family-oriented audience than has traditionally been the case with motorsport."

Broadcaster interest

Formula E's most lucrative deals are with commercial broadcaster TV Asahi in

Formula E renegotiates deals to secure wider coverage

The Formula E electric car racing series took the unusual step of renegotiating some broadcast deals after one season to ensure the widest possible coverage.

The series originally signed a two-season deal, from 2014-15 to 2015-16, in Germany, Austria and Switzerland with pay-television broadcaster Sky Deutschland, understood to be worth about €50,000 (\$55,000) per season.

For the 2015-16 season, it took the rights back from Sky and sold them to Discovery Communications-owned sports broadcaster Eurosport, which is available free-to-air in the country. Eurosport is paying about €200,000 per season for rights in 2015-16 and

2016-17. It is part of a wider deal which also covers the Nordics, Poland, and non-exclusive rights in Iceland.

In Italy and the Netherlands, Formula E took the rights back from Fox International Channels, which had acquired them for its premium Fox Sports channel in 80 territories (see main story).

In Italy, it sold them on to public-service broadcaster Rai for two seasons, 2015-16 and 2016-17. In the Netherlands, it sold them to pay-television broadcaster Ziggo Sport for the 2015-16 season. Ziggo Sport, formerly known as Sport1, is majority owned by Liberty Global. ■

Japan and UK commercial broadcaster ITV. The three-season TV Asahi deal, from 2014-15 to 2016-17, is worth an average of €1.2m per season. The deal with ITV is worth about £500,000 (€715,000/\$755,000) in 2015-16.

Formula E's first media rights deal was the 80-market agreement with FIC. FIC has since extended the deal covering the Caribbean, Latin America and North America for three seasons, from 2017-18 to 2019-20, for about \$500,000 per season. The rights in North America were free (*TV Sports Markets* 19:13).

The company chose not to extend its deal in other territories in Asia and sub-Saharan Africa; it will wait another season before entering discussions as it wants to see how the property develops.

In addition, FIC's rights in Asia and Africa are less exclusive – free-to-air rights have been carved out in some markets. Its rights in the Americas are fully exclusive.

Russell said the deal with FIC had been "absolutely essential" to the establishment of Formula E as it created momentum for the championship. "We wanted to align ourselves globally because we felt there was real strength a global broadcaster could give us from a marketing and brand-building point of view," he said.

Following the investment in the series by Liberty/Discovery, broadcasters owned by the two companies are expected to be awarded rights in certain

territories, as has already been the case in some European markets (see box). This is unlikely to happen in territories where there is a valuable deal in place with a local broadcaster.

In addition to holding live rights in several markets, Eurosport has a pan-European highlights deal, worth about €200,000 per season, which covers the 2015-16 and 2016-17 seasons.

The two media groups wanted long-term control over what may become a key property if it develops as hoped.

"To partner with one of the world's biggest cable operators and one of the biggest broadcasters on the globe gives us a lot of strength, a lot of experience and support in terms of operating a business on a global scale," Russell said.

Formula E is also streamed online and via its app in many territories. The series initially hoped to stream all races globally, but many of its broadcast partners felt it would eat into their exclusivity, so races are only streamed in selected territories.

Formula E Holdings is responsible for selling the series' commercial rights. It is advised by the MP & Silva agency in a three-season deal, from 2014-15 to 2016-17. The agency is not thought to pay a guarantee for the rights, but earns 20-per-cent commission on all sales. Formula E remains signatory to all deals.

It currently has no plans about how to market its rights from 2017-18 onward.

Ownership

The remaining 70 per cent equity in Formula E is held by private individuals and other media companies – one of which is Causeway Media Partners, which has investments in US sport.

“We’ve got a very strong group of investors, and what that allows us to do is to invest in the sport which helps it grow and develop,” Russell said. ■

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

FOOTBALL

StarTimes pays high rights fee to complete Italian job

By Callum McCarthy

Pay-television broadcaster StarTimes has paid what is considered to be a high fee to secure rights to the Coppa Italia for the next three seasons, safeguarding its position as the sole broadcaster of Italian club football across sub-Saharan Africa.

It will pay about \$500,000 (€475,000) per season for rights to Italy’s club knockout competition over three seasons, from 2015-16 to 2017-18, in a deal struck with the B4 Capital agency. The deal was completed after private negotiations at the Sportel Monaco trade fair in October.

StarTimes is thought to have faced some competition from pay-television broadcaster SuperSport for the rights.

The Supercoppa, a match played at the beginning of each season between the winners of the Coppa Italia and Italian top tier Serie A, is included in the deal.

Only the final of the Coppa Italia was broadcast in sub-Saharan Africa last season as broadcasters balked at B4’s valuation of the property as a whole – B4 sought about \$200,000 for the rights in 2014-15.

SuperSport acquired the 2014-15 final for a fee thought to be in the low-to-mid tens-of-thousands of dollars.

B4 paid about €4m per season for international rights to the Coppa, from 2012-13 to 2014-15. It now pays about €26m per season for the same rights, from 2015-16 to 2017-18, which has forced the

agency to dramatically increase its asking price (*TV Sports Markets* 19:12).

Local experts believe StarTimes’s spend on the Coppa is incredibly high, as the competition is seen by many as less valuable than its equivalent in England, Spain or Germany. The top eight clubs in Serie A enter the competition at the last 16 stage – later than in other domestic club competitions – which reduces its value.

But by acquiring the Coppa, StarTimes has prevented a split in its Italian football coverage. The tournament will accompany StarTimes’s Serie A coverage, for which the broadcaster pays an average of \$6m per season from 2015-16 to 2017-18, in a deal with the MP & Silva agency (*TV Sports Markets* 19:15).

The broadcaster does not enjoy the same level of exclusivity over German club football. It has a five-season deal for rights to the Bundesliga, from 2015-16 to 2019-20, but SuperSport acquired rights to the DFB-Pokal, Germany’s knockout competition.

StarTimes’s Coppa coverage began with fourth-round fixtures on December 1.

Club World Cup

StarTimes has also acquired rights to the Fifa Club World Cup tournaments in 2015 and 2016 – both will be hosted in Japan. The deal, agreed with the Dentsu agency, is thought to be worth a total of about \$400,000.

The value of the property has increased considerably – the participation of African Champions League winners TP Mazembe, from the Democratic Republic of Congo, made the property more attractive for broadcasters in sub-Saharan Africa. Previous participants have generally come from North Africa. The 2015 edition will be the first time since 2010 that there has been a club from sub-Saharan Africa.

The tournament’s previous broadcaster, SuperSport, is not thought to have bid aggressively. Heightened competition in sub-Saharan Africa has increased rights fees for most sports properties in the region, forcing SuperSport to be selective about the battles it fights.

While the property is unlikely to drive subscriptions, StarTimes was keen to add

a prestigious property and continue its relationship with Fifa. Earlier this year, StarTimes bought a package of Fifa rights including youth and women’s World Cups, worth about \$1.5m (*TV Sports Markets* 19:12). ■

FOOTBALL

MP & Silva pulls out of 18/22 World Cup rights deal in Italy

By Frank Dunne

The rights in Italy to the Fifa World Cups in 2018 and 2022 have reverted to world football’s governing body after MP & Silva withdrew from its agreement to sell them, *TV Sports Markets* understands.

The agency agreed the deal in October 2013 after Fifa had failed to secure satisfactory offers from the country’s broadcasters in exploratory talks (*TV Sports Markets* 17:18).

The combined value of offers from state broadcaster Rai for free-to-air rights and Sky Italia for pay-television rights was about 40 per cent below Fifa’s asking price. Fifa will now have to come back to the market in an arguably trickier economic climate than in 2013.

Fifa has not lost anything from the collapse of the agreement except time, as the first competition is just under three years away. However, it is still a precedent that Fifa could do without.

It is understood that the MP & Silva deal did not involve an upfront minimum guarantee. The agency had projected certain targets and would have earned a performance fee if it exceeded them.

Based on the €340m Rai paid for the 2010 and 2014 World Cups, it is likely that the target would have been well in excess of €300m. MP & Silva is not thought to have incurred a penalty in rescinding the agreement.

It is still unclear why the agreement was terminated. Some sources say the agency would have found it more difficult to get a good price for the rights after the corruption scandal surrounding Fifa exploded in May this year.

The rights have not yet come back onto

the market. Italian broadcast sources contacted by *TV Sports Markets* this week said they were unaware of the breakdown of the MP & Silva deal and had not yet been notified by Fifa.

Minority stake

One finance expert said that even if the World Cup deal did not carry a guarantee, it was still beneficial for the agency not to have such a commitment on its books while it is in talks with private equity houses to sell a minority stake.

Two companies are thought to have been shortlisted in the bidding process for the agency: private equity company Permira and a major Chinese investor. A deal is expected early next year.

The size of the available stake is thought to be subject to negotiation. Riccardo Silva, one of the agency's three co-founders, holds 45 per cent of the company. Another co-founder, Andrea Radrizzani, holds 41 per cent, after having sold Silva a two-per-cent stake earlier this year. The rest of the company, 14 per cent, is held by third co-founder Carlo Pozzali.

Radrizzani was due to step back from day-to-day management of the agency this year to concentrate on his premium sports channel operation Eleven Sports Network. However, it is understood that he remains active for MP & Silva and was the principal negotiator in the agency's recent deals for Premier League rights in Asia (*TV Sports Markets* 19:21).

Euro 2016 talks

Uefa this week said it would open private talks with Italian broadcasters for the rights to Euro 2016. European football's governing body auctioned the rights in April but only received one bid – from Rai – which was rejected.

The lack of bids at auction does not bode well for Uefa's hopes of matching the €106m Rai paid for Euro 2012. Like many European public-service broadcasters, Rai is reducing its spend on sports rights.

Pay-television operator Sky Italia has moved away from a strategy of investing heavily in one-off events which have marketing value but do not add many subscribers. One source said the company

was also still sore about Uefa's decision to award exclusive Champions League rights to its chief rival, Mediaset Premium.

Discovery Communications is a theoretical bidder. However, the US media group is not thought to be interested. Having recently acquired rights to the Olympic Games across Europe Discovery is not in a position where it needs to do deals to make a statement to the market.

The most likely competitor to Rai would appear to be Mediaset, which also has the ability to split coverage across free-to-air channels and its pay-television platform. However, the company is groaning under the weight of its €230m-per-season deal for exclusive Champions League rights (*TV Sports Markets* 18:3).

Mediaset has been looking for a buyer for its pay-television arm – Mediaset Premium – for over a year, but has so far failed in its search.

Sky's owner Rupert Murdoch pulled out of merger talks in July, reportedly over Mediaset's expectations about the level of boardroom control it would have as the minority stakeholder. ■

FOOTBALL

Uefa nets increase in Africa with Euro 2016 buyout deal

By Callum McCarthy

TV Media Sport added football's European Championship to its free-to-air portfolio in sub-Saharan Africa this month, securing a buyout deal with Uefa, European football's governing body.

TVMS, a Paris-based agency specialising in free-to-air distribution in sub-Saharan Africa, will pay about €1.5m (\$1.6m) for free-to-air rights to Euro 2016 in 38 territories.

The deal was brokered by the CAA Eleven agency, Uefa's sales agent for its national team competitions.

The package consists of 12 matches, including one semi-final and the final. It is non-exclusive, as SuperSport has pay-television rights to every match of the tournament across sub-Saharan Africa.

The fee is about 50 per cent more than TVMS's deal for Euro 2012, when it paid a minimum guarantee of just under \$1m for free-to-air rights in the region.

A source close to the negotiations said pay-television operator StarTimes, which can broadcast free-to-air, was the only other serious bidder.

For Euro 2016, TVMS will be responsible for eight fewer territories than for Euro 2012, when it had a total of 46. These eight territories – Angola, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda – are the most lucrative in sub-Saharan Africa.

Free-to-air rights in these territories will be, or have already been, sold directly by CAA Eleven. Deals have been finalised in South Africa, with SuperSport, and in Angola, with Upstar Comunicações.

Distribution

It is thought that CAA Eleven prioritised coverage over income. It wanted to ensure the winning bidder was focused on distribution rather than recouping a large rights fee. Many African free-to-air

broadcasters are not used to paying fees for sports rights, and this has proved an obstacle for agencies in the past.

CAA Eleven is understood to expect TVMS to secure coverage in all territories, but TVMS has no contractual obligation to do so. TVMS is likely to give Euro 2016 rights away for no or low rights fees in the smallest markets.

At Uefa's behest, the agency will not package Euro 2016 rights with its free-to-air rights to the 2016 Olympic Games, as it wants to monitor the value of its rights in the region.

TVMS acquired rights to the 2016 Olympics in a joint deal with the Infront Sports and Media agency in January 2014 (*TV Sports Markets* 19:15).

Uefa was pleased with TVMS's distribution of Euro 2012, and the governing body also likes the tailored coverage TVMS can provide.

As with the 2016 Olympic Games, TVMS will produce live in-studio content shown before, during and after matches. The agency will produce its own daily, hour-long highlights show. ■

FASTRACK 2

NEWS IN BRIEF

ATP closes lucrative new deals in China and India

The ATP World Tour earned hugely improved terms in new deals covering China and India this month.

In India, pay-television broadcaster Sony agreed an exclusive five-year deal, from 2016 to 2020, worth between \$3m (€2.8m) and \$4m per year.

The deal was agreed in direct talks with ATP Media, the commercial arm of the tour, which was advised by the IMG agency. It is understood to have been agreed in August.

It is more than a sixfold increase on the total value of the ATP's current non-exclusive deals with pay-television broadcasters Star and Taj, from 2012 to 2015, which are worth about \$500,000 per year.

The deal adds year-long content to Sony's tennis portfolio, which also includes the Australian Open from 2015 to 2019. It also keeps the broadcaster competitive with rivals Star – which holds rights to Wimbledon, the most-watched of the grand slams in India – and Taj, which has WTA Tour and US Open rights (*TV Sports Markets* 18:19).

In China, ATP Media took advantage of the burgeoning digital market by tendering its rights in late September. Incumbent Le Sports beat competition from rival digital firms including iQiyi and PPTV to retain the rights for a further five years, from 2016 to 2020.

Its fee increased from about \$2m per year to close to \$20m per year. The current deal runs for three years, from 2013 to 2015.

The 10-fold increase is driven by the explosive growth in China's digital rights market in the past two years, and by Le Sports' aggression in acquiring rights to grow its viewer base, even if the deals stand to lose money in the short term (*TV Sports Markets* 19:15).

Le Sports was keen to maintain its hold on the rights: tennis reaches a broad demographic in China, and the ATP Tour ensures over 1,000 hours of

content from early February to late November, including during the week when there is less top live sport.

Le Sports also agreed a separate deal with the ATP World Tour for online video and court-side sponsorship.

Both agreements cover 23 tournaments: nine ATP World Tour Masters 1000 events, 13 ATP World Tour 500 events and the World Tour Finals, a tournament played by the eight top-ranked players on that year's tour. ■

MLS back on Fox after long talks

Fox Sports Africa has restarted its coverage of Major League Soccer in sub-Saharan Africa after year-long negotiations with IMG, the league's agency partner, and Soccer United Marketing, the league's commercial arm.

MLS received no English-language coverage of its 2015 regular season in sub-Saharan Africa as pay-television broadcaster Fox refused to pay IMG and SUM's original asking price, believed to be about \$150,000 (€140,000) per season.

A deal was eventually agreed in October, in time for Fox to broadcast the MLS playoffs. Fox will pay just over \$100,000 per season for English-language rights to all MLS events, from 2015 to 2018. It will not pay a discounted price for the 2015 season.

The new deal represents an increase of about 67 per cent on Fox's previous deal for MLS rights. The broadcaster paid about \$60,000 per season in a two-season deal, covering 2013 and 2014, with the MP & Silva agency.

IMG pays between \$6m and \$8m per season to distribute MLS international rights – in conjunction with SUM – from 2015 to 2022. Agency MP & Silva paid \$2m per season from 2010 to 2014 (*TV Sports Markets* 18:20).

It is believed Fox stood firm on the amount it was willing to pay for the rights at the beginning of the year, and could afford to do so due to the lack of competition for the property.

In the new deal, Fox has rights to up

to four live matches per week and a 30-minute highlights show produced by IMG. In its previous deal with MP & Silva, Fox had two live matches per week and no highlights rights. ■

NRK renews key skiing rights

Norwegian public-service broadcaster NRK renewed two vital skiing rights deals last month, agreeing to pay decent increases for both.

NRK signed off deals with the Fédération Internationale de Ski, skiing's global governing body, and Norges Skiforbund, the Norwegian national ski association. Both deals will run for five seasons, from 2016-17 to 2020-21.

NRK will pay about €6m (\$6.4m) per season for a package of Fis World Cup events in a deal brokered by the Infront Sports & Media agency. The deal covers alpine, Nordic and freestyle events over the period (*TV Sports Markets* 19:7).

This is up 20 per cent on the €5m per season it pays in its current five-season deal, from 2011-12 to 2015-16. A deal has been under discussion for more than six months.

The threat of an aggressive bid from US media company Discovery, which operates the SBS Nordic and Eurosport channels, is thought to have forced NRK into the increase. The rights are must-have content for NRK – skiing is hugely popular in Norway.

NRK also paid an increase for World Cup events held in Norway in a deal with Norges Skiforbund. The new deal is worth about €1.5m per season, up by around 15 per cent on the value of the current five-season deal, from 2011-12 to 2015-16, which is worth about €1.3m per season.

On top of the rights fee, NRK will continue to cover production costs of about €3m per season.

The fee increase is relatively small as NRK is thought to have had a matching-rights clause in its existing deal. This discouraged strong bidding from Discovery and TV2, both of whom were keen to get the rights. ■

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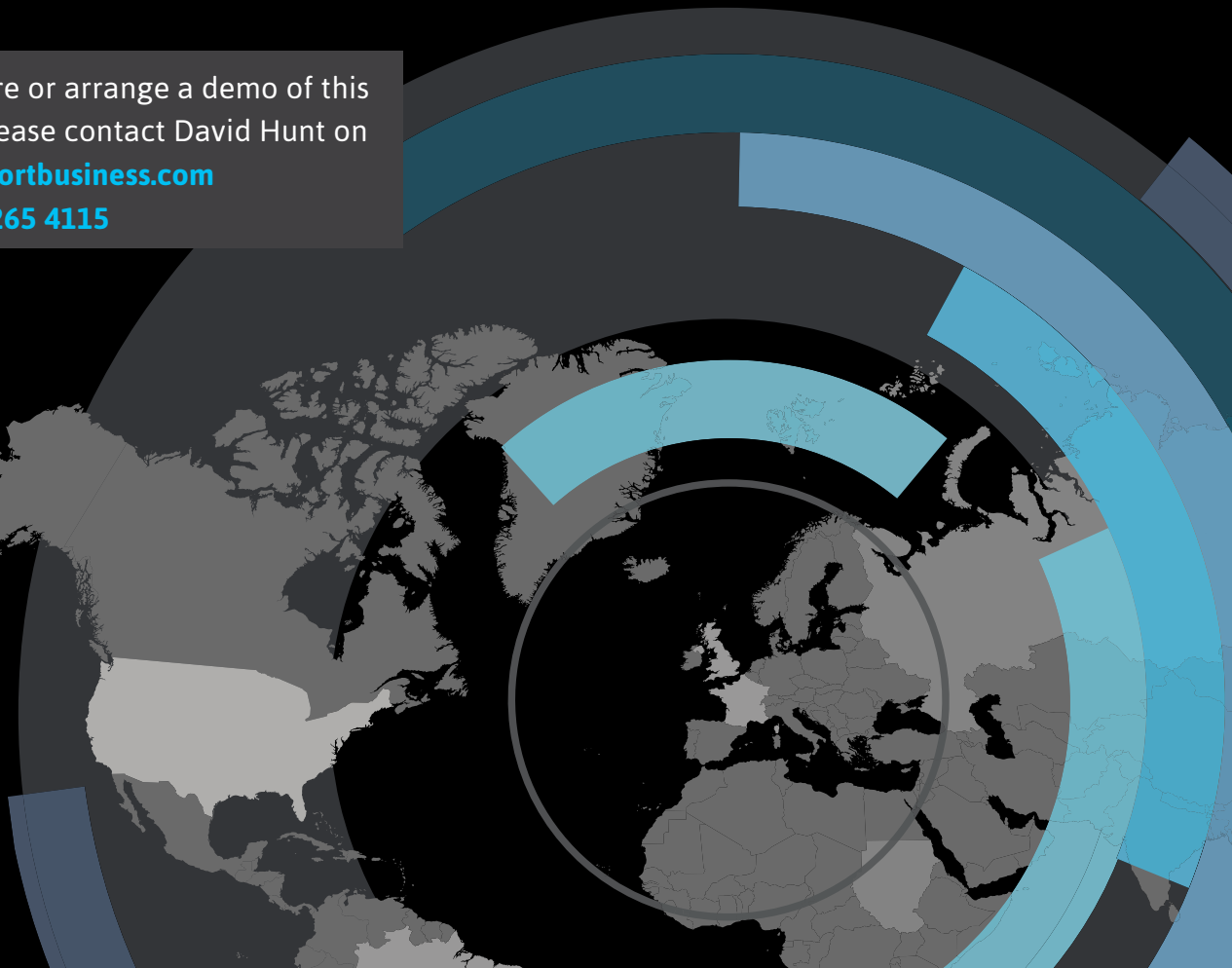
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SPORTS CLIPS: News from TVSM Daily from November 19 to December 2**MEDIA RIGHTS 1****Football: Copa Libertadores, Premier League, Copa América and more**

- **Football:** International pay-television broadcaster Fox International Channels acquired rights for a series of tournaments operated by Conmebol, the sport's governing body in Latin America, for three years, from 2016 to 2018. Fox will continue to show live and exclusive multi-platform coverage of the Copa Libertadores, Copa Sudamericana and Recopa Sudamericana in Latin America. The deal also includes the Copa Libertadores U-20, women's Copa Libertadores, Futsal Copa Libertadores and Beach Soccer Copa Libertadores. Fox will also distribute multi-platform rights outside Latin America.
- **Football:** Telco Altice acquired rights in France for the English Premier League for three seasons, from 2016-17 to 2018-19 (page 1).
- **Football:** Conmebol and Concacaf, respectively the sport's governing bodies in South America and North America, Central America and the Caribbean, awarded the unsold commercial rights to the 2016 Copa América Centenario national team tournament to the IMG and Soccer United Marketing agencies.
- **Football:** German public-service broadcaster ARD and pay-television broadcaster Sky Deutschland retained rights for German domestic knockout competition the DFB-Pokal for three seasons, from 2016-17 to 2018-19.
- **Football:** Spanish commercial broadcaster Mediaset acquired rights for the 2015 Fifa Club World Cup. Mediaset will exploit the rights on its Telecinco, Cuatro and Energy channels. Mediaset will provide coverage of the tournament from December 16, when Spanish LaLiga club Barcelona enters the competition at the semi-final stage.
- **Football:** Pay-television broadcaster Fox Sports Africa acquired rights for North America's Major League Soccer in sub-Saharan Africa. The deal will start immediately and runs for just over three seasons, until the end of the 2018 campaign. The agreement covers 25 countries across the continent (page 8).
- **Football:** Pay-television operator StarTimes, which operates in sub-Saharan Africa, acquired rights to Italy's Coppa Italia knockout competition and the Supercoppa Italiana match. The rights will cover three seasons, from 2015-16 to 2017-18 (page 6).
- **Football:** StarTimes acquired rights for the Fifa Club World Cup in a two-year deal, from 2015 to 2016 (page 6).
- **Football:** French digital-terrestrial television channel L'Équipe 21 acquired rights to the Italian second tier Serie B.

SINCE LAST TIME

- Chinese conglomerate Dalian Wanda integrated the Infront Sports & Media agency and World Triathlon Corporation into a newly-formed entity called Wanda Sports Holding. Infront's president and chief executive, Philippe Blatter, will become president and chief executive of the entity with the top management of Infront and WTC, parent company of the Ironman triathlon series, remaining in place. Wanda Sports' operational headquarters will be in Zug, Switzerland. Dalian Wanda acquired a majority shareholding in Infront in July and completed a 100-per-cent takeover of WTC in November.
- The Lagardère Sports agency's Asia-focused division was ordered to pay \$27.9m (€26.3m) to the MSM Satellite (Singapore) unit of Sony-owned Indian broadcaster Multi Screen Media. The International Court of Arbitration decision was in relation to a dispute over rights for the Indian Premier League Twenty20 cricket tournament. According to the *Economic Times* newspaper, the dispute surrounded a 'facilitation fee' MSM had paid to World Sport Group in 2009. World Sport Group became part of the Lagardère Sports and Entertainment umbrella brand in September. Lagardère Sports, which has a 70-per-cent stake in the division formerly known as World Sport Group, said it would "study all possible legal recourse".
- UK media regulator Ofcom removed the regulation requiring pay-television broadcaster Sky to offer its Sky Sports 1 and 2 channels on a wholesale basis, stating that the company is now widely supplying these channels to rivals on commercial terms. UK telco BT, which has a commercial wholesale arrangement with Sky, is considering legal action over Ofcom's decision.
- The rojadirecta.me website was ordered to halt operations in Spain by December 4. The website was responsible for "unfair competition, as it uses the streaming of content owned by third companies to profit through advertising," according to the commercial court of A Coruña in Spain. Internet service providers were told to "interrupt data transmission, data storing, telecom access and any other service" if rojadirecta.me does not curtail streaming.
- Italian broadcaster Mediaset secured a ruling from a court in Milan ordering "a major supplier" of internet services to prevent its customers from accessing it.rojadirecta.eu. The website was identified by Mediaset as one of the major sources of online piracy of its content, including sports coverage. The internet company, reported by the Italian press to be Swisscom-owned Fastweb, will be forced to remove references to Rojadirecta sites regardless of the country in which they are registered.

MEDIA INTERNATIONAL

- Major League Baseball agreed a three-year deal with US network Fox, from 2016 to 2018, to provide live in-market streaming of MLB games. The agreement encompasses the 15 regional sports channels operated by the Fox Sports division of Fox. The streaming of games via computers and mobile devices will cover the following teams: Arizona Diamondbacks, Atlanta Braves, Cincinnati Reds, Cleveland Indians, Detroit Tigers, Kansas City

SPORTS CLIPS: News from TVSM Daily from November 19 to December 2

MEDIA RIGHTS 2

Bangladesh Premier League, European Handball Championship and more

- **Cricket:** Indian pay-television broadcaster Neo Sports acquired rights for the 2015 edition of Twenty20 tournament the Bangladesh Premier League. The deal includes an option to extend the agreement for a further two years (page 2).
 - **Curling:** US sports broadcaster ESPN retained exclusive rights to Canada's Season of Champions events in a deal with Canadian pay-television sports broadcaster TSN for the 2015-16 season. ESPN will show more than 300 hours of coverage via its ESPN3 online streaming service.
 - **Handball:** SportA, the agency that represents German public-service broadcasters ARD and ZDF, acquired exclusive rights for the 2016 and 2018 men's European Handball Championships in Poland and Croatia respectively. The agreement was brokered by the European Handball Federation's marketing and media agency partner, the Infront Sports & Media agency. ARD, ZDF and regional public-service broadcasters will broadcast Germany national team matches live and will show highlights of games featuring other teams.
 - **Hockey:** Pay-television broadcaster BT Sport acquired rights in the UK and Ireland for the 2015 Hockey World League Finals. BT Sport struck the deal with the FIH, the sport's global governing body. BT Sport will broadcast every game from the men's and women's tournaments in Raipur, India, and Rosario, Argentina.
 - **Hockey:** Canadian broadcast group Asian Television Network acquired exclusive rights in the country for the 2015 men's and women's Hockey World League Finals.
 - **Ice Hockey:** Latvian pay-television broadcaster Best4Sport acquired rights for the DEL, the sport's top division in Germany, until the end of the 2015-16 season. Best4Sport will show one game each Friday and the play-offs. The deal was brokered on behalf of the DEL by the Sportsman Media Group agency.
 - **Ice Hockey:** ESPN struck a deal to stream live coverage of the US National Women's Hockey League. ESPN will stream live coverage of eight Boston Pride games via ESPN3 until the end of the 2015-16 season.
 - **Ice Skating:** The MP & Silva agency agreed a deal with the International Skating Union to market the rights for the 2016 Team Challenge Cup, the first edition of a new figure skating event. MP & Silva will serve as the exclusive worldwide rights distributor, with the exception of the US and Japan.
- Royals, Los Angeles Angels, Miami Marlins, Milwaukee Brewers, Minnesota Twins, New York Yankees, San Diego Padres, St Louis Cardinals, Tampa Bay Rays and Texas Rangers.
- US pay-television sports broadcaster ESPN suffered a 3.2-per-cent fall in subscribers during the 12 months through to the end of September. Regulatory filings show that ESPN had a total of 92m subscribers on October 3 this year, down from 95m on September 27 last year.
 - Karl-Heinz Rummenigge, chairman of top-tier German Bundesliga football club Bayern Munich, rallied behind an "overdue" debate triggered by second-tier club St. Pauli over the centralised distribution model for domestic media-rights income. Rummenigge also called on the German league to negotiate more lucrative deals to ensure the Bundesliga remains competitive with the English Premier League. A tender for the next cycle of domestic rights, covering the top two divisions from 2017-18 to 2020-21, is expected to be opened by mid-2016.
 - French pay-television broadcaster Canal Plus opted to broadcast the final of the 2015 Davis Cup national team tennis tournament on its Canal Plus Décalé channel. According to French daily newspaper *L'Équipe*, Canal Plus was not planning to show the final of the competition between Belgium and Great Britain, despite having rights for the tournament in a four-year sublicensing deal with public-service broadcaster France Télévisions, from 2012 to 2015.
 - Spanish LaLiga football club Real Madrid and French Ligue 1 club Marseille signed partnerships with social media platform Snapchat. Users will be able to access exclusive video and photo content from the club, including behind-the-scenes footage.
 - Irish telco Eir opened discussions over the potential acquisition of pay-television broadcaster Setanta Sports, according to the *Irish Times* newspaper. The report said talks are at an advanced stage and a deal is likely to be finalised next year, subject to regulatory approval and competition clearance. Michael O'Rourke, co-founder and majority shareholder of Setanta Sports, would remain with the broadcaster for a period after completion of the deal.
 - Football-dedicated media company SuperSoccer agreed a deal to carry Manchester United's in-house pay-television channel, MUTV, in Indonesia. The length of the multi-year agreement was not disclosed. The channel will be featured as part of SuperSoccer TV's offering on the Dens.TV and Nexmedia platforms.
 - North American basketball league the NBA expanded its partnership with Brazilian pay-television broadcaster Globosat. Sportv.com, the online platform of Globosat's pay-television service SporTV, will become the league's official online platform in Brazil, with all content being moved from the nba.com/brasil portal. The SporTV-branded site will also provide access to NBA League Pass, the league's out-of-market live game service.
 - Pan-regional pay-television broadcaster ESPN launched its ESPN, ESPN2, ESPN3, ESPN Plus and ESPN Extra channels in HD in Latin America and will offer them through its ESPN Play streaming platform.
 - Telco Cable & Wireless launched the Flow Sports pay-television channel in the Caribbean. The channel is available via Flow's Basic

SPORTS CLIPS: News from TVSM Daily from November 19 to December 2**MEDIA RIGHTS 3****Motorsport, NRL, skiing, ATP World Tour, college sport, TNA Wrestling**

- **Motorsport:** UK commercial broadcaster ITV retained exclusive rights for the British Touring Car Championship in a five-year deal, from 2017 to 2021. At least seven hours of coverage will be shown on ITV4 on each race day.
- **Motorsport:** UK free-to-air digital-terrestrial channel Quest struck a deal to broadcast coverage of the final round of the 2015 World Rallycross Championship in Argentina on November 29. Quest provided highlights of races during the 2015 campaign.
- **Rugby League:** Domestic rights for Australia's National Rugby League were acquired by pay-television broadcaster Fox Sports and telco Telstra. The deals will run for five years, from 2018 to 2022 (see website story).
- **Skiing:** Spanish media company Secuoya was awarded broadcast and production rights for the International Ski Federation's 2016 Freestyle Aerials and 2017 Freestyle Snowboard World Cup events. Secuoya will produce both events, which will be hosted in Sierra Nevada, Spain. It will also broadcast coverage via a new free-to-air channel to launch next year. Secuoya applied for a new digital-terrestrial licence in Spain earlier this year.
- **Tennis:** Le Sports, which is operated by Chinese internet company LeTV, acquired exclusive digital rights in the country for all events on the ATP World Tour men's series (page 8).
- **Tennis:** Sony-owned Indian broadcaster Multi Screen Media acquired exclusive rights for the ATP World Tour for five years, from 2016 to 2020 (page 8).
- **US College Sport:** US sports broadcaster ESPN and the ABC network acquired rights for the new Battle at Bristol American football game on September 10, 2016, between Virginia Tech Hokies and Tennessee Volunteers.
- **Wrestling:** US pay-television broadcaster Pop acquired rights for the TNA organisation's flagship show, Impact Wrestling. Pop will begin to show the live, two-hour programme every Tuesday from January 2016.

TV package in Antigua, the Bahamas, Barbados, the Cayman Islands, Curaçao, Grenada, Jamaica, Saint Vincent & the Grenadines, Saint Lucia and Trinidad and Tobago.

- Pay-television broadcaster Fox Sports withdrew its offer to acquire Canal del Fútbol, the broadcaster that has exclusive rights to domestic football in Chile, according to Chilean newspaper *El Mercurio*. The report added that media company Turner, as well as sports broadcaster ESPN and beIN Media Group, had submitted proposals to invest in the channel. The Chilean Football Association has an 80-per-cent stake in the channel, with businessman Jorge Claro holding the other 20 per cent.

MEDIA RIGHTS NEGOTIATIONS

- American football's NFL may offer an expanded 16-game package and a stake in its NFL Network cable-television channel as part of its Thursday Night Football package of rights, according to the *New York Post* newspaper. The NFL is expected to award Thursday Night Football rights for a multi-year period from the 2016-17 campaign, possibly through to the end of 2021-22. The CBS network pays about \$300m (€283m) in the current one-season deal that includes eight games during 2015-16.
- Formula One chief executive Bernie Ecclestone rejected a request by the BBC for the UK public-service broadcaster to renegotiate its deal for the motor-racing series, according to the *Daily Telegraph* newspaper. The BBC wants to cut its sports-rights budget by £35m (€50m/\$53m) in 2016-17 as part of wider savings of £150m. The BBC's current deal, through to the end of the 2018 campaign, includes live coverage of 10 races per season.
- Irish public-service broadcaster RTÉ is considering sublicensing on sports rights next year in an effort to generate additional

income, according to the *Irish Times* newspaper. RTÉ is expected to hold talks with broadcasters in Ireland, including commercial broadcaster TV3, over the possibility of sharing rights to major sports events. Pat Kiely, commercial director for TV3, said the broadcaster will offer to "take on any rights RTÉ would make available under sublicensing arrangements". TV3 is interested in bidding for sports rights in partnership with RTÉ in the future.

- Austrian public-service broadcaster ORF is in talks over extending its Formula One deal, but added that a new deal must represent good value. Reports in September suggested that ORF may not be prepared to match its existing rights fee of about €15m (\$16m) per year to retain the rights beyond 2015.
- Basketball Australia is close to signing a multi-season rights deal for the Women's National Basketball League with a free-to-air partner to end a blackout so far in the 2015-16 season, according to chief executive Anthony Moore.
- Pan-European basketball competition the United League is close to sealing a three-season deal with Russian sports media platform Match TV, according to the tournament's deputy chief executive Ilona Korstin.

ALSO SINCE LAST TIME

- Jed York, chief executive of NFL American football franchise the San Francisco 49ers, confirmed that the league is investigating the possibility of expanding the number of games that are streamed live next season following the success of an initiative with internet company Yahoo. The NFL reported that more than 1.5.2m unique viewers tuned in for the first global free-to-view live stream of a regular-season game on October 25. The Buffalo Bills v Jacksonville Jaguars International Series game at London's

SPORTS CLIPS: News from TVSM Daily from November 19 to December 2

- Wembley Stadium was streamed live on Yahoo and blogging website Tumblr.
- The NFL's Jacksonville Jaguars entered into a strategic partnership with virtual reality company Voke through which it will offer instant replay applications to spectators on game days at its EverBank Field stadium.
 - Aintree Racecourse, host of UK horseracing's showpiece Grand National, confirmed the 2016 edition of the race will start an hour later than in previous years in an effort to increase television audience figures. The Grand National has traditionally started at 4.15pm UK time, but the 2016 race will begin at 5.15pm. It will be shown in the UK by commercial broadcaster Channel 4.
 - Antonio Campo Dall'Orto, the director general of Rai, said the Italian state broadcaster has "no intention" of entering the country's pay-television sector. Italian daily newspaper *La Repubblica* had reported that Dall'Orto was seeking approval from the country's government to introduce a subscription-based online service in Italy.
 - The Movistar Plus pay-television platform of Spanish telco Telefónica showed the domestic LaLiga football match between Real Madrid and Barcelona on November 21 in 4K ultra HD – a first for a sporting event in Spain.
 - Australian commercial broadcaster Ten hailed the successful introduction of day-night Test cricket, but added that the country's showpiece Melbourne and Sydney Test matches should retain their traditional daytime scheduling.
 - The International Netball Federation overhauled the sport's rules to become more appealing to broadcasters. Among the changes are 30-second restrictions on injury time and quicker penalties.
 - Video streaming website Dailymotion agreed a content partnership with cross-platform media network Whistle Sports, which will make its original video content available to Dailymotion through 26 channels on the latter's website.
 - US pay-television broadcaster Tennis Channel entered into a partnership with the United States Tennis Association to promote its premium digital-subscription service, Tennis Channel Plus. Until December 31, USTA members can take advantage of a 25-per-cent discount on subscribing to Tennis Channel Plus's \$79.99 (€75.45) annual subscription. Non-members who want to purchase the OTT service through the USTA are able to save 20 per cent on an annual subscription. The partnership will resume from May 1 through to June 5.
 - The 2015-16 season of the World Rugby Sevens Series rugby union competition will reach an estimated 400m homes in 144 nations and 12 languages, according to global governing body World Rugby.
 - The International Luge Federation plans to stream live coverage of its World Cup and World Championship events from the 2016 season, which begins in January. The federation will stream coverage via its official website, fil-luge.org, with the action accompanied by English-language commentary. The service will be available worldwide, apart from in Germany and Italy.

INDUSTRY MOVES

- Media and entertainment company Discovery Communications, the parent company of international sports broadcaster Eurosport, announced new appointments to support the exploitation of rights for the Olympic Games in 50 European territories, from 2018 to 2024. The company's Olympic Games leadership team will cover five key functional areas, with Jean-Thierry Augustin serving as head of commercialisation, David Schafer as head of operations and planning, and Géraldine Filiol leading Olympic relations and coordination. Executives are yet to be appointed to the engineering and technology or production roles. At Eurosport, Sameer Pabari has been appointed to spearhead business development, while Antonio Ruiz will lead marketing and Fiona McLachlan will head up communications. • Mark Taffet, who was credited with establishing the pay-per-view television model in boxing, will step down as senior vice-president of US pay-television broadcaster HBO on December 31. Peter Nelson, currently HBO Sports' vice-president of programming, will assume his responsibilities.

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