

FOOTBALL

Fox deal spares Fifa further court appearance and possible exposure of 2022 award process

By Frank Dunne and Richard Welbirg

Fifa avoided the prospect of going back into a US court by agreeing to extend its World Cup rights deal with Rupert Murdoch's Fox Sports last month. But getting off the legal hook comes at a price, in terms of questions about Fifa's governance and also, possibly, in having sold the rights at well below market value.

The deal means Fifa cannot be humiliated again, as it was in the Visa/MasterCard case of 2006 which led to four senior staff being sacked.

More importantly, it means that the US courts, which have wide powers of discovery, will not be able to subpoena information about the process by which football's world governing body controversially awarded hosting rights to

the 2022 tournament to Qatar.

There is no certainty that Fox would have been able to demand this had it taken legal action against the governing body. But, lawyers say, there was no way Fifa could have been certain.

When Fifa opened a consultation process in October 2013 on the possibility of shifting the Qatar event from the World Cup's usual June/July berth to the winter, Fox publicly said that its \$425m (€379m) investment for the English-language rights to the 2018 and 2022 events had been based on the World Cups taking place in the summer, "as they have since the 1930s."

The broadcaster made no threats but

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FOOTBALL

Sky Italia's 'act of love' Serie A wake-up call

By Frank Dunne

Italian pay-television broadcaster Sky Italia said this week that it was "concerned and frustrated" that a continuous flow of negative developments in Serie A was undermining the credibility of the league.

The broadcaster sent an open letter to the 20 club presidents last week which was interpreted by some as a veiled threat that Sky would seek compensation for rights fees it has paid this season. The broadcaster currently pays €561m (\$628m) per season for pay-television rights to all matches.

Jacques Raynaud, Sky's executive vice president of sports channels and advertising sales, told *TV Sports Markets* that far from being a threat, the letter was "an act of love and an appeal to take things seriously."


The league has been engulfed in controversy on several fronts over the last two weeks. This has included:

- the cancellation of two Parma matches because the club had no money to pay staff, raising the possibility that the club may be kicked out of the league – something which

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FASTRACK 1

NEWS IN BRIEF

Uefa was prepared to play waiting game in Spain

Weak competition for Europa League rights in Spain forced Uefa into lengthy negotiations with the beIN Media Group and the Mediapro agency, who were bidding jointly. A deal was eventually agreed last week.

Mediapro and beIN will pay €21.5m (\$22.9m) per season for exclusive rights across all platforms for three seasons from 2015-16 to 2017-18. This is a 30-per-cent increase on the value of the rights in the current cycle, from 2012-13 to 2014-15, in which they are worth €16.5m per season (*TV Sports Markets* 16:7). The deal was negotiated by Uefa's distribution partner Team Marketing.

Mediapro and beIN have the option, but not the obligation, to sublicense to free-to-air broadcasters. The pair made it clear to Uefa that they wanted to acquire exclusive rights.

In the past, Uefa has sold a package of free-to-air rights in addition to pay-television rights. In the current cycle, commercial broadcaster Mediaset pays €6m per season for non-exclusive free-to-air rights to the first-choice match each game week.

Uefa had hoped for Telefónica to bid strongly against Mediapro/beIN for pay-television rights, but the telco failed to follow through on its initial interest.

There was only one bidder for free-to-air rights. Mediaset made a €5m-per-season offer, which was regarded as unacceptably low.

Commercial broadcaster Atresmedia was thought to be interested, but was financially constrained after agreeing a €40m-per-season deal for free-to-air Champions League rights from 2015-16 to 2017-18 (*TV Sports Markets* 18:18).

The tender for Europa League rights was issued almost 10 months ago, in May 2014. The process took so long for two reasons. First, Uefa had to conclude the sales process for the Champions League. Mediapro, backed by beIN, won pay-television rights in a deal worth €125m

per season agreed late last September.

Second, Uefa felt the initial Mediapro/beIN offer undervalued the rights. It is thought that the governing body intimated that it was prepared to go back to Mediaset and, if necessary, take a financial hit on the free-to-air rights. This possibility made Mediapro and beIN raise their offer.

In the current cycle Mediapro pays €10.5m per season for pay-television rights: €3m per season for non-exclusive rights for the first-choice match, and €7.5m per season for the live rights for all other matches.

It is unclear how the agency and broadcaster plan to exploit the rights. Mediapro has previously shown matches on its Gol T pay-television channel. BeIN is yet to launch a channel in Spain. It is expected to do so in the summer. ■

Top 14 final sale reaps dividends

The domestic media rights value of French rugby union's Top 14 final increased by about 45 per cent in new deals agreed last week.

The rights to the final in the four seasons from 2015-16 to 2018-19 will be worth a total of just under €1.6m (\$1.8m) per season in deals with France Télévisions and Canal Plus.

Public-service broadcaster France Télévisions will pay about €1.3m per season, while pay-television broadcaster Canal Plus will pay about €250,000 per season. The final will be shown by both broadcasters.

The deals were agreed with the Ligue Nationale de Rugby, the body which operates the top two tiers of rugby union in France.

The state broadcaster also agreed a one-season deal, covering the 2014-15 final, worth about €1.1m. This is a small increase on its existing three-season deal, from 2011-12 to 2013-14, worth €1m per season (*TV Sports Markets* 19:2). France Télévisions will show coverage on its flagship France 2 channel.

Pay-television rights to the final have, until now, been included in deals for

regular-season rights, which have previously been held by the league's long-term live broadcast partner, Canal Plus. This time the league demanded a separate fee from the broadcaster for the final. This was the main factor driving the overall fee increase.

Production costs to the final are thought to be about €100,000 on top of the rights fee. It is understood that this will be split equally between France Télévisions and Canal Plus.

France Télévisions increased its fee by 10 per cent for 2014-15, and by another 18 per cent on top of that for the four seasons from 2015-16 to 2018-19. Local experts feel this is in line with the growth in interest and viewership of rugby in France in recent years.

The Top 14 final is a listed event in France and must be shown free-to-air. However, France Télévisions faced no competition for the rights. Commercial broadcaster TF1, which will show the majority of the 2015 Rugby World Cup, is understood to have considered a bid, but in the end chose not to.

Under the terms of the tender, free-to-air broadcasters were invited to bid in multiple scenarios: if they had exclusive rights to the Top 14 final; if they were sharing with one pay-television broadcaster; or if they were sharing with two pay-television broadcasters.

Canal Plus was always likely to be awarded Top 14 final pay-television rights after agreeing a €74m-per-season deal with the LNR for regular-season matches in January.

Under its deal for live rights to the regular season, Canal Plus became an 'official broadcaster' of the league. Only an official broadcaster could acquire pay-television rights for the final. The only issue to be agreed between the league and Canal Plus was the rights fee.

The league was advised by the Cornerplay agency, run by former Ligue de Football Professionnel executives Stéphane Dor and Jean-Guillaume Welgryn. ■ www.football.fr

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Fox deal spares Fifa further court embarrassment

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said that it would “not countenance” a World Cup being played in November or December. It was widely expected that it would push for a significant discount and, if it failed to secure one, would sue Fifa for breach of contract.

Governance issues

Fifa’s secretary general Jérôme Valcke is almost certainly correct in saying that Fifa has broken no “international rules” by choosing to renew with an existing broadcast partner without a tender process. There was no legal requirement for them to do so, and Fifa is far from unique in doing this kind of deal.

In May last year, the International Olympic Committee renewed its US rights deal with partner NBCUniversal through to 2032 without a tender process (*TV Sports Markets* 18:9).

That deal, like the Fifa-Fox deal, raised questions of fairness, transparency and accountability. But whereas the IOC was prepared to engage in detailed discussion of its decision-making process, Fifa has so far only issued terse statements which do not fully address the issues raised.

Questions without answers

This week *TV Sports Markets* asked Fifa:

1. Why it had not spoken to broadcasters such as ESPN and Univision, which both have a long track record as World Cup broadcasters.
2. How it could be sure to have got the best possible deal without allowing Fox’s rivals to bid.
3. Whether the reported 10-per-cent increase in value for the 2026 World Cup substantially undervalued the rights.
4. Whether the broadcasters in the US and Canada (where Bell Media was awarded the rights) had been given any assurances that the US would host the 2026 World Cup.
5. Whether the Fox deal was motivated

by a desire to avoid being forced to disclose information in court about the awarding of the 2022 tournament to Qatar.

Fifa replied: “Fifa reviewed the overall situation in the US market, including examination of the process and the result of the tender for the 2018 and 2022 Fifa World Cups. As you know, it is not uncommon in the US sports industry for existing agreements with broadcasters to be extended. Fifa TV, in the course of its general activities, collects market intelligence and considers the options in view of this intelligence.”

Cute Fox

At the same time as it extended its deal with Fox for English-language rights in the US, Fifa extended its deal for Spanish-language rights with Telemundo, a division of NBCUniversal. It also extended a deal for the rights in Canada with Bell Media.

The values of the deals have not been made public and Fifa declined to comment this week. The *New York Times* claimed last week that Fox’s deal was only a 10-per-cent uplift on the current deal. On the basis of an equal split in value for 2018 and 2022, that would make the 2026 rights worth about \$235m.

If these details are accurate, Fox appears to have played its hand exceptionally well. At that price, the deal would undervalue the US rights significantly. The scale of the underselling would be magnified if, as many expect, the US ends up winning the right to host the 2026 tournament.

Insiders say that Fox has either been very clever since October 2013, or had been very naïve when it negotiated its original deals, or both.

Qatar was chosen to host the 2022 World Cup in December 2010. Fox secured the rights the following October. Throughout its negotiation, Fox knew that Qatar would host the event and would have understood the potential complications of that.

Executives from other World Cup broadcasters involved in negotiations at that time say that Fox would – or should – have factored into its valuations the possibility that the World Cup would not take place in June and July.

Several World Cup broadcasters and

independent sports rights lawyers said this week that Fox would have stood little chance of winning a claim against Fifa for breach of contract and would probably have known that, so was unlikely to have brought the case to court.

Fifa does not commit to any particular date for the World Cup in its broadcast contracts. Typically, broadcasters try to negotiate as much protection as possible. This could be trying to get Fifa to specify a particular window or the broadcaster saying it could not commit to showing the event live if it clashed with another major event.

As one well-placed source put it, “Fifa likes to leave things really open. It could legitimately argue that these calendar issues were raised during negotiations, it didn’t agree to Fox’s requests and Fox signed up on that basis. I suspect Fox would have struggled [to demonstrate breach of contract] because of that.” ■

[www.fox.com](#) Did Fifa get the best possible deal from the US market?

AMERICAN FOOTBALL

MP & Silva wins 'fierce' agency tussle for NFL rights across Europe

By Richard Welbirg and Frank Dunne

MP & Silva’s deal to distribute National Football League rights in Europe is a “landmark” deal for the agency, according to senior vice president Daniel Cohen.

Under last week’s deal, MP & Silva will sell television and digital rights in 42 European territories for five years, from 2015 to 2019. Cohen declined to comment on the value of the deal, but it is understood to be worth an average of about \$6m (€5.4m) per season. It will pay about \$5m in the first season, and the fee will increase incrementally by about \$500,000 per season.

All the major sports rights agencies are understood to have bid in what Cohen said was a “fierce” bidding process.

Cohen, who joined the agency in January to lead its operations in the Americas, told *TV Sports Markets*: “This is a landmark deal for us because it is the first major US property for which we are

going to help globalise their brand for a very significant amount of time and in a very significant number of territories. The NFL don't entrust their brand or their sport to just anybody."

He said the deal was a testament to the fact that MP & Silva was now being recognised as, "if not the number one, at least one of the global players in sports media rights."

Since the NFL Europa developmental league was disbanded in 2007, the NFL has focused on promoting its product in Europe through the International Series of regular-season games played at Wembley Stadium in London. The number of games rose from one in the 2012 season to three in 2014, and there have been persistent rumours the NFL's long-term intent is to establish a permanent franchise in London.

"There is no firm commitment to move a team to Europe by a specific date," Cohen said. "But we are very confident that the NFL are going to try to push the envelope and really grow the business in Europe, whether that means putting a team in towards the end of the deal or playing more games."

He added that the NFL was not dictating MP & Silva's strategy, and suggested the agency may seek to sign separate digital content deals rather than bundle it with television rights, as has been the case in previous European deals.

The deal excludes some of Europe's most lucrative territories, where the NFL has signed direct deals, including Germany, Scandinavia and the UK.

In Scandinavia, the NFL sold its rights to commercial and pay-television broadcaster Modern Times Group, for five years from 2012 to 2016 (*TV Sports Markets* 16:4). In the UK, pay-television rights are held by Sky in a five-year deal, from 2015 to 2019, worth between \$8m and \$10m per year.

Sports broadcaster Sport1's deals for rights in Germany, Austria and Switzerland, worth a combined \$700,000 per year, expired this season. Austria and Switzerland are included in the new pan-European deal with MP & Silva.

The rights MP & Silva acquired were previously split between the IMG Events & Media agency and pay-television broadcaster Fox International Channels.

Fox held English-language rights in 42 territories excluding Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Scandinavia, Spain and the UK for two seasons, 2013 and 2014. The deal was worth about \$1m per year.

Local-language rights in Europe, excluding the UK and Scandinavia, were sold by IMG under a three-year agreement with the NFL, from 2012 to 2014 (*TV Sports Markets* 16:4).

The NFL separated the rights by language after getting a good offer for English-language rights in the 2012 to 2014 cycle from international sports broadcaster ESPN.

The broadcaster wanted the rights for ESPN America, which was distributed in Europe, the Middle East and Africa. When ESPN America shut down in July 2013, English-language rights reverted to the NFL and the remaining rights to the 2013 and 2014 seasons were sold to Sport1 and Fox. ■

[www. For the full interview with Daniel Cohen visit our website.](#)

BETTING RIGHTS

Sportsman gambles on Bundesliga to keep up with rivals

By Robin Jellis

The Sportsman Media Group's desire to remain on an equal footing with its rivals helped the German Bundesliga to a 400-per-cent increase in the value of its betting rights in a deal agreed late last month.

The deal with the agency is for two seasons, from 2015-16 to 2016-17, and is worth €30m (\$33.6m), or €15m per season. This is a five-fold increase on the value of Sportsman's current three-season deal, from 2012-13 to 2014-15, worth €3m per season (*TV Sports Markets* 19:3). The rights are thought by several experts to have been undervalued in the existing contract.

Sportsman is understood to have bid aggressively to keep pace with its main rivals in the growing betting rights market – the Perform Group and the IMG Events & Media agency.

Sportsman's deal for betting rights to Spanish football's La Liga ends this season. IMG holds betting rights to France's Ligue 1 and Italy's Serie A. As a result, Sportsman was desperate to renew its Bundesliga rights.

The league sold the rights in a 'Dutch auction' whereby it started with a high asking price, which it planned to lower. It didn't need to, however, as Sportsman's offer came almost immediately.

The three other parties invited to the auction were IMG, Perform and betting and data services company Sportradar.

The rights were sold by DFL Sports Enterprises, the commercial arm of the league, the Deutsche Fussball Liga.

They were sold only for two seasons so the contract will tie in with the expiry of the league's broadcast deals in Europe. In the next cycle it is expected to sell rights for three seasons.

The league is on course to earn about €165m per season for its international rights from 2015-16 onward. The last valuable territories in which it is yet to agree deals are Australia and New Zealand.

Rights covered

The rights in both the current and the new deals are global in scope, but exclude the German-speaking countries of Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Liechtenstein and Luxembourg.

There are two changes in the territories covered by the new and existing deals. Italy is excluded in the new deal, having been included last time. Hong Kong will be included in the new deal having been excluded in the current one.

In Hong Kong, from 2012-13 to 2014-15, Bundesliga media and betting rights are held by pay-television platform i-Cable in a deal worth \$6m per season.

In Italy, pay-television broadcaster Sky Italia picked up rights late in the current cycle and the betting rights had already been included in the deal with Sportsman. Sky Italia pays about €1.5m per season from 2013-14 to 2014-15 for the media rights.

When the league agreed its subsequent 80-territory, €80m-per-season deal with channel syndicator Fox International Channels in October 2013, it carved out betting rights in all territories. Fox pushed for betting rights to be included in its deal for Italy and was granted them. ■

FOOTBALL

Raynaud: Beautiful game is being undermined

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has not happened since the modern Serie A was founded in 1946

- claims in Italian newspaper *La Repubblica* that the solidarity fund intended to redistribute four per cent of Serie A's media-rights revenue – about €40m per year – to youth, grassroots and infrastructure projects is being used by clubs in the third division, Lega Pro, as 'an ATM machine' to help them cover day-to-day club financing

- the publication of a phone call in which Lazio president Claudio Lotito admitted to telling the president of Serie B, Andrea Abodi, that he didn't want clubs from small towns, with limited appeal to broadcasters, promoted to Serie A. At the time, Lotito was head of a committee to reform the structure of the professional game but has been removed from this role as a consequence of the comments.

Parma crisis

Serie A club Parma is verging on bankruptcy and pulled out of league fixtures with Udinese and Genoa because it could not pay its staff or cover security costs.

In its letter to the league last week, Sky said the games missed by Parma had already made the championship "irregular" and that it was "astonished" the football authorities had allowed such a situation to develop.

Raynaud said this week that the broadcaster considered the championship irregular because "if some teams can have the week off and get their players back from injuries we don't think everybody is being treated equally or is in the same condition to compete."

He added: "This is not about us as a broadcaster. It is for the championship to retain its credibility for the *tifosi* [fans]."

Fit and proper

The league rejected Sky's arguments. It told *TV Sports Markets*:

(1) The regularity of the championship

was not "remotely in discussion". The postponement of matches was clearly contemplated by sporting rules and could not be considered 'irregular' or in any way anomalous;

(2) The existing financial controls of clubs in Italy were effective. At the start of the 2014-15 season, the federation denied Parma a licence to take part in the Europa League due to unpaid tax bills. Parma was admitted to Serie A, however, because the club had met all of its financial commitments to players and staff until June 2014 and had no debts relating to player transfers.

The league added that in the coming weeks a fit and proper person test, along the lines of that used in England's Premier League, would be introduced to evaluate the suitability of new club owners. Tougher sanctions would be introduced for those clubs not respecting their financial commitments during the season. These would include blocking or limiting transfer activity, or requiring clubs to reduce the number of players in their first-team squads.

Mutuality 'ATM machine'

The 2008 Melandri Law, which reintroduced collective selling in Italy, required Serie A clubs to create two distinct solidarity mechanisms to redistribute a portion of centrally-sold media rights income.

Six per cent was to be shared among the lower professional leagues – the second-tier Serie B and third-tier Lega Pro (formerly Serie C).

A further four per cent was to be destined for youth football and infrastructural projects in the lower football leagues, including semi-professional and amateur leagues, and at least two non-football projects. This was to be overseen by a newly-created body, the Foundation for General Mutuality in Professional Team Sports.

In the current three-year rights cycle, 2012-13 to 2014-15, the Foundation has distributed €112.5m.

Last week, *La Repubblica* claimed that money was being paid to clubs in Lega Pro in a way which violated the rules. Instead of receiving funding on the basis of projects which had been properly evaluated by the Foundation, a proportion of the income

was simply being split equally between the 60 clubs to help them with day-to-day finances.

Magistrates in Naples are assessing whether any criminal activity has taken place. There could be further repercussions. Senior Italian sports lawyer, Massimo Coccia, told *TV Sports Markets* this week: "Both the collective selling and the redistribution are mandated by law. If the law has been violated, the Autorità Garante della Concorrenza e del Mercato [Italy's antitrust authority] may look at it."

Sky's Raynaud said that this was a governance issue for the league and the broadcaster had no say in the matter, but added: "We are a little bit concerned and frustrated that another negative light has been shed on football. Football is the beautiful game and should remain the beautiful game. We should be talking about matches, top players, and great coaches. Instead, we have too many negative issues. I doubt these things will encourage a 10-year-old to go to the stadium or a 15-year-old to want a season ticket for a team."

The Foundation this week told *TV Sports Markets* that the way it distributed funds corresponded exactly with the established rules, and that all projects funded were certified by an external expert.

It pointed out that the various sporting bodies eligible for funding were required by law to secure independent certification that their application was valid, and that the board of the Foundation had to provide a report of all funding activities to the relevant government minister, accompanied by all the relevant documentation.

Small clubs

Earlier this month, Pino Iodice, director general of Lega Pro club Ischia, secretly recorded a phone call with Lazio president Lotito which was made available to the media.

Lotito, who had been charged with drawing up a blueprint for the reform of the professional game, told Iodice: "I told [Andrea] Abodi [president of Serie B]: if you bring up Carpi or teams that are not worth a fuck, in two or three years we won't have a penny. If we have Frosinone, Latina ... who's going to buy the rights?"

They [the broadcasters] don't even know they exist."

Carpi, the runaway leaders of Serie B, Frosinone and Latina are all small-town teams which would have limited commercial value for pay-television broadcasters like Sky and Mediaset.

The point that Serie A media rights might not be worth as much if smaller teams were promoted has not been questioned. But the call raised the spectre of the 2006 'Calciopoli' scandal in which behind-the-scenes pressure was applied to match officials and favours swapped between club and federation officials to ensure the 'favourable' outcome of a large number of matches. ■

[www. For the full interview with Jacques Raynaud, and a statement from the Foundation, visit our website.](#)

FOOTBALL

MLS gives Eurosport first pan-European football league

By Robin Jellis

Pan-regional sports broadcaster Eurosport is thought to be paying about \$3m (€2.7m) per year for Major League Soccer rights across Europe, excluding the UK, in its four-year deal agreed last week.

This is thought to be far higher than the combined value of previous single-territory deals. However, it is hard to make a like-with-like comparison, as the league's previous rights distributor, the MP & Silva agency, often sold MLS rights in bundles with other football content.

Eurosport's interest in the rights is thought to have been driven by a desire to have a football property on a pan-regional basis. It has a strong portfolio of tennis, cycling and winter sports rights across the region, but no top football rights on a pan-European basis.

Although MLS is not recognised as being on the same level as Europe's top football leagues, it is becoming more popular and the production standard of matches is good.

Matches frequently attract large audiences of passionate and colourful

fans. Last Sunday, 62,500 fans attended the Orlando City v New York City match – one of the highest football attendances anywhere in the world that weekend.

MLS franchises have some hugely wealthy owners with big ambitions. An increasing number of marquee signings are expected in the coming seasons.

The rights are also relatively inexpensive and provide plenty of content during the summer when it will clash with no live European football.

The Eurosport deal, which runs from 2015 to 2018, was agreed with the IMG Events & Media agency. The rights are not thought to have been tendered.

Last October, IMG agreed a deal for global MLS rights, excluding the US and Canada, over the eight years from 2015 to 2022. IMG pays a guarantee of between \$6m and \$8m per year. This is a big increase on the \$2m per year paid by MP & Silva, which sold MLS rights internationally from 2009 to 2014 (*TV Sports Markets* 18:20).

At the time, IMG president Ioris Francini told *TV Sports Markets* there was "great potential" to increase the value of MLS internationally.

Sky snatch

IMG last week sold MLS rights in the UK to pay-television broadcaster Sky in a deal for the same four-year period, 2015 to 2018, worth about £800,000 (€1.1m/\$1.2m) per season.

This represents a 60-per-cent increase on the value of the rights in the previous deal. Rival pay-television broadcaster BT Sport held the rights for two years, from 2013 to 2014, in a deal worth about £500,000 per year (*TV Sports Markets* 16:18).

It is understood that MP & Silva had agreed a longer-term deal with BT which had to be curtailed when the agency failed to renew its deal for international rights in October last year.

IMG spoke to both Sky and BT about a deal, but there was no formal tender process. Sky was keen to snatch the rights from BT because former England internationals Steven Gerrard and Frank Lampard will be playing in the league from July.

There is also heightened interest in the

Miami franchise which former England star David Beckham plans to set up. Beckham hopes to have a team ready for the 2017 season.

The combined value of the deals with Eurosport and Sky is about \$4.2m per year. It was expected that IMG would have to recoup around half of its guarantee from Europe, about 30 per cent from Asia, and the remainder from the rest of the world. IMG will share any upside with the league.

Serie A stays on BT

BT renewed its rights for Italy's Serie A late last month for three seasons, from 2015-16 to 2017-18, in a deal with MP & Silva worth about £3.5m per season. BT can show up to 380 matches live per season, as in the current deal.

The fee is up slightly on BT's current deal, from 2012-13 to 2014-15, worth about £3m per season. It is thought that the initial three-season deal included an option to extend for three more seasons.

The new deal represents a huge increase on the value of the rights two cycles ago, when sports broadcaster ESPN paid £1m for the rights in the 2012-13 season. ■

FORMULA ONE

Bernie secures latest fee increase with free/pay rights split

By Richard Welbirg

Formula One Management earned a significant increase in the value of its rights in Australia last month by allowing a pay-television broadcaster to acquire rights to the championship for the first time in the country.

FOM, Formula One's commercial rights-holder, extended a deal with commercial broadcaster Ten by five years, from 2015 to 2019. The extension incorporates the final year of Ten's existing deal, from 2011 to 2015.

The new deal is worth \$25m (€22m) per year, a 150-per-cent increase on the existing deal worth \$10m per year. Ten is believed to be funding at least \$20m per season of the new deal through a

sublicensing agreement with pay-television broadcaster Fox Sports.

FOM began talks with several parties in the middle of last year. Commercial broadcasters Seven and Nine both made bids, understood to have been some way short of the Ten/Fox offer.

Splitting coverage between pay-television and free-to-air broadcasters has become increasingly common for FOM. It has similar agreements in the UK, Italy, Spain and Germany (*TV Sports Markets* 15:15; 16:10; 18:3; 18:8).

In the 2011 to 2015 deal, Ten broadcast all races live and exclusively. Under the new deal and sublicensing agreement, Fox will broadcast 10 races each season on an exclusive basis. The remaining 10 races will be simulcast by Fox and Ten.

In the 2015 season, these will be the Australia, Bahrain, Monaco, Austria, Germany, Belgium, Singapore, Russia, Mexico, and Abu Dhabi grands prix.

The Australian grand prix is covered by the country's anti-siphoning legislation and must be shown free-to-air. The other nine races to be broadcast by Ten are likely to change season-by-season.

FOM was closely involved with the terms of the sublicensing deal, and is thought to have pushed for the free-to-air races to be European or Asian events. These races air on Sunday afternoons or evenings in Australia, and reach the biggest audiences.

Over the course of the deal, Ten is likely to lose some of its audience to Fox. The pay-television broadcaster has agreed an affiliate deal with Sky to carry the UK broadcaster's highly-regarded coverage and commentary.

Good deal

The Formula One deal is seen as a good one for Fox, which has long coveted the rights. Being the only home for every race of the top three motorsport properties – Formula One, V8 Supercars and MotoGP – is important for pay-television platform Foxtel, which is 50-per-cent owned by Fox's parent company News Corporation.

Pay-television penetration has stalled at about 30 per cent of Australian households, lagging behind most Western countries. The Fox Sports channels are seen as key to improving Foxtel's triple-play offering.

The picture is more complicated for Ten,

which has struggled in recent years. The network lags behind Seven and Nine in ratings and revenue share. It posted after-tax losses of A\$168.3m (€117m/\$130.9m) in 2014 and A\$285m in 2013.

The deal means it retains at least some Formula One coverage on its channels in the medium-term. It also helps support ratings as three of the four main shareholders of the network – Lachlan Murdoch, James Packer and Gina Rinehart – attempt to sell their stakes.

Ten is subject to an offer by a consortium of Foxtel and media company Discovery. Bruce Gordon, the network's fourth major shareholder, opposes the bid and has made an alternative offer. ■

TENNIS

Open renewal maintains IMG's US sports portfolio

By Robin Jellis

The IMG Events & Media agency maintained its commitment to US sports properties in renewing its deal to advise on the sale of global US Open tennis rights last week.

The deal, agreed with the US Tennis Association, covers the nine years from 2017 to 2025. IMG will pay no guarantee and will be paid on a commission basis, as in its current four-year deal, from 2013 to 2016.

The current deal covers rights in Europe, the Middle East, Australia and Asia-Pacific, excluding Japan. The new deal is global, excluding the US, Canada and Latin America. The USTA will sign off all deals.

The US Open renewal follows other recent investments from IMG in US sports properties. In August 2014, the agency agreed a deal to distribute international media rights for Nascar stock car racing for 10 years, from 2015 to 2024 (*TV Sports Markets* 18:15). In October, it ousted MP & Silva as the international distributor of Major League Soccer rights for eight years, from 2015 to 2022 (*TV Sports Markets* 18:20).

The agency has always had American

owners and has been strong in US sport since it was founded in 1960. But it is thought that its current owners, talent agency WME, are particularly keen to expand IMG's representation of US sports globally as part of the longer-term strategy of leveraging its sport and entertainment interests.

IMG is understood to have renewed the deal directly with the USTA, without a tender process, to avoid having to face down strong competition for the rights.

Insiders say the agency was keen to renew after losing out on Women's Tennis Association rights to the Perform Group in December, and International Tennis Federation rights to the beIN Media Group in a deal announced last month.

The last time US Open rights were sold, in 2011, IMG wrested them from Lagardère Unlimited's Best division and had to beat a strong guarantee offer from the MP & Silva agency (*TV Sports Markets* 15:7).

When IMG agreed the existing US Open deal, it made three projections – low, medium and high – for the potential rights income for the Open. The top-end projection is thought to have been about \$28m (€25m) per year. The projection in the new deal is likely to have been higher. One expert said it would be at least \$30m per year. IMG and the USTA share any upside in the current deal, and this is likely to be the same in the new deal.

IMG recouped the full amount projected in the current cycle from two deals with pan-regional sports broadcaster Eurosport. Its rights across Europe are for five years, from 2013 to 2017, and are worth about \$26.5m per year. Its deal covering 17 territories in Asia, from 2013 to 2016, is worth \$1.5m per year (*TV Sports Markets* 16:8).

The rights in Europe are extremely valuable to Eurosport as it agrees lucrative sublicensing deals in the key UK and Spanish markets. This is due to strong local interest in the matches of Andy Murray and Rafael Nadal.

In the UK it sold rights to pay-television broadcaster Sky, from 2013 to 2015, for about £5m (€6.9m/\$7.7m) per year. In Spain the rights are held by pay-television operator Canal Plus and are worth about €4m per year. ■

FASTRACK 2

NEWS IN BRIEF

Suspension of football gives Nova leverage with league

Pay-television broadcaster Nova is in advanced negotiations with the Greek Superleague to extend its domestic football deal for two more seasons, *TV Sports Markets* understands.

Local experts say Nova is using the current suspension of Greek football as a bargaining chip to negotiate a good deal. Late last month, the government indefinitely suspended football in the country following fan violence during the match between rivals Olympiacos and Panathinaikos.

Nova currently holds rights to all Superleague matches in a four-season deal, from 2013-14 to 2016-17, worth €39m (\$43.7m) per season. It wants to extend the deal to cover 2017-18 and 2018-19 and is thought to have offered to maintain its current fee.

In initial discussions Nova is thought to have pushed for a rights-fee reduction of €5m covering the 2014-15 season. This gave it leverage for an extension on the same terms.

The Superleague is Nova's most important sports property, and it will be desperate to renew its rights after losing Uefa Champions League and Europa League rights to its main rival, OTE, last October (*TV Sports Markets* 18:19).

There has not been an official tender process for Superleague rights. OTE is not thought to have spoken with the league about a deal.

Nova is also thought to be close to overturning an OTE rights deal in the courts. OTE holds Greek Cup rights in a three-season deal, from 2013-14 to 2015-16, worth about €2.6m per season. The Greek football federation had initially sold the rights to the Media Goal agency for about €7.1m, or just under €2.4m per season.

Nova claims the federation should have sold the rights directly to a broadcaster, and is prohibited from selling rights to an intermediary.

Industry insiders expect the court to

rule in Nova's favour, and the rights to be offered to the market in the coming months.

Telco Forthnet, which owns Nova, is in financial difficulty and looking to sell the broadcaster. OTE and telcos Vodafone and Wind Hellas submitted non-binding offers but no decision has been taken and talks are on hold. ■

Why Pac-12 agreed China deal

Last month's deal between the Pacific-12 Conference (Pac-12) and Chinese internet firm LeTV is evidence that China's internet platforms are providing sports bodies with exposure which has a value beyond rights fees.

The competing US universities have big research departments which are always looking for partnerships with foreign universities and to attract international students.

Pac-12 deputy commissioner Jamie Zaninovich told *TV Sports Markets*: "We will get some [financial] support from LeTV but we recognise that as an early entrant it's about exposing our brand. We have educational institutions who are interested in leveraging this."

LeTV will live stream 27 Pac-12 games from the 2015 college basketball season, including all 11 games in this month's post-season play-offs.

The internet firm is understood to have paid a nominal fee but reaching the right kind of target audience is far more important for the Pac-12.

Zaninovich said the objective was to get into the Chinese market and "see how it goes." The internet is a good platform for attracting students and developing collaboration between faculties, he said. "The demographic we are looking at, of potential students and their parents, is really a digital group."

After the play-offs, LeTV is believed to have an exclusive window in which to negotiate an extension to the deal.

The Pac-12 began talking to Chinese internet companies about a year ago. Negotiations over the specific rights package with LeTV started four months

ago. The conference operates its own US broadcast network, the Pac-12 Network, which will provide the game feed. It will cover all production costs. ■

Ten wants MotoGP to itself

Pay-television network Ten Sports's desire for exclusivity pushed up the value of MotoGP rights in the Indian subcontinent in last month's deal.

Ten Sports will pay \$5m (€4.5m), or \$1m per year, for platform-neutral rights to all MotoGP content for five years from 2015 to 2019. This is at least double the existing rights value across the region.

The rights were sold by MotoGP commercial rights-holder Dorna Sports, which was advised by the IMG Events & Media agency.

Dorna previously sold MotoGP rights in the Indian subcontinent on a non-exclusive basis. Ten Sports and pay-television broadcaster Star India both had long-term deals which expired in 2014. All races were simulcast by the two broadcasters. Ten and Star are each thought to have paid between \$200,000 and \$250,000 in the 2014 season.

Ten Sports is understood to have pushed for an exclusive deal in negotiations with Dorna and IMG over the past year.

MotoGP is not a high-profile sport in India, but Ten Sports believes it provides good value for money, delivering similar ratings to the Formula One motor racing series, which is shown by Star as part of Fox International Channels' pan-Asian deal (*TV Sports Markets* 18:19).

The broadcaster also believes that with exclusivity it can increase the audience of the property by providing more Indian-focused programming.

There was no formal tender process, but Ten Sports is thought to have faced competition from pay-television channel Sony Six.

Star India is not thought to have bid. The broadcaster has limited space in its schedule and is no longer thought to value the property highly. ■

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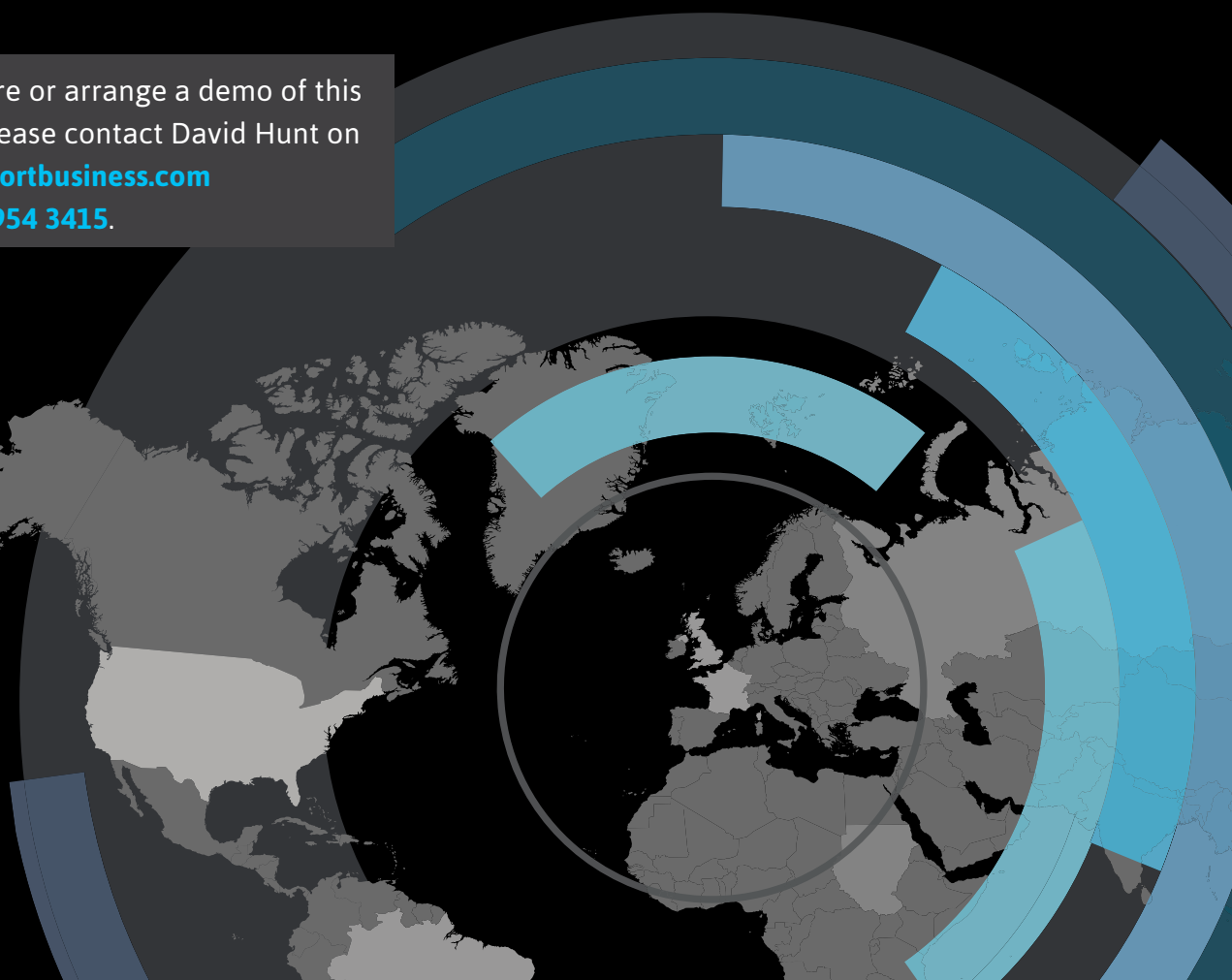
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SPORTS CLIPS: News from TVSM Daily from February 26 to March 11

MEDIA RIGHTS 1

Football: Euro 2016, Europa League, Major League Soccer, Serie A and more

- **Football:** Austrian public-service broadcaster ORF acquired rights for the Uefa Euro 2016 tournament in a deal with the CAA Eleven agency, which brokered the agreement on behalf of Uefa, the sport's European governing body.
- **Football:** The Mediapro agency and beIN Media Group were awarded rights for the Uefa Europa League in Spain for three seasons, from 2015-16 to 2017-18 (page 2).
- **Football:** Pan-European sports broadcaster Eurosport acquired rights for North America's Major League Soccer. Up to four matches will be shown live every weekend on Eurosport and Eurosport 2, with the latter broadcasting a 30-minute preview show every Friday evening (page 6).
- **Football:** Pay-television broadcaster ESPN Brasil acquired rights for Serie A, Italy's top division, in a sublicensing deal with the league's rights-holder in Brazil, pay-television broadcaster Fox Sports. The deal covers the remainder of the 2014-15 season.
- **Football:** Pan-African pay-television operator StarTimes confirmed a deal for the German Bundesliga and will launch a new premium sports channel to show the coverage. The deal is initially for two seasons, 2015-16 and 2016-17. The new channel, which will launch in May, will also provide coverage of NBA basketball, athletics and rugby union.
- **Football:** Major League Soccer's FC Dallas extended a local rights deal with TXA 21, a channel owned by the CBS network, for the duration of the 2015 season. TXA 21 will broadcast live coverage of 17 regular-season matches.
- **Football:** Major League Soccer's Houston Dynamo extended a local rights deal with the Telemundo Houston regional arm of US Spanish-language broadcaster Telemundo for the duration of the 2015 season. Telemundo Houston will broadcast 10 live games via TeleXitos, a new multicast service launched last year.

SINCE LAST TIME

- US Spanish-language broadcaster Univision hired Goldman Sachs, Morgan Stanley and Deutsche Bank to lead an initial public offering. The flotation of Univision, a major sports broadcaster, could take place in the second half of this year and raise more than \$1bn (€893m).
- Canadian telco Bell Media launched an appeal against a decision by the country's media regulator to ban the substitution of Canadian advertising over US advertising during major sporting events such as the NFL American football league's Super Bowl. The appeal follows a January 29 ruling by the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission to prevent 'simultaneous substitution' of ads.
- Media company Constantin Medien, which operates German sports broadcaster Sport1 and the Sport1 Media sports marketing company, posted better-than-expected results for the 2014 financial year following a strong fourth quarter. The company registered a €3.3m (\$3.7m) loss on earnings attributable to shareholders, an improvement from minus €11m in 2013 and better than the target range of between minus €7m and minus €9m set in November 2014.
- Several Campeonato Brasileiro Série A football clubs are challenging the Brazilian top-tier's media-rights revenue distribution model. Under the current arrangement, group one clubs Corinthians and Flamengo receive R110m (€34.2m/\$38.2m) each per year followed by São Paulo in group two with R80m, two clubs in group three with R70m each, one club in group four with R60m, six clubs in group five with R45m each, and six clubs in group six with R27m each. The clubs' rights-holder, media company Globo, planned to increase the payment per year to group one clubs to R170m in the next three-year cycle, from 2016 to 2018, followed by R110m, R100m, R80m, R60m and R35m per club for the other groups. Clubs outside group one are seeking a more equal distribution of income. The Brazilian Football Confederation held talks with Globo over the issue.

MEDIA INTERNATIONAL

- US pay-television broadcaster HBO's new standalone streaming service will launch in April, offering customers access to sports content which is not included in packages available via pay-television operators. The plans for HBO Now, which will offer major boxing events and sports documentaries and series, were first unveiled last year. Technology company Apple secured a three-month period of exclusivity through which its customers can subscribe to HBO Now via iPhone, iPad or iPod Touch devices, or digital media player Apple TV.
- Next Generation Sports Network (NGSN) launched a beta version of its digital sports channel in the US. NGSN will initially provide live coverage and highlights from top domestic football divisions in Portugal, the Netherlands, Russia, Bolivia, Chile,

FOOTBALL

- The Spanish Football League (LFP) and Spanish Football Federation (RFEF) joined forces to urge the country's government to act "urgently" in approving legislation to introduce collective rights sales for the Primera División and Segunda División, the top two domestic divisions. The LFP and RFEF said the new legislation must represent the interests of the two bodies, the participating clubs and the players' union. The LFP and RFEF will form a joint commission, comprising five

SPORTS CLIPS: News from TVSM Daily from February 26 to March 11

MEDIA RIGHTS 2

NFL, LA Marathon, Aussie Rules, basketball, boxing, IPL, cycling and more

- **American Football:** The MP & Silva agency struck a deal to market the NFL's rights across 42 European territories for five years, from 2015 to 2019. The deal includes television and selected digital rights covering pre-season, regular-season and play-off games, the Pro Bowl and Super Bowl, plus the NFL Red Zone game-day service, programming from the league-owned NFL Network and events such as the NFL Draft (page 3).
- **Athletics:** US pay-television broadcaster Universal Sports Network acquired rights for the 2015 Los Angeles Marathon.
- **Aussie Rules:** Satellite-television broadcaster Australia Plus acquired rights in the Asia-Pacific region for the Australian Football League. Australia Plus will show six matches per week during the top-tier Premiership's regular-season campaign plus all finals series matches and a weekly highlights programme.
- **Basketball:** US pay-television broadcaster ESPN acquired rights for the 2015 edition of the Basketball Tournament, an amateur, single-elimination competition in the country. The ESPN channel will show coverage of the opening game, the round-of-16 games and the quarter-finals. The main ESPN channel will broadcast the semi-finals and final.
- **Boxing:** US pay-television broadcaster Bounce TV acquired rights for the new Premier Boxing Champions series in a multi-year deal with manager and adviser Al Haymon.
- **Cricket:** US pay-television sports broadcaster ESPN acquired rights for the Indian Premier League Twenty20 tournament after outbidding North American pay-television broadcaster Willow TV and Times Internet, the online and mobile arm of Indian publishing company Times Group. The rights will run for three years, from 2015 to 2017, and were awarded by the Board of Control for Cricket in India. ESPN will pay \$12.4m (€11m) over the course of the deal.
- **Cycling:** Swiss public-service broadcaster SRG SSR renewed a rights deal for the Tour de Suisse for four years, from 2015 to 2018. SRG SSR acquired the rights from InfrontRingier Sports & Entertainment Switzerland, the Infront Sports & Media agency's 50-per-cent joint venture with Swiss media company Ringier.
- **Hockey:** Spanish agency Mediapro assumed control of the Euro Hockey League and its international rights after acquiring the Pro Sport agency's shareholding in the continental tournament. Mediapro will also be responsible for producing coverage of the competition. The league's new board of directors will consist of executives from Mediapro, media services company Infostrada Sports and the European Hockey Federation.
- **Horse Racing:** UK pay-television broadcaster Racing UK acquired rights for live coverage of the finale of Qatar's International Equestrian Sword Festival on February 26.
- **Ice Hockey:** The North American NHL and the NHL Players' Association (NHLPA) confirmed the award of US multi-platform rights to ESPN for the 2016 World Cup of Hockey. ESPN and ESPN 2 will show coverage in the US, with the broadcaster's ESPN International division securing exclusive rights in 20 other countries via its Pacific Rim and Latin North platforms. The deal was first reported by *TV Sports Markets* on February 27.
- **Ice Hockey:** The NHL and NHLPA awarded multi-platform rights to Canadian media company Rogers Communications for the 2016 World Cup of Hockey. Rogers will exploit the rights in English and French via the Sportsnet and TVA Sports pay-television channels. The deal was first reported by *TV Sports Markets* on February 13.

Ecuador and Venezuela via online and mobile platforms with English or Spanish commentary. NGSN will soon be available on game consoles and other internet-connected devices and will launch in Canada after the US, with other countries to follow.

- US streaming platform KlowdTV agreed a carriage deal with pay-television broadcaster beIN Sports. KlowdTV will stream all of the broadcaster's programming in English and Spanish to desktop, tablet and mobile devices.
- Netball Australia launched a mobile streaming service in collaboration with telco Telstra. Netball Live will be the flagship feature of a renewed four-year partnership with Telstra, from 2015 to 2018. Subscribers can watch every game from the 2015 ANZ Championship, the 2015 Netball World Cup in Sydney and Australia's national team Test matches.
- NCAA Digital, a joint venture between the Turner Sports division of US cable-television broadcaster Turner Broadcasting Systems and North America's National Collegiate Athletic Association, launched a channel on video-sharing website YouTube for this year's NCAA March Madness basketball tournament. The channel will feature real-time highlights and video recaps from all 67 games as well as live coverage of press conferences plus previews.
- Online sports and entertainment channel Red Bull TV agreed a carriage deal with online streaming platform Roku covering the US, Canada, UK and Ireland.
- Italy's RCS MediaGroup launched a new television channel based on *Gazzetta dello Sport*, its popular daily sports newspaper, on February 26 via free-to-air and DTT platforms. The channel will offer live sport, talk shows and sports news.
- Russian sports news website Sports.ru struck a deal to become an official media partner of the Euroleague club basketball tournament. Sports.ru will launch and host a new website that will feature video highlights and editorial content from the tournament.

SPORTS CLIPS: News from TVSM Daily from February 26 to March 11

MEDIA RIGHTS 3

MMA, World Endurance Championship, IndyCar, European Games and more

- **Mixed Martial Arts:** Pay-television broadcaster Fox Sports acquired rights in the Netherlands for the Ultimate Fighting Championship in a two-year deal, from 2015 to 2016. The deal includes live coverage of bouts plus weekly reality show the Ultimate Fighter.
- **Mixed Martial Arts:** Commercial and pay-television broadcaster Nova acquired rights in Czech Republic and Slovakia for the UFC. Live coverage of all European UFC events and selected bouts from outside Europe, as well as various weekly magazine programmes, will be shown via the Nova Sport channel.
- **Mixed Martial Arts:** Production firm Electus, a division of media company IAC, agreed a series of deals for the Bellator series, with: Australian commercial broadcaster Ten; Italian pay-television broadcaster Discovery; Portuguese commercial broadcaster SIC; Croatian pay-television channel 15 TV; Brazilian commercial broadcaster Esporte Interativo; pay-television broadcaster Fox Sports for rights in Latin America; pay-television broadcaster OSN in the Middle East; Polish pay-television broadcaster NC Plus; media company Ananey for rights in Israel; Russian pay-television broadcaster R2; pay-television broadcaster Sky New Zealand; and media company Celestial Tiger Entertainment in Hong Kong.
- **Motor Racing:** The Automobile Club de l'Ouest and World Endurance Championship appointed the Infront Sports & Media agency as the series' worldwide rights distributor in a three-year deal, from 2015 to 2017.
- **Motor Racing:** Danish broadcaster TV3 Sport, part of multi-territory commercial and pay-television broadcaster Modern Times Group, acquired rights to the US IndyCar series.
- **Multi-sport:** Danish commercial broadcaster TV2 acquired exclusive live and highlights rights for the 2015 European Games in Baku, Azerbaijan.
- **Multi-sport:** Polish pay-television operator Polsat acquired rights for the 2015 European Games. It will broadcast at least six hours live per day plus highlights.
- **Multi-sport:** Irish pay-television broadcaster Setanta Sports acquired rights for the 2015 European Games. It will show eight hours of coverage per day plus highlights.
- **Multi-sport:** Australian free-to-air channel NITV, which is operated by public-service broadcaster SBS, acquired rights for the 2015 Pacific Games in a deal with the local organising committee in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea. NITV will have exclusive free-to-air rights in Australia and non-exclusive online rights. It will show up to six hours live per day, plus the opening and closing ceremonies.
- Golf's European Tour renewed a partnership with sports media and technology company Deltatre for four years, from 2015 to 2018. Deltatre-designed European Tour TV will continue to offer fans live coverage and highlights of tournaments on mobile, tablet and desktop platforms.
- Pay-television operator Viasat struck a carriage deal in Norway with pay-television broadcaster C More. The agreement will allow Viasat to carry C More's coverage of the Tippeliga, the top division of football in the country, plus other football, hockey, tennis, martial arts, motorsport and equestrianism programming.
- Irish telco Eircom struck an expanded carriage deal with UK pay-television broadcaster Sky to add the Sky Sports 3, Sky Sports 4 and Sky Sports 5 channels to its eVision IPTV platform, which already carries Sky Sports 1 and Sky Sports 2. The expanded package will cost €36 (\$40) per month.

MEDIA RIGHTS NEGOTIATIONS

- Italy's Lega Serie A will initiate private negotiations with bidders for rights to the Coppa Italia and Supercoppa Italiana club football competitions. The rights cover three seasons, from 2015-16 to 2017-18. The deadline for bidding in the tender – which was drawn up in association with the Infront Sports & Media agency, the league's exclusive adviser for the national and international media rights to all its properties – was March 6. Package I includes live coverage of the Coppa Italia and Supercoppa Italiana on all platforms. Package L comprises digital rights for the two competitions, including near-live highlights and interviews.
- Pay-television broadcaster Sky Italia is set to replace the Infront Sports & Media agency as the archive rights-holder of Serie A clubs Juventus and Roma. Infront's deals with the clubs were due to run until 2016.
- The Australian National Rugby League is targeting a 15-per-cent increase in its next rights cycle, according to Dave Smith, the rugby league tournament's chief executive. The current five-year deals, from 2013 to 2017, with commercial broadcaster Nine and pay-television operator Fox Sports, are collectively worth A\$1.025bn (€712m/\$797m), or A\$205m per year.
- Australian pay-television broadcaster Fox Sports will take up the option of extending a rights deal for the country's National Rugby Championship. The extended deal for the club rugby union third-tier tournament with the Australian Rugby Union, which operates the event, is expected to run for five years, from 2016 to 2020. There had been concerns that Fox Sports might withdraw its backing due to modest audience figures.
- Fox Sports will "definitely have to keep" its domestic rights to the Australian Football League, the top division of Aussie rules in the country, according to Bedi Singh, chief financial officer of parent company News Corp Australia. The AFL's current five-year deals with Fox Sports, commercial broadcaster Seven, pay-television operator Foxtel and telco Telstra run until 2016.

SPORTS CLIPS: News from TVSM Daily from February 26 to March 11

MEDIA RIGHTS 4

Top 14 rugby union, squash, Davis Cup tennis, waterski and pro wrestling

- **Rugby Union:** French pay-television broadcaster Canal Plus and public-service broadcaster France Télévisions acquired rights for the final of the domestic Top 14 tournament for four seasons, from 2015-16 to 2018-19 (page 2).
- **Squash:** Tennis Channel, the US pay-television broadcaster, struck an exclusive deal with the Professional Squash Association. The length of the agreement was not disclosed. Tennis Channel will show nearly 170 hours of PSA coverage over the next 12 months, via its television channel and its digital service, Tennis Channel Plus. The rights include live and on-demand coverage, delayed broadcasts and a weekly magazine programme.
- **Tennis:** Australian commercial broadcaster Seven acquired rights for the Davis Cup men's national team tournament in a multi-year deal with the International Tennis Federation.
- **Tennis:** Czech Republic public-service broadcaster Česká Televize acquired rights for the Davis Cup in a multi-year deal with the ITF.
- **Tennis:** The Saran Media agency acquired rights in Kazakhstan for the Davis Cup in a deal with the ITF.
- **Tennis:** Belgian public-service broadcaster RTBF signed a deal with the ITF for Belgium's Davis Cup first round tie against Switzerland.
- **Waterski:** The IMG Events & Media agency agreed a multi-year deal to distribute rights for the International Waterski & Wakeboard Federation's World Cup Series on a global basis. IMG will show coverage of on its EdgeSport action sports channel in more than 25 territories.
- **Wrestling:** Indian sports and entertainment pay-television channel Sony Six signed a seven-year deal, from 2016 to 2022, with the TNA Wrestling series. Sony Six will show the series' flagship Impact Wrestling show every Monday, TNA Wrestling's Greatest Matches every Tuesday and TNA Xplosion on Wednesday. TNA's pay-per-view and One Night Only events are also included.
- Coaches from the AFL started talks with pay-television broadcaster Fox Sports over a deal that could lead to opposing coaches holding joint press conferences after games. The deal could be worth up to A\$500,000 (€360,000/\$390,000) per year, with the funds being put towards a coaches' retirement fund. AFL chief executive Gillon McLachlan raised concerns about the proposal.
- The Australian Football League, the top Aussie Rules league in Australia, agreed to stream live coverage of six NAB Challenge pre-season games online after a backlash from fans. Pay-television channel Fox Footy is showing the series' other 21 games.

ALSO SINCE LAST TIME

- Netball Australia confirmed it had agreed to pay commercial broadcaster Ten to show coverage of the governing body's national team and ANZ Championship club competition games in a previously-announced two-year deal, from 2015 to 2016.
- The European Athletics governing body will continue to stream coverage of its events through its website until at least the end of 2015 after supermarket chain Spar extended its sponsorship of the service, which provides live and on-demand coverage worldwide where exclusive rights deals are not in place.

INDUSTRY MOVES

- The Infront Sports & Media agency appointed Sven Biner, a former executive at sportswear company adidas, as its new director of its sports services division. • David Abrutyn was named as the executive vice-president and principal at new global sports marketing company Bruin Sports Capital. The company was founded by former IMG Worldwide president George Pyne, who worked with Abrutyn at the agency. • The MP & Silva agency appointed Sherman Tan to the new role of head of strategic partnership and business development in Asia.

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