

GLOBAL TV RIGHTS

Discovery premium content drive shows no sign of abating with string of latest deals

By Robin Jellis

An increasing desire to acquire premium sports rights for its Eurosport channels was the main driver behind a host of Discovery Communications deals late last week, *TV Sports Markets* understands.

At a press conference at Roland Garros, US media group Discovery confirmed it had acquired national team football rights in Denmark, French national team rugby rights globally excluding France, Six Nations rights in selected Asian territories and pay-television rights to show Wimbledon tennis in the UK.

It also sublicensed Olympic Games rights in Croatia and Ireland to public-service broadcasters HRT and RTÉ respectively. Both deals are for the 2018 and 2020 Games, and take its total of sublicensing deals for the period to six

(see box, page 3).

As *TV Sports Markets* went to press, Discovery also acquired one of the five available packages of live domestic rights to Germany's Bundesliga. The deal will run from 2017-18 to 2020-21.

The broadcaster announced a similar swathe of deals at the same time last year. At the time, Eurosport chief executive Peter Hutton told *TV Sports Markets* Eurosport must become far more locally relevant. The latest deals continue and extend upon its strategy to localise its offerings (*TV Sports Markets* 19:11).

In Denmark, Discovery acquired a package of rights from Uefa over four seasons, from 2018-19 to 2021-22, worth about €25m (\$28m). The package

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REGULATION

Court victory spurs Euroleague against Fiba

By Frank Dunne

Basketball's Euroleague said this week the complaint it lodged at the European Commission against the International Basketball Federation (Fiba) in February could have far-reaching consequences. Notably, it could affect the ability of sports governing bodies to prevent clubs setting up rival competitions.

The Euroleague won round one of its legal battle with Fiba last week when it was granted a temporary injunction by the Munich Regional Court.

Fiba Europe, basketball's European

governing body, had threatened to sanction national federations that supported the Euroleague over Fiba's planned Basketball Champions League competition.

Fiba is challenging the injunction and has asked for a private hearing. The governing body also has a complaint of its own pending against the Euroleague at the European Commission.

Speaking in the wake of the Munich ruling, Eduard Scott, chief operations

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BT pays more for larger package of WTA rights

UK pay-television broadcaster BT Sport last month agreed to pay an increase of about 25 per cent to renew Women's Tennis Association rights.

In the three-year deal, from 2017 to 2019, BT will pay the WTA about £2.5m (€3.3m/\$3.7m) per year. This is up from the value of BT's current four-year deal, from 2013 to 2016, worth £2m per year (*TV Sports Markets* 17:1).

The rights were sold by WTA Media, the joint venture between the WTA and digital media specialists the Perform Group. Perform holds global WTA rights in a 10-year deal, from 2017 to 2026, worth \$52.5m per year (*TV Sports Markets* 18:23).

WTA Media is understood to have sought a shorter deal this time as more UK events may be added to the calendar in future. This could increase the property's value to a broadcaster.

The value of the rights in the new deal has increased primarily because more events will be included. BT currently shows 22 events per year, but the new deal will contain 30 additional lower-tier events: 52 per year in total. Currently, rights to lower-tier events are held by their organisers or agencies.

BT is not thought to have faced any competition for the rights.

The WTA provides a decent volume of live content for BT, and there is some interest in the performances of British players. Australian-born Johanna Konta is 18th in the WTA rankings – this week she became the first British woman to break into the top 20 since 1983. ■

MTG renews EPL in Baltics

Modern Times Group has renewed its English Premier League rights in the Baltics, paying a decent increase compared with its current deal.

The multi-territory commercial and pay-television broadcaster will pay €1.2m (\$1.3m) per season in a three-

season deal, from 2016-17 to 2018-19. This is a 20-per-cent increase on the €1m per season it paid for the same rights, from 2013-14 to 2015-16.

The Baltic region – Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania – is not a particularly lucrative market for Premier League rights for two reasons.

First, motorsport properties are more popular than football, and this is reflected in MTG's \$2m-per-year deal for Formula One rights, from 2015 to 2017. Second, MTG is thought to be the only buyer able to afford the rights.

The lack of competition meant the IMG agency, which sold the property, could not force a more dramatic increase. IMG bought Premier League rights in 27 territories across Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia from 2016-17 to 2018-19, for about \$60m per season (*TV Sports Markets* 19:23).

MTG's previous deal was struck with the Saran Media agency, which bought Premier League rights in the Baltics, CIS states, Central Asia and Afghanistan for \$2.7m per season from 2013-14 to 2015-16. ■

Lega benefits from better product

Italy's top basketball league, Lega Basket Serie A, has more than doubled the value of its international rights in a renewal with the MP & Silva agency.

The league last month signed a two-season deal with the agency, from 2016-17 to 2017-18, understood to be worth an average of €375,000 (\$428,000) per season: €350,000 in the first season and €400,000 in the second.

It extends a previous three-season deal, from 2013-14 to 2015-16, worth an average of €150,000 per season, rising from €100,000 in the first season to €200,000 in the third.

Both deals cover rights for all platforms, including betting rights, for all territories outside Italy.

The league secured the increase despite there being no competition for the rights.

When the league issued a formal tender in February, there were no bidders. In subsequent private talks, only MP & Silva bid.

Before launching the tender, the league held informal talks with a small number of agencies which had expressed an interest, but none bid. These included Sportsman Media Group, which was primarily interested in the betting rights.

The MP & Silva bid was approved by the league board in March. It was formalised last month after having been approved by the country's antitrust and communications authorities.

It is thought the agency was happy to pay an uplift because it has secured much broader distribution for the league.

Since the 2014-15 season, coverage has increased from 15 territories with a potential reach of 16.4m homes, to 61 territories with a potential reach of 80.4m homes.

The agency benefited from being able to bundle the league with stronger properties in its portfolio, including many top European football leagues. However, the product itself also improved last season, both in quantity and quality. This was due to the new two-season domestic rights deals which came into force from the 2015-16 season.

Under the new deals, state broadcaster Rai produces its weekly match in high definition. Pay-television operator Sky produces two matches per week, also in HD.

This gives the agency three HD matches per week to distribute. Prior to last season, Rai had exclusive domestic rights and the agency was distributing the one match produced by Rai only, and in standard definition.

Rai pays about €1m per season for the top match each week, including production costs. Sky pays €600,000 per season for its two matches per week, plus production costs (*TV Sports Markets* 19:15). ■

GLOBAL TV RIGHTS

Discovery loses pan-Nordic qualifiers, but renews in Denmark

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includes European Qualifier, Nations League and friendly matches.

Discovery currently holds European Qualifier rights in Denmark, Norway and Sweden in a four-season deal, from 2014-15 to 2017-18, worth about €75m (*TV Sports Markets* 17:14).

Of this total, about 40 per cent is for Sweden (€30m), about 35 per cent for Norway (€26m), and about 25 per cent for Denmark (€19m).

Rights in a new cycle across Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden were tendered on February 9, with bids due by March 14. Discovery's interest in the rights across the region is thought to have been driven by Sweden.

Discovery's interest waned when informed by Uefa – European football's governing body – and its sales agent, CAA Eleven, that these rights had been awarded to another broadcaster. *TV Sports Markets* understands commercial broadcaster TV4 has acquired these rights in Sweden.

Discovery felt the fee in Norway was already high and that its need for the rights there was reduced following its deal in December for the domestic top-tier football league, the Tippeligaen (*TV Sports Markets* 19:23).

It is understood that commercial and pay-television broadcaster TV2 has won the rights.

Rights in Denmark were available more cheaply as there was little competition from public-service broadcaster DR or commercial broadcaster TV2.

The value in Denmark has increased in the new deal, although not greatly considering the increased inventory.

As well as all European Qualifier matches, Discovery has also acquired rights to the Nations League tournament and friendly matches of the Danish national team. Over the period, Discovery will show 40 Danish national team

Discovery strikes Olympic deals in Croatia and Ireland

Discovery Communications is understood to have increased the value of Olympic Games rights in both Croatia and Ireland in deals announced last week.

Last June, US media group Discovery was awarded rights to four Olympic Games, from 2018 to 2024, across Europe in a deal with the International Olympic Committee worth €1.3bn (\$1.4bn) (*TV Sports Markets* 19:13).

Discovery has now sublicensed rights to public-service broadcasters in six territories: the UK, the Netherlands, Finland and the Czech Republic – as well as Croatia and Ireland.

In Croatia, it is understood public-service broadcaster HRT will pay about €2m for rights to the 2018 and 2020 Games. This is up from the €1.3m it paid Sportfive for rights to the 2014 and 2016 Games in the country.

HRT will have digital rights to the content it shows on linear television. Discovery-owned Eurosport will show all Olympic coverage on its pay-television channels in the country and via its digital platforms.

The deal with Irish public-service broadcaster RTÉ will be worth about €2.2m for both Games. This is an increase of about 57 per cent on the current value of the rights – RTÉ bought rights to the 2014 and 2016 Games in Ireland from the Sportfive agency for €1.4m. Nearly all of the value is in the summer Games.

The increase was driven by RTÉ's strong desire to get the rights – it is the historic broadcaster of the Olympics in Ireland, and the property fulfils its

public-service remit. Additionally, the rights were sold in a five-day period, increasing the pressure on broadcasters.

Despite this, there was little competition for the rights – neither commercial broadcaster TV3 nor Irish-language free-to-air broadcaster TG4 bid.

TV3 felt it would struggle to refinance an investment in the 2018 and 2020 Games as they will both take place in Asia, in Pyeongchang and Tokyo respectively.

The value of the rights is further stymied by the fact Olympics coverage will also be shown by UK public-service broadcaster the BBC. The BBC is available in most Irish television households.

A deal in Ireland has come sooner than expected. The early agreement was triggered by the appointment of Dee Forbes – previously Discovery's president and managing director of Northern Europe – as RTÉ director general in April.

RTÉ will show the same content from the 2018 Games as it showed for the 2014 Games in Sochi – live coverage of the opening and closing ceremonies, plus a 30-minute daily highlights programme. In 2014 these were shown on RTÉ News Now, but in 2018 they will be shown on RTÉ 2, a more prominent channel. Coverage of the 2020 Games is yet to be planned.

For both Games, RTÉ will have digital rights to the content it shows on its linear channels. Eurosport will show live coverage of both Games across two channels. ■

matches. Qualifying matches of the Danish team will be shown on basic-tier channel Kanal 5.

Multi-territory commercial and pay-television broadcaster Modern Times Group is not thought to have been interested in the Uefa package.

It did not feel the property would drive subscriptions, and believes it already has a strong football portfolio: last October it

renewed English Premier League rights in Denmark and Sweden, and also acquired a package of rights from the MP & Silva agency across the region – including Spain's LaLiga, Italy's Serie A and France's Ligue 1 – for about €30m per season (*TV Sports Markets* 19:18).

Uefa was also selling rights to the Euro 2020 tournament across the region. In Sweden, rights are understood to have

been awarded jointly to public-service broadcaster SVT and TV4. In Norway, TV2 will share the rights with public-service broadcaster NRK. A deal is yet to be agreed in Denmark.

French rugby

Discovery also acquired global rights, outside France, to autumn international matches of the French rugby union team.

The five-season deal, from 2016-17 to 2020-21, was agreed with the French rugby union federation, the Fédération Française de Rugby. The contract will be worth about €1m per season.

This is an increase of just under 70 per cent on the value of the current deal, with the IMG agency. Over four seasons, from 2012-13 to 2015-16, the agency paid a minimum guarantee of about €600,000 per season (*TV Sports Markets* 20:6).

The increase was driven by competition for the rights. Discovery faced rival bids from IMG, the Infront Sports & Media agency and telco Altice. Altice is not thought to have been in the final three.

Discovery is thought to have been willing to increase the value due to its desire to add to the content of OTT service Rugby Pass, which is available in 23 territories across Asia. Discovery holds a 23.5-per-cent stake in the service (*TV Sports Markets* 20:5).

The FFR is understood to have favoured a deal with Discovery as it could guarantee coverage. Content will be available in Europe on the Eurosport channels and via the Eurosport Player digital platform, and in Asia via pay-television channel Setanta Asia and Rugby Pass. Discovery acquired Setanta Asia last June (*TV Sports Markets* 19:12).

Discovery will distribute the rights on behalf of the FFR outside these regions.

Six Nations in Asia

Discovery also acquired Six Nations rugby rights in selected Asian territories – Hong Kong, South Korea and Thailand. Each deal is just for 2017.

Discovery acquired the rights from the Pitch International agency after previous deals in these territories expired after 2016. BeIN Media Group had held rights in Hong Kong and Thailand, while IPTV broadcaster Spo TV held rights in Korea.

Acquiring these two properties is seen as an attempt to build Rugby Pass into the “one-stop home for all rugby”, according to one source close to the broadcaster.

The deals also bolster Discovery’s channels in Asia in the wake of losing US Open tennis rights to global channel syndicator Fox Networks Group last month (*TV Sports Markets* 20:9).

Discovery currently holds Six Nations rights in most other territories across Asia via its ownership of Setanta.

It is understood Discovery is in talks to acquire Six Nations rights in a new cycle in Italy – where it is the incumbent – and Asia. Pitch currently sells Six Nations rights in all territories outside the competing nations in a four-year deal, from 2014 to 2017, worth €5m per year (*TV Sports Markets* 16:16).

Wimbledon in the UK

Discovery is close to being able to show Wimbledon on pay-television in the UK.

It has agreed a deal with UK public-service broadcaster the BBC, which holds exclusive UK rights, and the All England Lawn Tennis Club, the tournament operator. However, UK media regulator Ofcom is yet to approve the deal. The proposal has been put out to consultation until June 15.

The deal would be for five years, from 2016 to 2020, and would allow Eurosport to show a daily highlights programme during the two-week tournament between 10pm and 11.30pm, as well as simulcast coverage of the men’s and women’s finals.

The deal is not thought to be expensive: Discovery’s primary motivation is understood to have been strengthening its relationship with the AELTC.

Upcoming deals

Discovery is thought to be close to finalising deals for two other properties.

First, it is in advanced discussions with IMG to extend its existing deal for the Giro d’Italia cycle race.

Second, the broadcaster has agreed a deal across Europe for US Open tennis rights. The UK is not currently included in the deal due to the high asking price. IMG is advising the US Tennis Association on the sale of the rights. ■

REGULATION

Euroleague/Fiba dispute could set league v club rules

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officer of Euroleague Basketball, told *TV Sports Markets* that if the commission drew similar conclusions to the Munich court “it could set a precedent for individual and team sports worldwide, including football. It could potentially cause many international federations to have to review the legality of their regulations”.

He added that about 80 per cent of sports federations had some kind of wording in their statutes or regulations on recognised and non-recognised competitions which allow them “to maintain a very strict control over which events or competition organisers are or are not active in their sport”.

He said that the “the traditional federation model” of monopoly control over which club competitions are recognised “is antiquated and does not work in this day and age”.

Contested clauses

At the core of the Euroleague’s complaint to Brussels are articles 9 and 12 of the Fiba statutes, which confer on national federations total control over who can operate basketball competitions in their territories.

It is thought that the complaint is not against the rules per se, but the way Fiba is interpreting them in its battle with the Euroleague.

Scott said there were clauses in the statutes that “can be used” to breach EU competition and antitrust law.

“They are illegal, in our view, insofar as they allow Fiba to decide who can and who cannot stay in the market,” he said.

“If clubs participate in a non-recognised competition, the national federations are forced to sanction them, which we disagree with legally and ethically. Those clauses should be abolished or profoundly amended.”

Sanctions

Fiba is launching a new competition next season, the Basketball Champions League, which would rival the Euroleague's second-tier competition, the Eurocup.

Fiba Europe threatened sanctions against national federations to force them to pressure their domestic leagues into ensuring clubs did not take part in Euroleague competitions, especially the Eurocup. These included excluding the national teams of non-compliant federations from multiple competitions, including EuroBasket 2017. Fiba Europe later withdrew the threat.

The Munich court ruled that there could be "no justification" for such an exclusion under European law. However, in a phrase which will be welcomed by many sports federations, Judge Waitzinger prefaced that comment by remarking, "even if the exclusivity clauses under Articles 9.1 and 12 of the Statutes and the associated sanction mechanisms do not in themselves constitute an anticompetitive measure..."

This observation, and other factors in the case, have led some lawyers to conclude that if Brussels does choose to open an investigation, and finds that Fiba has abused a dominant position, the case would not have wider significance because it is rooted in the specifics of Fiba's application of the rules, rather than the rules themselves.

Angelique Bret, partner and competition law expert at law firm Pinsent Masons, said: "The significance of any ruling in Brussels will probably be limited to the way Fiba have applied the rules. It would be surprising if the commission took the step of saying these types of rules are anticompetitive by object and therefore automatically infringe the rules. There has to be a recognition that for a sport to be properly organised it will need a governing body, and that they will have some level of oversight over events."

She said that the landmark Meca-Medina ruling in the European Court of Justice in 2006, involving two swimmers who had failed drugs tests, established that "the rules of governing bodies which are proportionate and necessary for the proper functioning of the sport will fall

outside the scope of the competition law rules. And sporting bodies are allowed a certain level of discretion in terms of what is considered necessary."

Breakaway questions

There are currently two other cases in front of regulators that are being fought on similar principles. Together, these three cases will go a long way to establishing the limits of federation powers. They are being followed closely for their significance in the context of a possible breakaway European super league in football.

The Fédération Équestre Internationale, the governing body of equestrianism, is being investigated by the Belgian competition authority over its sanctions against riders and horses taking part in the Global Champions League, an event it does not recognise. In April, the FEI's request to the Brussels Court of Appeal to overturn a temporary injunction brought against it by the competition authority was rejected.

In October, the European Commission opened an investigation into the International Skating Union, following a complaint from two skaters, Mark Tuitert and Niels Kerstholt, who had been threatened with lifetime bans for taking part in events unauthorised by the ISU.

Bret said: "The outcome of these cases will be significant for something like a football super league. However, a closed super league in football could raise potential competition issues itself. A football super league would be different to the basketball Euroleague if it cannot co-exist with existing European competitions."

She said the competition law analysis "would take into account the legitimacy of any exclusive arrangements or restrictions on competing events to protect the overall interests of the sport."

It is a view supported by another European competition lawyer, who said Uefa's exclusivity clauses – which are similar to those of most other federations – would probably not be enough to prevent clubs breaking away and creating their own league. The only real sanction available to Uefa would be that clubs could not also take part in Uefa's

competitions – not a massive deterrent if they had already decided to leave.

A bigger problem for such a league is that it would struggle to function commercially, for example, through the central selling of media rights.

It would be a cartel but with none of the benefits to the wider system – in terms of solidarity, supporting the grassroots and maintaining the sporting pyramid – that regulators took into account when granting an exemption from competition law to enable Uefa, the English Premier League and the German Bundesliga to sell rights collectively. ■

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

TV AFRICA

Cricket Australia rights split between Kwesé, SuperSport

By Callum McCarthy

The erosion of SuperSport's portfolio in sub-Saharan Africa continued last week following Cricket Australia's decision to divide its rights between the region's two biggest rivals.

Local experts believe this could set a precedent for other rights-holders, and may signal further change in the region's broadcast market.

Cricket Australia rights will be split between pay-television broadcaster SuperSport – which will retain rights in South Africa – and pay-television start-up Kwesé Sports, which has acquired rights in the rest of sub-Saharan Africa.

Kwesé has acquired platform-neutral rights across sub-Saharan Africa in a five-season deal, from 2016-17 to 2020-21. The deal will be worth \$10m (€9m), or \$2m per season.

Kwesé acquired the rights after a second round of bidding – the rights outside South Africa were tendered by Cricket Australia, with SuperSport thought to be the only other bidder. The deal in South Africa was agreed in direct talks.

SuperSport will pay \$8m, or \$1.6m per season, for the same rights in South Africa

only over the five-season period, from 2016-17 to 2020-21.

The competition between Kwesé and SuperSport has been excellent news for Cricket Australia, which has secured an overall dollar increase of just over 130 per cent for its rights across the region. Its current five-season deal with SuperSport, covering all of sub-Saharan Africa, runs from 2011-12 to 2015-16, and is worth \$7.75m, or \$1.55m per season.

Due to the depreciation of the South African rand against the US dollar, SuperSport's new deal is worth 130 per cent more in rand despite the fact it will only have rights in South Africa in the new deal.

Kwesé is thought to be paying over market value for its package. Interest in Cricket Australia's rights outside South Africa is very small, especially due to the time at which matches take place. Local sources say Kwesé acquired the rights in part to weaken SuperSport's portfolio in Kwesé's active territories.

The deals with Kwesé and SuperSport cover rights to all of Australia's international Test and limited-overs matches, as well as the domestic Twenty20 Big Bash League.

Kwesé is owned by telco Econet Wireless. It currently broadcasts as a free streaming service but will launch its pay-television channels on the Kwesé TV service in August. It plans to exploit the rights on its own free-to-air and pay-television platforms, as well as via its online streaming service.

SuperSport is expected to exploit the rights on pay-television and via its streaming service.

Step-change

The deals represent the first time a rights-holder has split its rights between SuperSport and Kwesé in sub-Saharan Africa.

The fresh competition is good news for sports rights-holders, who will be closely studying the results of Cricket Australia's decision to split rights in the region.

SuperSport was bidding to renew the rights as, alongside rugby, cricket is one of the most important parts of its offering outside South Africa as it attracts a wealthy demographic – SuperSport is the

Kwesé seeks top talent for vacant chief executive role

Pay-television start-up Kwesé TV's bullish mid- to long-term ambitions have become clear this week, as *TV Sports Markets* obtained a brief for its yet-to-be-filled chief executive position at Kwesé Sports.

The brief, circulated by global executive search firm Egon Zehnder, claims Kwesé has set aside \$1bn (€900m) for sports-rights acquisitions in sub-Saharan Africa over five years.

The brief says the prospective candidate must build relationships with a number of rights-holders, notably:

- World football's governing body Fifa
- European football's governing body Uefa
- American football's NFL
- Golf's PGA Tour.

The brief also requires the chief executive to build a relationship with the South African Football Association. Kwesé representatives have strenuously denied it plans to enter the South African market, but the inclusion of Safa in this list has raised eyebrows among industry experts.

Safa rights are currently held by Siyaya – a start-up pay-television company that, although fully-licensed to broadcast in South Africa, never went ahead with its plans.

Kwesé acquisitions are currently

handled by freelance sports consultant and ex-Sky Sports managing director Rik Dovey, and ex-Fox Sports Africa executive Cristian Cerimele.

It is understood Dovey is on a short-term contract with a brief to create a solid base for any future chief executive to build upon. Cerimele will work under any new chief executive at Kwesé as an acquisition executive.

Kwesé's parent company, telco Econet Wireless, has instructed Egon Zehnder to headhunt Africa's top executive talent. Personnel at global channel syndicator Fox Networks Group, SuperSport parent company Multichoice and US media group Discovery Communications have all been sent the brief.

TV Sports Markets understands a large number of candidates have been interviewed, while a number of top executives with experience of the African market have already turned down the job. Many have cited their unwillingness to relocate to Johannesburg, which is a key requirement for the role.

Conversely, any future chief executive would not require knowledge specific to the African sports-rights market – the brief states knowledge of Africa and its markets would be "nice to have". ■

most expensive pay-television broadcaster in the region.

The loss of Cricket Australia rights outside South Africa is not expected to lose SuperSport many subscribers as it is well-insulated – it holds every other major cricket property in the region. But the deals are seen by industry experts as a harbinger of things to come.

The depreciation of the rand has weakened SuperSport's ability to beat its rivals to all properties. Naspers – which owns SuperSport, pay-television operation DSTV and their parent company Multichoice – all derive revenue in rand.

Econet, Kwesé's multinational owner, is a private company that accrues revenue in

dollars. Local experts, although cautious in their predictions, believe Kwesé has a much better chance of long-term survival than now-defunct pay-television broadcasters Gateway Television and HiTV, which briefly challenged SuperSport after entering the market almost 10 years ago.

While the two were pure pay-television operations that relied on venture capital, Kwesé is backed by a multinational telco with deep roots in sub-Saharan Africa's media sector.

While it has no public plans to enter South Africa, the maturation of Nigeria, Ghana and Kenya – and solid GDP growth across the region – indicate it could thrive without doing so. ■

ESPORTS

IMG and Turner push Western esports onto linear television

By Callum McCarthy

The IMG agency this week told *TV Sports Markets* the decision to embark on its eLeague joint venture with media conglomerate Turner “was not influenced by other eSports companies and events”.

Ben Nicholas, senior vice president, UK media and head of digital at IMG, said the agency was excited at the prospect of owning a league in order to “manage its authenticity and direction”.

IMG is also responsible for sales outside of markets in which Turner exploits the rights on its own channels.

Turner is handling the rights in Southeast Asia, the US and Latin America. It will either exploit the rights on its own commercial and pay-television channels, or sell on to broadcasters. It has sold rights on to pay-television broadcasters Sports Illustrated and Astro.

It is thought the agency has earned between \$1m (€890,000) and \$1.5m in media-rights revenue for the inaugural 10-week eLeague tournament, which involves 12 teams competing against each other in a tournament consisting of a group stage and knockout round.

The tournament began on May 24 and will end on July 30. A second 10-week tournament will begin in October, with a new round of sales.

The most lucrative deals are, in order: in China with esports streaming platform Huoma; in the Nordics with multi-territory commercial and pay-television broadcaster Modern Times Group; and perhaps most impressively – given its tough rights market – in Russia with esports streaming platform Starladder.

These deals are all worth between \$100,000 and \$500,000. The remaining deals IMG has agreed range in value between zero and \$60,000.

IMG declined to disclose the eLeague’s media rights earnings, but Nicholas stressed its strategy “has been focused on ensuring we are able to get eLeague in as

many homes as possible” as opposed to maximum remuneration.

Pay-television broadcaster SuperSport is not paying a fee in sub-Saharan Africa, but IMG deemed placing the eLeague on the region’s most prestigious broadcaster more important than extracting a small rights fee from a rival.

All broadcast deals are underpinned by a non-exclusive digital rights deal with video-game-streaming platform Twitch. Twitch is not paying a rights fee, but the platform will extensively market and promote the league to its more than 100m monthly users.

Linear product

In order to reach their target audience more effectively, rights to esports leagues have predominantly been exploited on specialist online esports platforms as opposed to linear broadcasters.

But by selling rights to linear broadcasters, esports and television experts believe IMG and its broadcast partners can appeal to a different audience. With linear television viewership among young people in decline, broadcasters are keen to acquire programming that will lure back a younger demographic.

By creating an esports league with 10 weeks of content – as opposed to the more traditional one-off tournaments held in South Korea and Japan – IMG has created a property with greater value for linear broadcasters, as well as benefiting from Turner’s investment in production.

As one esports expert explained: “You can make better use of your production spend, promotion and marketing with a league. With a one-off tournament, all the promotion and marketing you’ve done is gone after two weeks.”

The agency hopes that positioning the eLeague on linear channels with high levels of penetration, alongside specialist platforms, will keep hardcore fans happy while also reaching a more traditional sports audience.

CS:GO

The eLeague’s current game of choice is first-person-shooter Counter Strike: Global Offensive, considered ideally

suited to competition gameplay due to its high difficulty level.

CS:GO was chosen for the inaugural eLeague season for four reasons.

First, the game’s genre and gameplay is more appealing to a western audience than esports standards like Starcraft 2 and League of Legends – complex real-time strategy games which are popular in China, South Korea and Japan, and require extensive gameplay experience to understand.

Second, its game rounds are shorter. Each round of CS:GO in the eLeague has a time limit of 1m 55s. Matches are played on a first-to-16 rounds basis.

Third, CS:GO is considered by IMG and Turner to be more attractive from a production standpoint, with less time needed to explain rules and player tendencies, and more emphasis on action.

Fourth, IMG’s esports talent pool. The agency bought out talent agency Global Esports Management in January 2015. Rights to 12 of the most famous CS:GO teams in the world transferred to IMG as part of the takeover.

The agency has not ruled out expanding into other games in other genres, and will almost certainly have to do so in order to grow the eLeague’s brand in Asia.

Joint venture

IMG’s contribution to the joint-venture is all value-in-kind. IMG Media – IMG’s London-based arm – is offering Turner the sales and esports expertise of Ben Nicholas; Oliver Boden (head of esports Europe and international sales; and Charlotte Moore (esports co-ordinator).

It is also providing 12 of the 24 teams that make up the eLeague roster. Each season comprises a 12-team, 10-week tournament.

Turner is responsible for all production costs and technical distribution. The eLeague is produced at US commercial broadcaster TBS’s Atlanta studios.

The eLeague is a self-governed competition – it is not affiliated to any esports federation or governing body. Turner and IMG have appointed Min-Sik Ko as eLeague commissioner.

Ko is the former head of esports at IMG and will be responsible for the administration of the league. ■

FOOTBALL

Associations in Ghana and Tanzania see fortunes diverge

By Callum McCarthy

The recent fortunes of the Ghanaian and Tanzanian football associations could not be more different.

Local experts believe a renewal of East-African pay-television operator Azam's Tanzanian Premier League rights will be announced shortly.

Confidence in a renewal grew two weeks ago after the Tanzanian Football Federation and Azam announced a landmark deal for rights to two new properties: the TFF Women's Premier League and the U-20 National League.

Meanwhile, the Ghanaian Football Association's negotiations for a renewal of its rights with pay-television broadcaster SuperSport broke down last week, putting the future of its club competitions in jeopardy.

A new deal must be struck before the start of the 2016-17 season in August if

the Ghana Premier League and FA Cup are to be broadcast.

Stability

Azam's current deal for TFF senior men's football rights – including the TPL and the TFF's knockout club competitions – was worth an average of \$1.13m (€1m) per season from 2013-14 to 2015-16.

The TFF and Azam have enjoyed a stable relationship for the past three seasons – a rarity between an African football association and a broadcaster – and a considerable increase in investment is expected in both rights and production. A new agreement could run as long as five seasons, until 2020-21.

Tanzania is Azam's core market, and the TPL rights have been key to expanding its subscriber base in the country. It is thought Azam now has more pay-television subscribers than any other operator in the territory.

Uncertainty

Sources say SuperSport broadcast fewer GPL and FA Cup matches in 2015-16 compared to previous seasons in an attempt to reduce its production costs.

The broadcaster didn't deem a renewal on the GFA's terms worthwhile as the

depreciation of the South African rand has forced SuperSport to cut spending.

SuperSport is thought to have had between 20 and 25 dedicated production vehicles stationed in Ghana, which local experts say it planned to reduce to nine.

SuperSport paid about \$2m per season for its Ghanaian club football rights and spent about \$3m per season on production. The deal, from 2013-14 to 2015-16, was a huge increase on the GFA's previous deal with the Optimum Media Prime agency, which was worth a total of \$1.05m per season from 2010-11 to 2012-13.

The GFA is understood to be exploring its options, and could try to agree deals with local free-to-air broadcasters.

TFF deals

For rights to the Women's Premier League and U-20 National League, Azam will pay the TFF about TZS2bn (€820,000/\$910,000) from 2016-17 to 2020-21 – TZS400m per season. It will broadcast the leagues on its Azam Sports pay-television channel.

Should Azam renew its TPL rights from 2016-17 onward, it will broadcast more domestic football from a single territory than any other broadcaster in the region. ■

FOOTBALL

RTL aggression provides Uefa with German windfall

By Robin Jellis

German commercial broadcaster RTL significantly increased the value of national team football rights in the country in a deal with Uefa last month.

It acquired rights to 28 Germany national team matches over four seasons, from 2018-19 to 2021-22, for about €250m (\$278.5m). This includes 20 European Qualifier and eight friendly matches in total, an average fee of about €8.9m per match.

A like-for-like comparison is not possible as Uefa, European football's governing body, has further centralised

national team football rights from 2018-19 with the addition of all friendly matches. But RTL appears to have paid a vast increase.

In July 2013, RTL acquired rights to 20 European Qualifier matches in the four seasons from 2014-15 to 2017-18 in a €110m deal – valuing each match at about €5.5m (*TV Sports Markets* 17:13).

Public-service broadcasters ARD and ZDF currently hold Germany friendly matches in a two-season deal from 2016-17 to 2017-18, worth €4.5m per match. That deal was agreed with the German football federation, the Deutscher Fußball-Bund. Uefa is selling these rights from 2018-19.

Uefa and CAA Eleven offered three packages to German broadcasters. Two each contained 10 European Qualifier matches and four friendly matches – RTL acquired both after one round of bidding.

The third package contains 12 matches

of the German national team to be played in the Nations League tournament over the four seasons. These are yet to be sold, but local experts say ARD/ZDF are the front-runners to acquire them, having offered close to €8m per match.

If this were accepted, Uefa would earn close to €350m in what has historically been a tough free-to-air market.

The assumption in Germany is that a national team match costing above €4.5m cannot be refinanced from advertising or broadcast sponsorship. RTL is understood to be prepared to lose money on a flagship sports property.

RTL's only other major sports property is Formula One motor racing. It shares live coverage with pay-television broadcaster Sky Deutschland in a two-year deal, from 2016 to 2017, for which it pays just under \$50m per year (*TV Sports Markets* 19:15).

One local expert said RTL's aggression

could be explained by the fact that sport provides the broadcaster with guaranteed high audiences. The 10 European Qualifier matches for Euro 2016 attracted average audiences of 10.94m per match, an audience share of 35.9 per cent.

The source added that, increasingly, live sport is the only content that can provide broadcasters with consistently strong ratings as entertainment programmes are increasingly being watched on-demand.

Uefa bidding

Uefa tendered the rights in Germany on February 2, with bids due on March 1. RTL and ARD/ZDF bid.

The current European Qualifiers deal with RTL includes highlights of German national team matches, plus highlights of other matches which take place on the same day. RTL is expected to have these rights again in the new deal.

As well as acquiring all Germany matches from 2018-2022, RTL is understood to have acquired all third-party matches – the matches of other European national sides. Basic-tier channel RTL Nitro acquired these rights one year into the current cycle, in June 2015, in a deal worth about €2m (*TV Sports Markets* 19:12). ■

TV CARIBBEAN

Telco expansion creates competition for sports rights

By Richard Welbirg

Cable & Wireless Communications told *TV Sports Markets* this week its entry into the Caribbean sports-rights market was to drive its quad-play offering across the region, and that it did not invest in rights on which it could not make a return.

The telco launched its basic-tier Flow Sports channel last November after several months of aggressive rights acquisitions, the most eye-catching of which came in October when it bought English Premier League rights, from 2016-17 to 2018-19, for about \$26m (€23m) per season.

This was 10 times the \$2.6m per season

paid by pay-television broadcaster SportsMax from 2013-14 to 2015-16 (*TV Sports Markets* 16:20). SportsMax has been the only native Caribbean sports channel since its foundation in 2002, and has exercised near-monopoly power over rights fees. CWC's entrance has radically shaken up the market.

Flow's deal this month for a package of Twenty20 rights sold by Cricket Australia, worth about \$1.6m over five seasons from 2016-17 to 2020-21, is less astonishing than its Premier League acquisition, but nonetheless a significant increase for the rights-holder. In its previous cycle, Cricket Australia earned just \$300,000 from SportsMax for all its rights from 2011-12 to 2015-16.

"We're not reinventing the wheel here," James Tooke, CWC's senior vice president, media and content, told *TV Sports Markets*. "There's been a general move within a lot of telcos over the last three to five years to look again at the way content can be used to drive cable TV and broadband take-up."

Creating its own sports offering rather than simply carrying third-party channels allows it to target specific audiences.

CWC was acquired last month by media group Liberty Global. Flow will become part of LiLAC, Liberty Global's Latin American and Caribbean Group.

Tooke said: "In content, Liberty have even more experience, scale and relationships than we do, and we hope to leverage those advantages to deliver for our customers."

Anticipation

The current incarnation of Flow was created following the merger of CWC and rival telco Columbus in March last year. CWC merged its Lime operation into Columbus's Flow brand.

Plans to create a sports channel had been underway at Columbus and were immediately taken on by CWC. Its first sports-rights acquisition as Flow followed a month later with a deal for 2016 Olympic Games rights with the International Olympic Committee.

Its investment in sports content can be seen as a move to head off an anticipated threat from rival Digicel.

Digicel, the Caribbean's largest mobile

operator, had expanded its footprint in fixed-line telephony, broadband and cable television with a string of local telco acquisitions in 2014.

It added a content producer with the acquisition of SportsMax in September 2014. CWC – the largest fixed-line operator following the Columbus merger – required a sports-content offering to head off the incursion of its smaller rival.

Head to head

Many of the local cable operators which once characterised the Caribbean market have been absorbed into multi-territory pay-television operators. These include Flow TV and Digicel Play. DirecTV's Latin American satellite platform is also available in the region.

SportsMax's two channels have carriage with the majority of operators across the region, in premium packages or as an à la carte purchase for about \$15 per month.

As an à la carte channel local experts say it has about 100,000 subscribers, although this is likely to fall with the end of the 2015-16 Premier League season.

Flow Sports is available in Flow TV's basic-tier, which is in about 470,000 homes in 10 territories. CWC has struck wholesale deals for Flow Sports with operators MCTV in Barbados and Green Dot in Trinidad & Tobago, and is seeking further carriage agreements.

The scale of CWC's investment in the Premier League appeared outlandish given the size of the Caribbean economy, but there were credible reasons for it.

First, the Premier League is the most important sports property in the region.

Second, Digicel was at the time set for a \$2bn flotation on the New York Stock Exchange, which would have increased its spending power.

Third, talks between CWC and Liberty were already underway; the Premier League is one of the few sports properties that can affect a firm's value.

Tooke said: "The Premier League was clearly a meaningful investment but we don't invest in anything we don't believe we can generate a return on. Everything we do in CWC is based on that, whether it's equipment or content rights." ■

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

TENNIS

Star swoops for grand slam rights in Indian subcontinent

By Richard Welbirg

Star India has snatched rights to two tennis grand slams from its Indian subcontinent rivals in the last week, significantly increasing their value.

The pay-television broadcaster last week secured rights in the Indian subcontinent to the French Open over five years, from 2017 to 2021. And *TV Sports Markets* understands the broadcaster has also agreed a deal in principle for US Open rights over the same five years.

Star will pay \$4m (€3.6m) per year for the French Open, outbidding pay-television rivals Neo Sports, Sony Pictures Networks and Ten Sports in two rounds.

Incumbent Neo is thought to have declined to make a third bid after offering as much as \$2.5m per year in the second round, leaving Star the clear winner. Sony and Ten are thought to have offered less than \$2m per year.

The new deal is worth over 650 per cent more than Neo's existing agreement, in which it pays \$2.6m over the five years

from 2012 to 2016, or \$520,000 per year.

The deal was agreed between Star and the French tennis federation, the Fédération Française de Tennis, which operates the tournament.

Lagardère Sports brokered the deal. The agency advises the federation on its sales in all Asian territories except Japan, where MP & Silva is its adviser.

Lagardère's agreement with the FFT for the Indian subcontinent has been extended to run in parallel with Star's deal. The agency is paid commission.

Star's deal includes exclusive television and digital rights in India and the wider Indian subcontinent, covering Bangladesh, Bhutan, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

US Open rights are currently held by Ten over four years, from 2013 to 2016. It pays about \$1.2m per year. A source close to the new deal put Star's fee at just under \$4m per year, an increase of more than 230 per cent.

The US Tennis Association – which runs the US Open – is advised on the sale of its rights outside Canada, Latin America and the US by IMG, an arrangement that runs for nine years, from 2017 to 2025.

Local experts say there are three main reasons Star is paying so much more.

First, the high level of competition for the rights.

Second, Star's desire to consolidate its

position as the country's major tennis broadcaster, particularly in light of losing Australian Open rights to Sony in January 2014. Sony pays about \$2m per year for the Australian Open from 2015 to 2019 (*TV Sports Markets* 20:3).

Star also holds Wimbledon rights over the six years from 2015 to 2020 for a fee of between \$3.5m and \$4.5m per year (*TV Sports Markets* 18:9).

Third, Star will be freeing up funds with the imminent expiry of two cricket deals. Its agreements for English and Australian international cricket rights both end with the 2016-17 season.

Star decided not to exercise its option to extend England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) rights to cover the two seasons from 2017-18 to 2018-19.

Star's predecessor, ESPN Star Sports, agreed deals for Cricket Australia and ECB rights covering Asia and the Middle East. It paid \$30m per season and \$22m per season respectively, in five-season deals running from 2012-13 to 2016-17 (*TV Sports Markets* 15:23; 16:10).

Local experts expect the values of these properties to decrease in any new deals. Star's fees are seen as excessive given the devaluation of the Indian rupee and the decline in advertising revenues around Test cricket.

Star may bid to retain the two properties, but it is no longer prepared to overpay to block its rivals. ■

FOOTBALL

Euro 2016 sales continue in sub-Saharan Africa

By Callum McCarthy

Last-minute Euro 2016 free-to-air sales have continued in sub-Saharan Africa, with deals secured in the key markets of Kenya and South Africa.

South African public-service broadcaster SABC sublicensed free-to-air rights from pay-television broadcaster SuperSport in a deal worth in the region of \$700,000 (€630,000). SABC's deal for Euro 2012 free-to-air rights is thought to

have been worth a higher dollar amount. The reduced fee reflects the depreciation of the South African rand against the US dollar.

SuperSport holds Euro 2016 rights across sub-Saharan Africa in a deal worth \$20m (*TV Sports Markets* 20:6).

Commercial broadcaster e.tv was thought to be interested in the rights, but industry experts have pointed to the close relationship between SuperSport and SABC – SuperSport traditionally reserves South African free-to-air rights for the public-service broadcaster.

SABC's deal covers 12 key matches from the tournament including the opening match, both semi-finals and the final.

In Kenya, digital-terrestrial operator

Bamba TV acquired an identical package of free-to-air rights in a deal with the CAA Eleven agency. Bamba paid between \$100,000 and \$150,000.

CAA Eleven sells European Championship rights on behalf of Uefa, European football's governing body.

Bamba has held free-to-air rights to top football properties in the past. During the 2015-16 season it held free-to-air rights to both the English Premier League and Italian Serie A. Bamba buys free-to-air sports rights to boost set-top box sales.

Meanwhile, in Francophone territories, pay-television operator Canal Plus Afrique has acquired French-language pay-television rights to the tournament. Canal Plus will pay about \$2.5m for rights to all 51 matches of the tournament. ■

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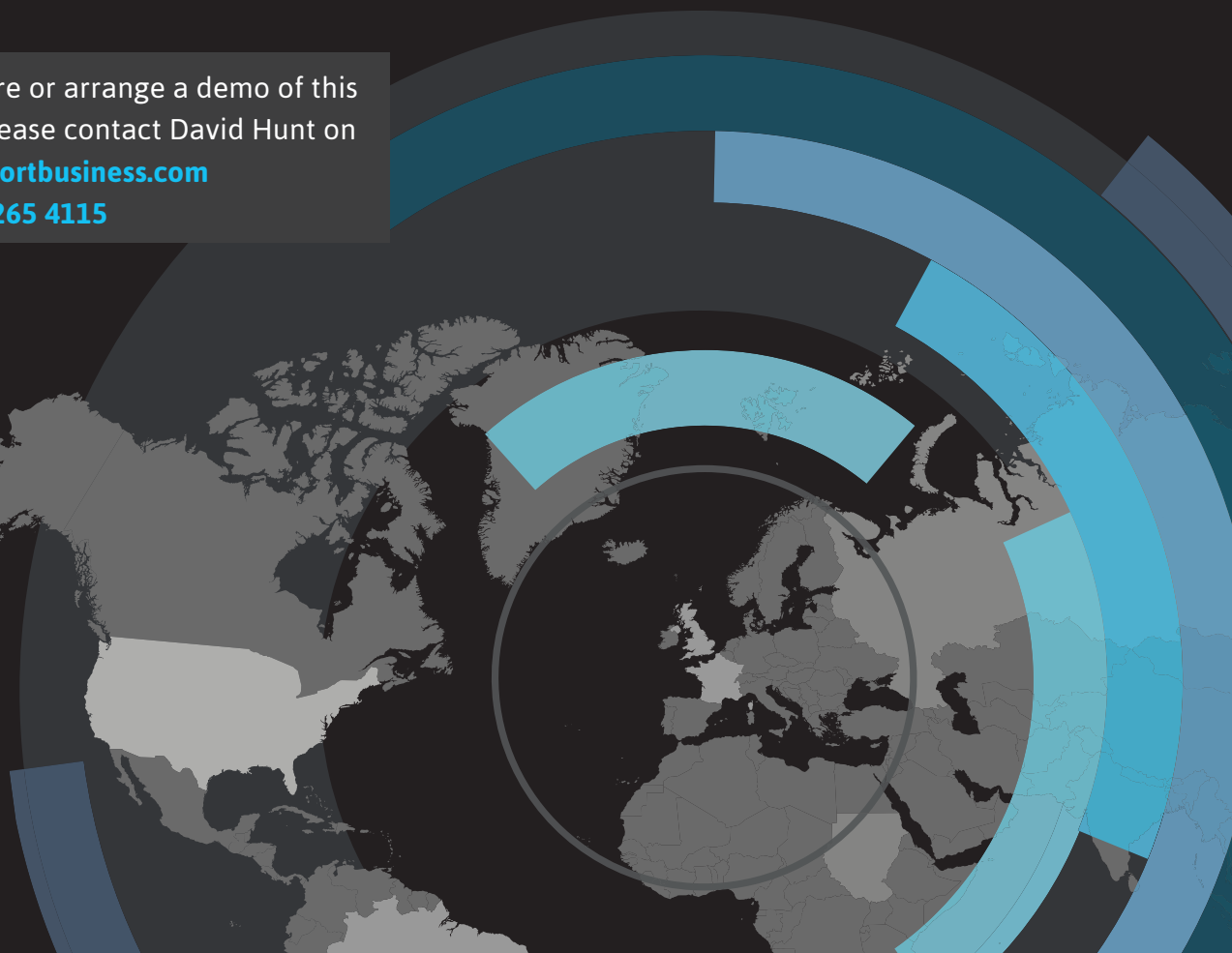
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SPORTS CLIPS: News from TVSM Daily from May 26 to June 8**MEDIA RIGHTS 1****Football: European Qualifiers, Euro 2016, Copa América Centenario and more**

- **Football:** German commercial broadcaster RTL acquired rights for Germany national team qualifiers ahead of the Uefa Euro 2020 and 2022 Fifa World Cup tournaments (page 8).
- **Football:** US media group Discovery Communications was awarded exclusive rights in Denmark for a package of Uefa rights including qualifiers ahead of Euro 2020 and the 2022 World Cup (page 1).
- **Football:** International sports broadcaster Eleven Sports Network acquired exclusive rights in Chinese Taipei to all 51 matches from Euro 2016.
- **Football:** South African public-service broadcaster SABC acquired rights for Euro 2016 (page 10).
- **Football:** German newspaper *Bild* acquired digital rights for Euro 2016. *Bild* will show highlights 45 minutes after the final whistle of each match.
- **Football:** Ecuadorian state broadcaster Gama TV acquired rights for all 32 matches of the Copa América Centenario national team tournament, which began on June 3. Gama TV struck the deal with the IMG and Soccer United Marketing agencies, which are marketing the competition's rights.
- **Football:** Bolivian state broadcaster Bolivia TV acquired rights for the Copa América Centenario.
- **Football:** Portuguese pay-television broadcaster Sport TV acquired rights for all 32 games at the 2016 Copa América Centenario.
- **Football:** Pay-television broadcaster Canal Plus acquired rights in Africa for Euro 2016 and the 2016 Copa América Centenario. Canal Plus Afrique will broadcast a total of 83 matches across the two tournaments (page 10).
- **Football:** Canal Plus renewed French-language rights in Africa for the English Premier League for three seasons, from 2016-17 to 2018-19. More than 150 matches per season will be available via the Canal Plus Sport channel.
- **Football:** Czech pay-television operator Digi Czech Republic is considering launching a new sports channel after acquiring rights for England's second-tier Championship for three seasons, from 2016-17 to 2018-19. Digi will show 86 matches per season.
- **Football:** Mi TV, the internet television arm of Chinese smartphone manufacturer Xiaomi Corp, acquired digital rights in China for Euro 2016, in a sublicensing deal with internet television company Future TV. The agreement includes live and repeat coverage of every match.
- **Football:** The Baofeng Sports International division of Chinese internet entertainment and technology provider Baofeng acquired digital rights for the Chinese Super League. The deal will run for two years, 2016 and 2017. Baofeng Sports will have rights to a single match from every round.
- **Football:** Eleven Sports Network acquired rights in Singapore for the 2016 Aya Bank Cup and Nations Cup national team tournaments.
- **Football:** French public-service broadcaster France Télévisions acquired rights for the Uefa Women's Euro 2017 national team tournament. Under the deal with Uefa, the sport's European governing body, France Télévisions will broadcast at least one match on every match day, including every contest featuring France.
- **Football:** Sony Pictures Networks India, formerly known as Multi Screen Media, acquired exclusive rights in India for Premier Futsal, a new multi-national futsal league, ahead of the inaugural 2016 season.

SINCE LAST TIME

- Turkey's state-owned Savings Deposit Insurance Fund approved the sale of pay-television broadcaster Digiturk to beIN Media Group. Investment vehicle Çukurova Holding held a 53-per-cent stake in Digiturk, which has domestic rights for Turkish football's top-tier Süper Lig until the end of the 2016-17 season, while US investment company Providence Equity Partners and other shareholders controlled the remaining 47 per cent. The Savings Deposit Insurance Fund seized Çukurova's stake in Digiturk in 2013 due to debts.
- Modern Times Group, the multi-territory commercial and pay-television broadcaster, acquired a 22-per-cent stake in digital services provider Engage Sports Media. ESM produces branded video content for clients and has partners in football, rugby, cricket, motorsport and horse racing. MTG also announced the launch of Viasat Sport Premium, a new premium sports channel in Sweden. Viasat Sport Premium will launch in August and be part of the Viasat Gold, Viasat Silver, and Viasat Sport packages.
- US media group Discovery Communications struck a deal to acquire a 27.5-per-cent stake in Bethia Communications, the parent company of Chilean free-to-air broadcaster Mega. Discovery also confirmed a deal for the Vodafone TV platform to carry all its free-to-air channels in Italy.
- Chinese internet entertainment and technology provider Baofeng formed a sports subsidiary following its investment in the MP & Silva agency in May. Baofeng Sports will begin operations by providing live broadcasts and virtual reality content on its digital platforms. Andrea Radrizzani, co-founder of MP & Silva, will be the chief executive of Baofeng Sports' international business.
- German pay-television broadcaster Sky Deutschland lodged a complaint against the country's federal cartel office, the Bundeskartellamt, over the implementation of a 'no-single-buyer rule' for the domestic rights sales process covering the Bundesliga,

SPORTS CLIPS: News from TVSM Daily from May 26 to June 8

MEDIA RIGHTS 2

NBA, Basketball Bundesliga, Cricket Australia, NHL, horse racing and more

- **Basketball:** Pay-television sports broadcaster ESPN expanded a rights deal in Australia and New Zealand for the National Basketball Association. The broadcaster will show 188 regular-season games next season – up from 88 in the 2015-16 campaign – and 53 playoff games, an increase of eight games year-on-year, as well as the all-star game and the post-season.
- **Basketball:** German sports broadcaster Sport1 acquired rights for the country's Basketball Bundesliga. The sublicensing deal was secured with telco Deutsche Telekom and will cover two seasons, 2016-17 and 2017-18. The agreement includes exclusive free-to-air coverage of up to 48 games per campaign: 34 regular-season games and 14 playoff games. The deal includes highlights and clip rights on all platforms.
- **Basketball:** The Baofeng Sports International division of Chinese internet entertainment and technology provider Baofeng sealed a rights deal with the Chinese Basketball Association. The deal includes virtual reality coverage of the China women's national team.
- **Cricket:** SuperSport, the pay-television broadcaster which operates in sub-Saharan Africa, acquired rights in South Africa for properties operated by Cricket Australia over five seasons, from 2016-17 to 2020-21 (page 5).
- **Cricket:** Telco Econet Media struck a deal for Cricket Australia rights covering sub-Saharan Africa, excluding South Africa, over five seasons, from 2016-17 to 2020-21 (page 5).
- **Cricket:** Cricket Australia renewed a rights deal with telco Digicel and struck a new agreement with telco Cable & Wireless Communications in the Caribbean. Both deals will run for five seasons, from 2016-17 to 2020-21. Digicel's SportsMax channels will show Australia national team Tests and one-day internationals. CWC-operated pay-television channel Flow Sports will show men's and women's international Twenty20 cricket, as well as the Big Bash League and Women's Big Bash League (page 9).
- **Cricket:** Australian commercial broadcaster Ten expanded a rights deal with Cricket Australia for coverage of the Women's Big Bash League. Ten will broadcast 12 matches – two more than last season – with 10 of the contests available on Ten's primary channel, up from three last time.
- **Cycling:** Russian sports-media platform Match TV acquired rights for the 2016 Tour de Suisse International Cycling Union WorldTour event. Coverage of the event, which will take place across Switzerland, will be shown on the Match Arena channel.
- **Esports:** Sport1 acquired rights in Germany for the ESL One Frankfurt 2016 event. The deal was agreed with esports event operator ESL. Sport1 will show the event's finale live on television after offering coverage of the earlier stages of the competition online.
- **Horse Racing:** Australian free-to-air digital channel Racing.com agreed a rights deal with the Hong Kong Jockey Club. Racing.com will show live coverage of the club's races, preview shows before every night meeting, and the club's *Racing to Win* programme.
- **Ice Hockey:** International sports broadcaster Eurosport acquired exclusive NHL rights in Russia for three seasons, from 2016-17 to 2018-19. Eurosport agreed the deal with the NHL and the IMG agency. The deal was first reported in *TV Sports Markets* 20:8.

the top tier of football in the country.

- Telco Altice completed the transfer of Altice Media Group France, which operates a series of television channels and media assets, to its French subsidiary SFR-Numericable.
- France's media regulator, the Conseil Supérieur de l'Audiovisuel, blocked the proposed exclusive carriage deal between Canal Plus and pay-television rival beIN Sports. In February, Canal Plus agreed to become the exclusive carriage partner for beIN Sports's channels in a five-year deal, from 2016 to 2020. But the CSA ruled that the deal contravened a condition, introduced when TPS and CanalSat merged in 2012, that Canal Plus would not enter exclusive carriage arrangements. It said "the circumstances of law or fact have not changed significantly since 2012". Canal Plus Group said in a statement it would "have to work on alternative solutions to stop the losses at the French Canal Plus channels".

27 international sports federations to work together on the new Olympic Channel, with a 2016 launch date to be confirmed in the coming weeks. The governing bodies of aquatics, archery, badminton, basketball, bobsleigh and skeleton, boxing, canoeing, curling, equestrian sports, fencing, golf, gymnastics, hockey, ice hockey, judo, modern pentathlon, rowing, rugby union, sailing, shooting, skiing, table tennis, taekwondo, tennis, triathlon, weightlifting and wrestling will provide content for the channel.

- Internet video technology provider NeuLion agreed a deal to acquire Saffron Digital, a company that assists clients in building OTT video services.
- The Mediapro agency launched Gol, a new digital-terrestrial sports channel, in Spain. Gol will feature a range of sports programming, including basketball, cycling, motorsport and tennis.
- Portuguese pay-television broadcaster Sport TV struck a deal with the country's national airline, TAP, to show a 30-minute news programme on long-haul flights.
- Portuguese telco Nos and football club Benfica agreed a deal for the club's in-house pay-television channel, BTV, to continue

MEDIA INTERNATIONAL

- The International Olympic Committee reached agreements with

SPORTS CLIPS: News from TVSM Daily from May 26 to June 8**MEDIA RIGHTS 3****Olympic Games, Six Nations, French Open, Conference USA and more**

- **Olympic Games:** US media group Discovery Communications agreed a sublicensing deal with RTÉ Sport, giving the Irish public-service broadcaster exclusive free-to-air television rights for the 2018 and 2020 Olympics Games (page 3).
- **Olympic Games:** Discovery Communications sealed a sublicensing deal with public-service broadcaster HRT for the 2018 and 2020 Games (page 3).
- **Rugby Union:** International sports broadcaster Eurosport bought rights in several Asian markets for the 2017 Six Nations national team tournament (page 1).
- **Rugby Union:** Public-service broadcaster France Télévisions extended a rights deal for the France U20 national team. The deal with the Fédération Française de Rugby, the French rugby union federation, will run for five seasons, from 2016-17 to 2020-21. The rights will be exploited exclusively on the France 4 channel.
- **Rugby Union:** Eurosport agreed a global rights partnership with the FFR for autumn internationals featuring the country's national team over five seasons, from 2016-17 to 2020-21 (page 1).
- **Skiing:** German public-service broadcasters ARD and ZDF extended their agreements with the W sportsmedia agency for rights to the Ski Classics series of long-distance events. The lengths of the renewals were not disclosed, although the deals will at least cover the 2016-17 campaign. ARD and ZDF will continue to provide news and highlights clips of the series.
- **Sport Climbing:** International sports broadcaster Eurosport agreed a deal to show a monthly highlights programme in the Asia-Pacific region covering International Federation of Sport Climbing news. Eurosport struck the agreement with the Broadreach Media agency, which acts as the IFSC's exclusive media distribution partner.
- **Tennis:** Pay-television broadcaster Star India struck a deal for French Open rights in the Indian subcontinent, for five years from 2017 to 2021 (page 10).
- **US College Sport:** US pay-television broadcaster ESPN acquired American football rights from the Conference USA college sports conference. ESPN will show five regular-season games and the championship game in 2016-2017 and 2017-18.
- **US College Sport:** US pay-television channel CBS Sports Network struck a deal with Conference USA for the 2016-17 and 2017-18 seasons. It covers six American football and six men's basketball contests during the regular-season, the Men's Basketball Championship title game for the first time, as well as the Women's Basketball Championship game.
- **US College Sport:** US pay-television broadcaster American Sports Network renewed a rights deal with Conference USA for two seasons, 2016-17 and 2017-18. ASN will show a minimum of 15 regular-season American football games, 13 regular-season men's basketball games and two women's basketball games per season. It has the option to add rights for up to 15 football, 42 men's basketball, three women's basketball and 10 Olympic sport events.

showing Primeira Liga top-tier domestic games throughout the 2016-17 season. In December, Nos acquired rights for Benfica matches in an initial three-season deal, from 2016-17 to 2018-19.

- Norwegian telco Telenor agreed a new deal for carriage of commercial and pay-television broadcaster TV2's channels on its Canal Digital pay-television platform.
- International sports broadcaster ESPN and pay-television broadcaster Sony Pictures Networks launched a new mobile-focused, digital service in India. The new ESPN.in website and regional ESPN app will offer video content based on rights held by Sony LIV, Sony's digital streaming platform, and the Sony ESPN sports channels.
- India's Supreme Court ruled broadcasters of major sports events in the country must remove advertising before supplying feeds to public-service broadcaster Doordarshan.
- The Brazilian Basketball League agreed a partnership with Facebook through which it will become the first domestic sports organisation to stream games via the social media platform's Facebook Live service.
- Ten Sports plans to launch more high-definition channels and

regional services, according to the Indian pay-television broadcaster's chief executive, Rajesh Sethi.

MEDIA RIGHTS NEGOTIATIONS

- LaLiga, which operates the top two tiers of Spanish football, launched a tender process for its five remaining packages of domestic rights covering three seasons, from 2016-17 to 2018-19. Bids must be submitted by 1pm on June 20. Package one includes live coverage of a Friday night top-tier Primera División game, not featuring Real Madrid, Barcelona, Valencia, Atlético Madrid or any team still competing in a European competition. Package two covers every round of the Copa del Rey from the second qualifying round through to the semi-finals of the knockout tournament. Package three includes extended highlights of games of up to 12 minutes each, while package four covers rights for four matches per match day from the second-tier Segunda División. Package five includes delayed matches from the top two divisions. The tender was launched after the Comisión Nacional de los Mercados y La Competencia, Spain's competition regulator, asked LaLiga to alter certain details relating to the sales process.

SPORTS CLIPS: News from TVSM Daily from May 26 to June 8

- UK media regulator Ofcom is analysing a proposed deal that would result in international sports broadcaster Eurosport becoming the first commercial entity to broadcast live coverage in the UK of the Wimbledon tennis grand slam (page 1).
- Sony Pictures Networks India has been given a 60-day window to submit an offer to retain rights to the Indian Premier League Twenty20 cricket competition, according to the *Times of India* newspaper. Sony holds broadcast rights for the event through to the 2017 edition. The length of the proposed new cycle was not disclosed. If Sony and the Board of Control for Cricket in India cannot agree a deal within the exclusive window, the broadcaster will have the right to submit a counter offer to any other bidder.

ALSO SINCE LAST TIME

- US media group Discovery Communications has not ruled out the possibility of agreeing deals with Facebook and Twitter for them social media platforms to show programming from its pan-European sports broadcaster, Eurosport, according to Discovery chief executive David Zaslav.
- Twitter linked up with US sports broadcasters Univision and Fox Sports to deliver clips to users from the Copa América Centenario national team football tournament. The clips will be available through Twitter's Amplify service in real time during games.
- The 2016 edition of the Indianapolis 500 on May 29 received blanket national coverage in the US for the first time since 1950 after local television blackout restrictions were lifted due to the IndyCar event selling out.
- CCTV 5, the sports channel operated by Chinese state broadcaster CCTV, agreed a strategic partnership with social media platform Sina Weibo. The long-term deal will commence with CCTV's coverage of the 2016 summer Olympic Games. In future, the partnership will expand to cover production, content, data and news-programming initiatives.
- Pay-television broadcaster C More hit out after an error by the Lagardère Sports agency meant it was unable to broadcast golf's Scandinavian Masters European Tour tournament in its home market of Sweden. In May, C More announced its new C More Golf channel would broadcast the tournament in parallel with

Swedish public-service broadcaster SVT. Lagardère acknowledged it had not been free to sell rights to a pay-television broadcaster under the terms of its deal with the European Tour.

- Social media platform Snapchat signed a three-year partnership, from 2016 to 2018, with the All England Lawn Tennis Club. The Snapchat Live service will provide coverage of the club's Wimbledon tennis tournament from the qualifying rounds.
- Irish telco Eir is considering launching a new free-to-air sports channel. Eir acquired pay-television broadcaster Setanta Sports in December. Eir chief executive Richard Moat told the *Irish Examiner* newspaper a free-to-air channel is something Setanta "may have to do one day" in order to compete for rights.
- The Ukrainian Premier League, the top division of football in the country, is set to switch to a collective rights-sales model following a vote of its member clubs. Ten of the 12 clubs agreed to transfer their rights for international broadcasts, while seven opted to move their domestic rights to a collective system.
- The European Broadcasting Union consortium of public-service broadcasters is "deeply concerned" after its member in Bosnia and Herzegovina, BHRT, announced it would cease operations at the end of June due to financial difficulties.
- The International Volleyball Federation will stream all 120 games from the 2016 Volleyball World Grand Prix season via its channel on video-sharing platform YouTube.

INDUSTRY MOVES

- Simon Thomas and Andrew Guy have left global channel syndicator Fox Networks Group. Thomas joined as FNG's executive vice-president of global sport and content sales in December 2013, while Guy was appointed senior vice-president of global sport in July 2014. It is understood the pair may set up a sports-rights agency. • Mike Kerr, former chief executive of golf's Asian Tour, joined beIN Media Group as its managing director in Asia. • Infront Italy president Marco Bogarelli was appointed strategic director for Wanda Sports Holding, the Chinese entity that incorporates the Infront Sports & Media agency, endurance brand Ironman and Wanda Sports China. Bogarelli will start his new role on June 20 while continuing as Infront Italy president.

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