

## FOOTBALL

### Premier League international media-rights revenues set to increase by almost 50%

By Robin Jellis

International media-rights revenues for the English Premier League are set to increase by almost 50 per cent in its new cycle, according to research conducted by *TV Sports Markets*.

Since August 2015, the league has been selling rights market-by-market for the three seasons from 2016-17 to 2018-19 and has so far agreed 41 deals covering most of the world.

The league stands to earn at least \$1.732bn (€1.573bn) per season from international rights in the new cycle. This is just under 47 per cent more than the 2013-14 to 2015-16 cycle in which the league earned \$1.181bn per season from deals in the corresponding markets.

Overall, growth has slowed slightly

from the 2010-11 to 2012-13 cycle, when the jump to the 2013-2016 cycle was about 60 per cent. Then, fees increased from just under \$740m per season (*TV Sports Markets* 17:15).

Asia-Pacific remains the league's most valuable region for its international rights, contributing \$577.5m per season (see table, page 3).

Rights fees also soared across Europe, from marginally under \$300m per season to at least \$542.5m per season – an increase of more than 81 per cent.

There was also a huge increase in value in Latin America and the Caribbean. The league will earn about \$106m per season across these regions in the new cycle,

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## MIXED MARTIAL ARTS

### UFC on brink of UK renewal with BT Sport

By Callum McCarthy

The Ultimate Fighting Championship is set to complete a new deal in the UK and Ireland with incumbent broadcaster BT Sport which will more than double its current media-rights income.

The pay-television broadcaster will pay close to £8m (€9.6m/\$10.6m) per year in a two-and-a-half-year deal from August 2016 until the end of 2018. This will be an increase of just under 160 per cent on BT's current three-year deal, from August 2013 to August 2016, worth £3.1m per year (*TV Sports Markets* 20:9).

The new deal has been negotiated

directly between the UFC and BT. The last time UFC rights were sold, in March 2013, the promotion's deal with BT was brokered by the RDA TV agency.


BT will hold rights to every live UFC event in its new deal, including those not host broadcast by US pay-television broadcaster Fox.

In its current deal, BT is only able to show the UFC's pay-per-view events and events host broadcast by Fox. Events hosted in Europe, the Middle East and Africa – better time-zones for a UK

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## LeSports takes first bite of expensive Premier League

LeSports has become the first Chinese internet operator to secure English Premier League rights in the upcoming 2016-17 season, agreeing a deal worth \$38m (€34.5m).

The deal was struck with the Super Sports Media Group agency, which pays \$18m per season for Premier League rights in China and Macau over six seasons, from 2013-14 to 2018-19 (*TV Sports Markets* 18:4).

SSMG sublicenses rights to digital players in one-season deals to account for rapid growth in the sector. It sets a fixed price and will sell the rights non-exclusively to up to three buyers.

For 2016-17 it is demanding \$38m from each, up from the \$18m paid by each of LeSports, Sina and Tencent for rights in the 2015-16 season.

The content is the same: 230 matches which the operators stream for free; the remaining 150 matches – which include most of the top fixtures – are sold by SSMG on a pay-per-view basis. The operators are paid for each of their users which sign up to SSMG's service.

This will change slightly in 2016-17, as LeSports has agreed a deal that will allow subscribers to its new paid service access to these matches. The LeSports Pass, introduced in April, costs CNY590 (€81/\$86) per year and currently has about 1.5m subscribers.

LeSports has agreed a separate deal for OTT rights in 2016-17, allowing it to show matches via smart televisions sold by its parent company, LeEco.

The deal was agreed with SSMG and IPTV operator BesTV, which holds OTT rights to the Premier League from 2013-14 to 2018-19. BesTV has a 14-per-cent shareholding in SSMG. Local sources said the OTT rights deal was likely to be a significant additional cost to LeSports. Its rights will be co-exclusive with BesTV.

*TV Sports Markets* understands Sina and Tencent have balked at the 110-per-

cent increase in SSMG's asking price for digital rights. One source said Sina and Tencent – whose websites are by a long way the most popular among China's digital sports operators' – did not need to buy the rights as a loss leader.

Internet operator PPTV – which did not have rights in 2015-16 – is thought to be close to a deal. PPTV showed 152 live Premier League matches in the 2014-15 season, as did LeSports. The firms paid \$13m and \$11m respectively.

New OTT player Baofeng Sports is interested in the rights. But one source said it was possible that no third buyer would meet SSMG's asking price. Even with just two deals, the agency would stand to make at least \$76m, 41 per cent more than it did last season. ■

## Eleven gets EPL in Chinese Taipei

MP & Silva has made a small profit on its most recent English Premier League sublicensing deal in Asia.

Pay-television broadcaster Eleven Sports Networks acquired the rights in Chinese Taipei from the agency earlier this week. It is understood Eleven will pay about \$600,000 (€545,000) over three seasons, from 2016-17 to 2018-19, or \$200,000 per season.

MP & Silva won these rights last November as part of a five-territory deal which also included Mongolia, the Pacific Islands, South Korea and Vietnam. It paid about \$43.3m per season (*TV Sports Markets* 19:21).

The agency's allocation for Chinese Taipei was thought to be about \$167,000 per season. The league is not a top property; baseball is the most popular sport in the country.

MP & Silva was also the rights-holder in the country for the 2013-14 to 2015-16 cycle. It acquired the rights after they were handed back to the Premier League by the KJ Sports n Media agency, which had been unable to agree deals with broadcasters.

MP & Silva paid about \$100,000 per season for the rights, and sold them to online subscription service Coliseum

Sports Media, which hosted its Premier League Pass in the country as well as in New Zealand (*TV Sports Markets* 17:12). The agency is understood to have made a small profit on the sale.

In Chinese Taipei, Eleven is available to stream via its own website and on IPTV platforms. It plans to launch a cable channel in 2017. ■

## Two more packages to Mediapro

Mediapro last week acquired the remaining two packages of domestic Spanish LaLiga rights for the three seasons from 2016-17 to 2018-19, after a second round of bidding.

The agency will pay €5.6m (\$6.2m) per season for package 2, which includes free-to-air rights to the second-pick live Copa del Rey match and first-pick semi-final. The final of the knockout competition is not included.

Mediapro will pay €1m per season for package 5 – digital video-on-demand rights to all league and cup matches.

Neither offer met the league's reserve price, but Mediapro was the only bidder for package 5 and the strongest bidder for package 2.

Mediapro increased its offer for package 2 from the first round, as did rival bidders – public-service broadcaster TVE and commercial broadcaster Atresmedia.

Earlier this month Mediapro agreed to pay €18.6m per season for three packages in the first round of bidding (*TV Sports Markets* 20:11).

Package 2, alongside the packages Mediapro acquired in the first round, will be exploited on its recently-launched digital-terrestrial channel, Gol. It is likely to exploit the video-on-demand rights from package 5 through Total Channel, its OTT platform.

LaLiga is expected to make two non-exclusive packages of rights – a package of pay-television rights for up to 10 live second-tier Segunda matches, and a package of 90-second clips for online exploitation – available at a fixed price very soon. ■

## FOOTBALL

## Premier League growth driven by big increases in Europe

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more than double the \$52.6m per season it earned from the two regions in the previous cycle.

All deals were agreed by the Premier League's media-rights sales team, which is led by Paul Molnar (director of broadcasting) and Sunil Kaikini (head of international broadcasting). Richard Scudamore, the league's executive chairman, oversees the sales process and the league's overall strategy.

The league is still to sell its rights in three markets: Albania, Canada and Russia. It announced a deal with Maltese telco Go this week.

The cycle has thrown up interesting developments:

- Although international rights will increase by nearly 50 per cent in value, the rate of growth has slowed slightly from 60 per cent in the previous cycle
- Growth in Asia-Pacific has slowed dramatically, from a 68-per-cent increase last time to an increase of just under 14 per cent this time
- Europe proved extremely lucrative, with fees across the region rising by more than 81 per cent
- The league will continue to earn far more from international rights than any other football league – it will be about 142 per cent ahead of Spain's LaLiga, its closest rival in terms of international earnings.

### Still way ahead

Phil Lines, consultant at Nootka and former director of international broadcasting and media operations at the Premier League, told *TV Sports Markets*: "I think Richard Scudamore and Paul Molnar have done a great job.

"They have continued to stabilise the Premier League as the most successful commercial league in the world. It's tribute to the way the rights are sold. It's still a long way ahead of LaLiga despite

Premier League international TV rights revenue from 2016-17 to 2018-19, compared to 2013-14 to 2015-16					
Region	New per-season value (\$m)	Percentage of new total	Previous per-season value (\$m)	Percentage of previous total	Percentage increase
Asia-Pacific	577.5	33.3	507.5	43	13.8
Europe <sup>1</sup>	542.5	31.3	299.5	25.4	81.1
Sub-Saharan Africa	190	11	125.3	10.6	51.6
North America <sup>2</sup>	166.7 <sup>3</sup>	9.6	83.3	7	100
Middle East and North Africa	143.3	8.3	110	9.3	30.3
Latin America and the Caribbean	106	6.1	52.6	4.5	101.5
In-flight/in-ship	6.25	0.4	3	0.2	108.3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1732.25</b>		<b>1181.2</b>		<b>46.7</b>

Source: *TV Sports Markets*  
<sup>1</sup> Does not include Albania or Russia where rights are yet to be sold  
<sup>2</sup> Does not include Canada where rights are yet to be sold  
<sup>3</sup> Average of NBC's six-season deal worth \$1bn

the fact LaLiga has made a big jump. It bodes very well for the future."

The league's international revenues are a great deal larger than those of the four other top five European football leagues:

- Spain's LaLiga earns about €650m per season from 2015-16 to 2017-18
- Germany's Bundesliga earns about €175m per season from 2015-16 to 2016-17 – this will rise to about €240m per season from 2017-18 when its European sales are finalised
- Italy's Serie A earns €185.7m per season from 2015-16 to 2017-18
- France's Ligue 1 earns €32.5m per season from 2012-13 to 2017-18, rising to €80m per season from 2018-19 to 2023-24.

One independent rights expert described the overall increase as "a huge result" for the Premier League.

"You can't look at it in isolation, you have to look at where the Premier League has been going over the last 10 years," the expert said. "People have been saying the league value was going to hit a ceiling but they've still got a big increase."

He added that although LaLiga earned a much bigger percentage increase in the value of its international rights – almost 177 per cent – it was coming from a much lower base (*TV Sports Markets* 19:15).

The league declined to answer questions about the sales process when contacted by *TV Sports Markets*.

### Future challenges

Despite the phenomenal commercial success of the Premier League, some experts say it will face challenges ahead.

Lines said the league will find it difficult to continue growing revenues from pay-television broadcasters around the world as growth within the sector is slowing.

"The league may no longer continue to spread everywhere. There are new generations and there has been the advent of the digital world – the league will have to get a grip on that transition," he said.

"You could say the Premier League needs to do more to reach directly to younger fans who are not likely to follow the traditional model of pay-TV."

He added that, in comparison with the major US sports leagues, the Premier League was well behind digitally.

### Asian growth slows

Despite remaining the most lucrative region for the league's international rights, growth in Asia-Pacific slowed compared to the previous sales cycle. Rights fees increased by only about 14 per cent compared to about 68 per cent last time.

There are various reasons why values fell in individual markets. One common theme was the depreciation of local currencies against the dollar. In others, there was limited competition, or at least less than when the rights were last sold.

And in some cases, broadcasters simply felt the previous price paid was too high and the value has now been corrected.

In the Indian subcontinent, pay-television broadcaster Star will pay \$33.3m per season, down from \$50m per season (*TV Sports Markets* 20:2).

BeIN Media Group reduced Premier League rights fees by about 10 per cent each in two deals – one covering Indonesia and another covering Thailand, Laos and Cambodia (*TV Sports Markets* 19:20; 20:3).

There were also falls in the value of pay-television broadcaster renewals in Singapore, and Malaysia and Brunei, with Singtel and Astro respectively.

But the biggest percentage decrease across the region was in Myanmar, where pay-television broadcaster SkyNet agreed a deal worth about \$6.7m per season, down from \$15m per season in the previous cycle – a fall of 55 per cent (*TV Sports Markets* 19:21; 20:4).

The Premier League is likely to be looking enviously at the success of other rights-holders in China where the market for digital rights has exploded.

The last time the league sold its rights in China it agreed a deal with the Super Sports Media Group agency for six seasons, from 2013-14 to 2018-19. The deal is worth \$18m per season – only a small increase on the league's previous \$16m-per-season deal in China.

SSMG agrees digital rights deals on a season-by-season basis. For 2015-16 it had deals with LeSports, Sina Sports and Tencent, each worth \$18m (*TV Sports Markets* 18:4). The agency's income is set to dramatically increase for the 2016-17 season (see separate story, page 2).

Lines said: "There will be some regret, they have missed out there. They would be less than human if they were not envious of what their sublicensee is getting, but in three years' time they will make up for it."

Despite this, the league secured strong increases in several territories – notably Australia, Hong Kong, New Zealand and a slate of 20 markets where the MP & Silva agency acquired the rights.

### European evolution

The majority of the league's growth was

driven by big fee increases across Europe, with values in several individual markets more than doubling.

In Norway, commercial and pay-television broadcaster TV2 will pay about €65m per season, up almost 144 per cent on the €26.7m per season it paid in the previous cycle.

In Sweden, commercial and pay-television broadcaster Modern Times Group renewed for about €50m per season – more than 130 per cent higher than the €21.7m per season it paid in the past cycle (*TV Sports Markets* 19:18).

Telco Altice was a surprise winner of Premier League rights in France, prising them from pay-television broadcaster Canal Plus in a deal worth €120m per season, a 99-per-cent increase on the €60.3m per season paid in the previous cycle (*TV Sports Markets* 19:23).

The Perform Group acquired rights across Germany, Austria and Switzerland for €11m per season, an increase of at least 175 per cent on the €3.5m to €4m per season paid by pay-television broadcaster Sky Deutschland. The rights will form the basis of its OTT service – DAZN – which is set to launch in the coming weeks.

Telco Telefónica won the rights in Spain for €14m per season, up from the €3m per season paid by the IMG agency – an increase of 366 per cent.

In Portugal, pay-television broadcaster Sport TV renewed for almost 330 per cent more: it will pay just under €10m per season, up from €2.3m per season.

In Belgium, Telenet paid an increase of about 114 per cent to renew its rights. The new deal is worth just over €20m per season, up from about €9.3m per season.

Israel – a market in which there has been little competition for years – provided a 400-per-cent increase. Pay-television broadcaster Charlton renewed for \$7.5m per season, up from \$1.5m per season. New competition in the market, stimulated by local telco Partner Communications looking to acquire sports rights, forced up the price (*TV Sports Markets* 20:1).

### Other increases

One of the league's biggest single deals was in the US, where media group

NBCUniversal secured a six-season deal, from 2016-17 to 2021-22, worth \$1bn. This represented a season-on-season uplift of 100 per cent: NBC paid \$250m in the previous three-season cycle (*TV Sports Markets* 19:15).

Sub-Saharan Africa also provided a big rise: pay-television broadcaster SuperSport will pay about \$180m per season, up from \$113.3m per season. The deal is for all pay-television rights.

The rights across the region were not tendered, which Lines believes was an odd decision. He said: "I can't understand their strategy for Africa. I never saw a process. Yes, it's true that SuperSport has bailed them out in the past, but in the long term you will never get anything like you should if you stick with a tried and trusted partner. I think they should have had a process there."

BeIN will pay about 30 per cent more for rights across the Middle East and North Africa. Its deal will be worth about \$143.3m per season, up from the league's \$110m-per-season deal with MP & Silva.

Lines claimed the Premier League did not allow agencies to bid for the rights in the new cycle across Mena because it wanted to establish a direct relationship with beIN, which he described as a "very powerful broadcaster".

In Brazil, pay-television broadcaster ESPN will pay \$25m per season, up from the \$16.7m per season the league earned from ESPN and pay-television rival Fox Sports Latin America in the previous cycle. Across the rest of Latin America, pay-television broadcasters DirecTV and Sky México will share rights in a deal worth about \$55m per season, up from their previous deal covering the same territories worth \$33.3m per season.

The league's biggest percentage increase came in the Caribbean, where its fee soared by 900 per cent. Telco Cable & Wireless Communications will pay \$26m per season for the rights, 10 times the \$2.6m per season paid by pay-television broadcaster SportsMax in the previous cycle (*TV Sports Markets* 20:10).

### Remaining markets

The Premier League is yet to announce deals in three markets, with its new season to start on August 13. It is

understood the deals have yet to be finalised due to negotiations over price.

In Canada, pay-television rivals Rogers Sportsnet and TSN jointly held Premier League rights in the last cycle in a deal worth about \$7m per season. The fee and the 380 matches per season were split 50:50 between the two (*TV Sports Markets* 16:20). The rights in a new cycle are expected to be awarded to Rogers.

In Russia, pay-television broadcaster NTV Plus held the rights in a deal worth €9m per season. NTV Plus channels have since been rebranded under the Match TV umbrella by Gazprom Media.

Local experts say Match will renew the rights as there is no competition, but they expect the Russian rights fee to fall dramatically. One source said the deal would probably be worth between €4m and €5m per season.

There was no coverage in Albania in the previous cycle due to piracy concerns. The last time the rights were sold in Albania, in June 2010 for the 2010-11 to

2012-13 cycle, they were bought by pay-television broadcaster Tring TV for about €900,000 per season (*TV Sports Markets* 14:10).

During this cycle, Albania was the leading source of 'grey cards' to the UK. These are cards sold by international broadcasters which give people in the UK access to a satellite feed of that channel, including Premier League matches. To reduce this, the league chose not to sell its rights in the country in the 2013-16 cycle.

A source close to the league suggested a deal may be done if a broadcaster can agree to certain provisions. A decision is likely to be made once rights in the other two territories have been sold.

In Malta, telco Go has renewed its deal for the Premier League to show coverage on its Go Sport pay-television platforms. The previous deal was worth about €1m per season – the new deal is thought to be a similar amount.

The league will not agree a broadcast deal in North Korea, as in the past cycle.

## Total values

In February 2015, the Premier League sold its live domestic rights to pay-television broadcasters BT and Sky for a total of £5.136bn (€6.163bn/\$6.79bn) over the three seasons from 2016-17 to 2018-19, or £1.712bn per season (*TV Sports Markets* 19:3).

The league also earns £68m per season from UK public-service broadcaster the BBC for its free-to-air highlights.

In addition, the league sold near-live rights – including video-on-demand clips – to Sky for about £15m per season, and digital clips rights, also to Sky, for slightly more than £12m per season (*TV Sports Markets* 19:14; 19:22).

These deals gives the league total domestic income of about £1.807bn per season from 2016-17 to 2018-19.

Converting the current international sales total into pounds – to give £1.31bn per season – the league is set to earn at least £3.117bn per season from all broadcast rights. ■

## ICE HOCKEY

# Tencent pips LeSports to NHL streaming rights

By Frank Dunne

Chinese internet company Tencent has agreed a six-season deal for digital rights to North America's National Hockey League worth \$21m (€19.1m), or an average of \$3.5m per season.

The agreement will begin next season, 2016-17, and will run to the end of 2021-22. Tencent will pay \$1m in the first season, rising by \$1m per season thereafter to reach \$6m in the final season.

The deal was brokered by the IMG agency, which helps the NHL distribute its worldwide media rights outside North America and the Nordics in a five-season consultancy deal, from 2016-17 to 2020-21. The deal is based on a minimum guarantee of just under \$5m per season (*TV Sports Markets* 19:18).

It is understood the steep annual uplift

from a low base in Tencent's fee reflects the expected growth in audience as China moves toward hosting the 2022 winter Olympic Games in Beijing.

Tencent has only acquired digital rights. State broadcaster CCTV is expected to renew its deal for free-to-air linear television rights. However, Tencent will have first choice of matches.

CCTV has been agreeing rolling annual deals with the NHL for many years. So far it has not paid a rights fee but has covered technical costs. The broadcaster's CCTV5 sports channel shows three to four matches per week.

The award of the digital rights is understood to have come down to a head-to-head battle between Tencent and rival streaming service LeSports.

One local source said LeSports made a higher financial offer but the league preferred to go with Tencent because of its commitment to North American sport. However, a source close to LeSports said its bid had no financial component.

In January 2015, Tencent acquired exclusive streaming rights to US basketball's NBA for five seasons, from

2015-16 to 2019-20, worth \$100m per season (*TV Sports Markets* 19:3).

This February, Tencent agreed an output deal with US sports broadcaster ESPN which gives it extra NBA editorial content as well as exclusive Chinese-language streaming rights to ESPN content, including the NCAA men's college basketball championship tournament, March Madness.

Ice hockey is one of the sports the government is heavily promoting ahead of the 2022 Olympic Games.

This month, China entered a team – Beijing-based Kunlun Red Star – into Russia's Kontinental Hockey League from next season. As part of the deal, the Russian ice hockey federation will help Kunlun Red Star develop an ice hockey school in Beijing. The agreement was approved by the ministry of sport in both countries.

Even without the push from the government, ice hockey has been steadily growing in popularity in China. In 2015, the NHL drafted its first ever Chinese player, Song Andong, who joined the New York Islanders. ■

## MIXED MARTIAL ARTS

# UFC close to new deal with BT, set to get large fee increase

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broadcaster – are generally not host broadcast by Fox so are excluded from BT's current deal.

The new deal is yet to be signed, but is thought to be a formality after lengthy private negotiations. Sources close to the talks say BT was reluctant to pay more than £6m per year, while the UFC was seeking about £10m per year for its entire calendar of events.

It is thought BT was forced into paying a higher rights fee due to a late bid of about £7m per year from its main pay-television rival, Sky.

Both BT and the UFC declined to comment on the new deal.

BT's deal will end in tandem with the UFC's deal in the US with Fox which covers UFC Fight Night and UFC on Fox events, worth \$90m a year from 2012 to 2018. As Fox host broadcasts most UFC events, this deal dictates how many events take place each year. BT will have rights to at least 45 live events per year.

The deal will mark a second strong rights-fee increase for the UFC. Its previous one-year deal with pay-television broadcaster ESPN, from August 2012 to August 2013, was worth just over £1m (*TV Sports Markets* 17:6).

## Competition

Competition is thought to have been the main reason behind the UFC's large rights-fee increase.

Sky's interest surprised some industry insiders. The broadcaster has shown no interest in acquiring mixed martial arts rights since its deal with MMA promotion Cage Warriors in 2012.

However, it is thought Sky was won over by the growing popularity of the UFC, despite earlier worries the promotion wasn't a good fit with the family-focused image Sky tries to portray.

Pay-television broadcaster Premier Sports was also interested in the rights,

but according to one source its interest was "more passive than aggressive". The broadcaster is not thought to have submitted a formal bid but did express its willingness to take a package of UFC rights should no deal be reached with a more mainstream broadcaster.

While BT and Sky were adamant they wanted all live UFC events in any potential deal, Premier Sports was more flexible and would have allowed the promotion to carve out certain rights for its UFC Fight Pass OTT service.

BT was keen to hold onto the rights as the UFC has a loyal and passionate fan base, but the promotion's determination to secure a strong rights fee from one of its most important European markets prevented the two parties from reaching an agreement sooner.

The UFC considered carving out certain rights for Fight Pass due to BT's unwillingness to match the asking price.

Linear broadcast rights to events shown on Fight Pass were not included in BT's current deal, as Fight Pass had not been created when the deal was signed.

BT had to bid separately for each of these events. These were often held in favourable time-zones for a European audience and received comparatively good ratings on both BT and Sky-owned digital-terrestrial channel Pick TV.

## Ratings and potential

While mixed martial arts is widely recognised as the fastest-growing sport in the world, its rising popularity has yet to translate to strong ratings on BT. The highest-rating UFC events during BT's current deal were all European events not included in BT's deal.

UFC Fight Night: London, held on March 8, 2014, was by far the highest-rating UFC event with an average live audience of just under 600,000 viewers. It was shown by UK commercial broadcaster Channel 5.

In contrast, most US-based UFC events broadcast on BT Sport provide average live audiences of between 20,000 and 30,000 viewers.

While this is largely due to events starting at 3am local time, seven-day viewing figures – including delayed and highlights coverage – are little better.

Only events involving Irish world featherweight champion Conor McGregor and British world middleweight champion Michael Bisping bucked this trend.

BT's reluctance to pay more in a new deal was largely due to these low audience ratings. However, its eventual decision to continue with the UFC was due to three main reasons.

First, the UFC was seeking a two-and-a-half-year deal in the UK – so it would end at the same time as its deal in the US with Fox. This minimised the impact to BT of paying a much higher fee. Should ratings not improve, BT will not be locked into a long-term agreement.

Second, the inclusion of all Europe-based UFC events – and therefore the potential of bigger ratings – made the property more valuable to BT.

Third, BT didn't want to be seen to lose a big property to Sky, especially at a time when the UFC is becoming increasingly mainstream. BT has lost just one property to Sky since its launch in August 2013: the Top 14, the top French rugby union league (*TV Sports Markets* 18:8).

With McGregor and Bisping both current world-title holders, there is a strong chance both will defend their titles in the UK or Ireland before BT's new deal expires at the end of 2018. Such an event would generate huge interest in either country and would give BT the marquee event it has craved.

## Changes to Fight Pass

With BT's deal set to include rights to all UFC events, the promotion will change the function of its Fight Pass service in the UK and Ireland.

Instead of marketing the product around occasional live UFC events, Fight Pass will focus on live coverage of second-tier mixed martial arts promotions. The holdback period after which Fight Pass can show coverage of UFC events will also be reduced.

At its inception, subscribers had to wait a minimum of 28 days after its live airing to watch a UFC event on the service. Currently, subscribers have to wait a minimum of seven days. However, this is set to be reduced again to encourage fans

to subscribe. A subscription to Fight Pass currently costs £5.99 per month.

The exclusivity of preliminary bouts will also change. The UFC runs two separate preliminary events before each main card. Currently, one is exclusive to Fight Pass, while the other is exclusively shown by BT. From August 2016, when the new BT deal will begin, preliminary events previously exclusive to BT will now be simulcast on Fight Pass. ■

## RUGBY UNION

# Premiership value soars as rights are split across Africa

By Callum McCarthy

The English Premiership has at least quadrupled in value and significantly increased its coverage in sub-Saharan Africa, taking advantage of competition between pay-television broadcasters SuperSport and Kwesé Sports.

Deals with the two broadcasters for rights to English rugby union's top tier across sub-Saharan Africa will be worth a combined total of about \$1.7m (€1.5m) per season. The deals are both for English-language rights.

SuperSport's three-season deal, from 2016-17 to 2018-19, is for rights in South Africa only and is worth about \$500,000 per season. This is a significant increase on its previous deal, which was worth about \$375,000 per season and covered all of sub-Saharan Africa. That deal ran for three seasons, from 2013-14 to 2015-16.

Kwesé Sports agreed a five-season deal, from 2016-17 to 2020-21, worth about \$1.2m per season. This is regarded by most industry experts as a huge fee for rugby rights outside South Africa. Kwesé's rights are valid in English-speaking territories outside South Africa.

In addition to the huge boost in revenue, Kwesé and SuperSport will show more Premiership matches than were broadcast in the region before. Both will show at least 100 matches per season, 69 of which will be live.

Premiership Rugby commercial director Dominic Hayes told *TV Sports*

*Markets* this week: "Premiership Rugby's big selling point is its competitiveness. Around 50 per cent of matches finish within one score, making it a very compelling sports proposition.

"From an on-pitch perspective, the performances and of our clubs are a testament to the quality of the league.

"The Premiership provided five of the eight quarter-finalists in the European Champions Cup, three of four semi-finalists, and the winners in Saracens. The club game is certainly in rude health in terms of quality."

The deals are the first to have been agreed by telco Altice and the RDA TV agency since the two acquired Premiership Rugby international rights in July 2015. Their deal is for five seasons, from 2016-17 to 2020-21, and is worth close to \$5m per season (*TV Sports Markets* 19:15).

The league's international rights were previously distributed by the Pitch International agency in a deal worth about \$2m per season from 2013-14 to 2015-16 (*TV Sports Markets* 17:11).

### Less SuperSport exclusivity

The English-language deals across sub-Saharan Africa for the Premiership mirror those agreed by Cricket Australia last month. In that deal, Australian cricket's governing body split English-language rights in the region between Kwesé and SuperSport (*TV Sports Markets* 20:10).

This possibility of splitting rights between broadcasters has given rights-holders the opportunity to substantially increase rights fees from a region that had seen little growth in recent years.

Local sources believe SuperSport will prioritise its South African audience wherever possible as long as it doesn't cause too much churn elsewhere. This is due to the financial problems of its parent company, media group Multichoice.

While SuperSport will be unhappy about its power base diminishing in sub-Saharan Africa, the two properties over which it has lost exclusivity to Kwesé are of limited interest outside South Africa.

South Africa, a rugby powerhouse, has 30 players playing across 11 of the 12

Premiership clubs, while the rest of sub-Saharan Africa has just five.

### Other coverage

As part of its international rights deal, Altice will exploit live French-language rights in sub-Saharan Africa via its basic-tier Ma Chaîne Sport channels. It will also show coverage in France, Belgium, Luxembourg, Switzerland and Portugal via its pay-television SFR Sport channels.

RDA is responsible for sales outside of these territories, but collaborates with Premiership Rugby on its sales strategy. Premiership Rugby signs off all deals.

RDA is thought to have finalised a deal in Australia with pay-television broadcaster Fox Sports. More deals are expected in the coming weeks.

By the end of the international sales cycle, Hayes believes the Premiership will be available in about 200 territories and more than 175m households.

"Our overall ambition is to be the best, most recognisable league in the world with a very strong global footprint," he added.

### Special relationship

Rights in the US were carved out of Altice and RDA's deal as Premiership Rugby wanted complete control over its own development in what it regards as a key territory. The league wanted to focus on exposure over revenue, something an agency could not afford to do.

Hayes said: "We wanted to go there and make sure our exposure and presence in the market was right. It was important for us to have a free hand in negotiations and it's really paid off."

In March, Premiership Rugby agreed a five-season deal with pay-television broadcaster NBCSN, worth about \$300,000 per season. The deal will run from 2016-17 to 2020-21.

The placement of the Premiership on NBCSN is key to the deal. The league's top match each week will air near-live immediately after its coverage of the English Premier League's early kick-off on Saturdays in order to attract as large an audience as possible. ■

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

## RUGBY UNION

## Competition drives up Rugby World Cup revenue in Ireland

By Richard Welbirg

Strong competition drove up the value of rights to the 2019 Rugby World Cup in Ireland this week, despite a much worse time zone than in 2015.

Pay-television broadcaster Eir Sport has agreed a deal worth just over £5.5m (€6.6m/\$7.3m) for the 2019 tournament, which will be hosted in Japan. The deal was agreed with World Rugby, which was advised by the IMG agency.

Pay-television channels Setanta Sports were this week rebranded as Eir Sport. Setanta was acquired by telco Eir in December 2015.

Eir's fee for 2019 is at least 83 per cent higher than the £3m that commercial broadcaster TV3 paid for the 2015 edition (*TV Sports Markets* 19:21).

World Rugby ran a formal tender which went through two rounds of bidding. Eir faced strong competition from a joint bid between TV3 and public-service broadcaster RTÉ. Pay-television broadcaster Sky did not bid.

Eir will have rights to all 48 matches, but will sublicense rights to 13 matches to a free-to-air broadcaster. This was a condition of the tender, although Irish law only requires Ireland matches and the final to be shown free-to-air.

World Rugby is thought to be sanguine about the tournament moving largely to pay-television. It agreed similar deals for the 2007 and 2011 Rugby World Cups – Setanta paid €6m for both tournaments and sublicensed free-to-air rights to TV3 and RTÉ respectively.

One expert noted it was important to secure free-to-air coverage for the 2015 tournament because it was hosted in England and broadcast close to prime-time in Ireland, guaranteeing large audiences. This is less important for 2019 because of the unfavourable time zone.

Eir's deal also includes rights to the 2017 women's Rugby World Cup, the U20 Championship from 2017 to 2019

and the 2018 Rugby World Cup Sevens.

This is a change in strategy for World Rugby, which has previously sold rights to these events separately. Global rights to the U20 Championship in 2015 and 2016 are distributed jointly by the RDA TV and Lagardère Sports agencies (*TV Sports Markets* 19:8).

In the UK, World Rugby is understood to have agreed a deal for the 2019 and 2023 World Cup with commercial broadcaster ITV.

### Formula One

Eir has also extended its agreement for Formula One motor racing rights for two years, 2017 and 2018. Its existing three-year deal runs from 2014 to 2016.

Eir has non-exclusive rights to all races, which limits the value of the rights. ■

## WRESTLING

## Digital growth in China leads WWE to exclusive deal

By Richard Welbirg

WWE's exclusive distribution deal with Chinese digital operator PPTV marks a step change in the wrestling promotion's approach to the Chinese market.

*TV Sports Markets* understands the deal, which began on June 28, will run for three years, until June 2019. It is worth just over \$10m (€9.1m), or at least \$3.3m per year.

PPTV will carry five hours of WWE programming each week: three hours of *Raw* and two hours of *Smackdown*.

Streaming will be near-live, one to two hours behind coverage in the US, and will be available in Mandarin Chinese. PPTV will also host a Chinese version of the WWE website.

George Barrios, WWE chief strategy and financial officer, told *TV Sports Markets* why the promotion opted for PPTV: "It was the breadth of distribution – 400m users over their variety of platforms. We thought the scale was right. And we liked their approach to content generation.

"They are marketers at heart. The thing

that sealed the deal was there was just a like-mindedness on how we would drive the WWE brand together in China."

The two parties have been negotiating since autumn last year.

Currently, WWE distributes its programming in one-hour Mandarin-language blocks three weeks after their initial live broadcast in the US. These are available to both linear television channels and digital players.

Barrios said the current delay was due to the extensive editing and translation, and the time taken in passing through Chinese customs.

WWE has been broadcast in China for about eight years but Barrios said the promotion had noticed a "marked shift" in the market for digital rights over the past two years, with rights fees rising across the board and buyers increasingly seeking greater exclusivity.

He added: "Last year we said the time was probably right to begin talking about the potential for an exclusive deal."

PPTV's deal will give it digital exclusivity – rival operators will no longer be able to acquire live WWE programming.

Linear television channels will still be able to acquire WWE's one-hour delayed programmes, but only PPTV will have rights to the full-length episodes of *Raw* and *Smackdown*.

In addition, WWE has signed its first Chinese wrestler, Bin Yang, to a development contract, and will hold an event in Shanghai in September. It will be the first in the country since August 2013.

WWE will work with PPTV to increase its exposure on Chinese social media. Barrios told *TV Sports Markets* the promotion had "not historically invested the same" in Chinese social media platforms as it had elsewhere.

He added that growth in the market meant WWE would work with PPTV to ensure its output was as localised and high-quality as in other markets.

Barrios added that WWE would announce within six months its plans for launching the WWE Network in China. The OTT channel has about 1.5m subscribers worldwide. ■

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



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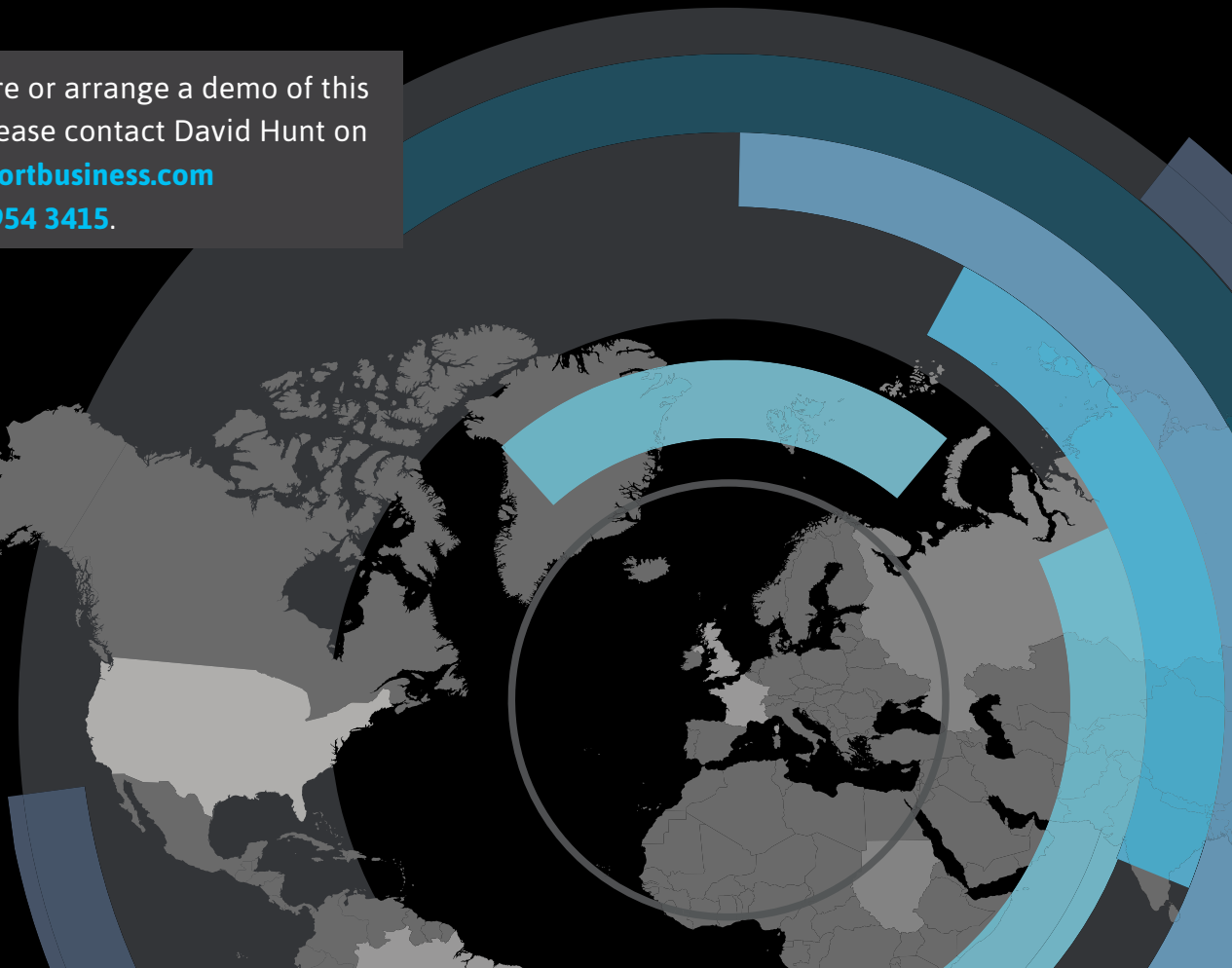
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## SPORTS CLIPS: News from TVSM Daily from June 23 to July 6

### MEDIA RIGHTS 1

## Football: LaLiga, Premier League, Serie A, Swiss Super League and more

- **Football:** The Mediapro agency acquired two packages of Spanish LaLiga domestic rights over three seasons, 2016-17 to 2018-19 (page 2).
- **Football:** Chinese digital platform LeSports agreed a sublicensing deal with Super Sports Media Group for English Premier League rights covering the 2016-17 season (page 2).
- **Football:** International pay-television broadcaster Eleven Sports Network acquired rights in Chinese Taipei for the English Premier League (page 2).
- **Football:** Maltese telco Go extended a rights agreement for the top-tier English Premier League. The three-season deal will run from 2016-17 to 2018-19. Go Sports will broadcast 200 Premier League matches live each season.
- **Football:** Go also acquired rights for the English FA Cup knockout competition. The two-season agreement will cover 2016-17 and 2017-18. It will show 60 FA Cup matches per season.
- **Football:** Go extended a deal for Italy's top-tier Serie A. The two-season deal will cover 2016-17 and 2017-18. Go Sports will provide live coverage of all 380 Serie A matches each season.
- **Football:** The MP & Silva agency agreed a deal with Brazilian media company Globo to distribute rights to the country's top-tier Campeonato Brasileiro, along with the state championships of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, across Latin America. The three-year agreement will run from 2016 to 2018.
- **Football:** Urs Schaeppi, chief executive of Swisscom, told the *Finanz und Wirtschaft* newspaper the telco had retained its rights to the Swiss Super League domestic club competition for four seasons, from 2017-18 to 2020-21.
- **Football:** The French football federation signed a three-season domestic rights deal, from 2016-17 to 2018-19, with pay-television broadcaster Canal Plus for coverage of its third-tier Championnat National. Canal Plus will broadcast 36 games per season at 3pm on Saturdays.
- **Football:** Video-sharing platform Dailymotion struck a three-season deal, from 2016-17 to 2018-19, with the French football federation for coverage of the Championnat National. The two parties will launch a dedicated platform that will stream eight National matches per round.

### SINCE LAST TIME

- Media and entertainment company Walt Disney acquired a one-third stake in MLB Advanced Media, the video-streaming division of North America's Major League Baseball. The deal values MLBAM, which is jointly owned by the league's 30 franchises, at about \$3.5bn (€3.2bn). Disney has an option to acquire a further one-third stake over the next four years.
- Sports marketing company Bruin Sports Capital acquired sports media service provider Deltatre. Deltatre – which works with top sports bodies Fifa, Uefa and the English Premier League, as well as broadcasters such as the BBC, BT Sport and Fox – will aim to expand its operations in Europe and Asia following the deal.
- Argentinian Football Association president Luis Segura was indicted in an investigation into the sale of the country's domestic media rights. Aníbal Fernández, Jorge Capitanich and Juan Abal Medina, who had each served as cabinet heads during former Argentinian president Cristina Kirchner's time in office, were also indicted, along with six former AFA directors. The investigation surrounds suspected embezzlement in relation to the government's Football for All scheme.
- US networks CBS, Fox and NBC, along with sports broadcaster ESPN, were dropped from an antitrust lawsuit in relation to coverage of the NFL American football league. The putative class action – alleging that customers of DirecTV's Sunday Ticket out-of-market subscription package are subject to anti-competitive pricing and restrictive supply – will continue, but only the NFL, its teams and DirecTV will have to defend it.
- UK newspaper the *Daily Mail* reported a number of European football clubs agreed to collaborate on a new digital media platform called Dugout. The website will feature behind-the-scenes footage and interviews, with clubs having been picked based on their social media following. The service will reportedly launch in the coming months and will be free to use. English Premier League clubs Arsenal, Chelsea, Liverpool, Manchester City, Tottenham Hotspur and West Ham United; Italian Serie A teams AC Milan, Inter Milan, Juventus and Roma; Spanish Liga champion Barcelona; French Ligue 1 champion Paris Saint-Germain and German Bundesliga champion Bayern Munich are among the clubs said to have signed up for the venture.
- The British Rowing governing body agreed a partnership with digital media agency Engage Sports Media. The agency, which has a partnership with video-sharing platform YouTube, will edit and distribute content across British Rowing's digital media channels.
- The Racing Partnership, a joint venture between UK racecourse owner and operator Arena Racing Company and seven independent racecourses in the UK, will launch a new television channel on September 1. The channel will provide TRP's content to licensed UK betting offices and will feature about 1,100 live race fixtures per year.

### MEDIA INTERNATIONAL

- South Korean electronics company Samsung and the NBC Olympics division of US media company NBCUniversal agreed a deal to broadcast the 2016 summer Games in virtual reality. Coverage will be available via the NBC Sports app on Samsung Galaxy smartphones, using the Samsung Gear VR headset.

## SPORTS CLIPS: News from TVSM Daily from June 23 to July 6

### MEDIA RIGHTS 2

## NFL, British Basketball League, Caribbean Premier League and more

- **American Football:** Pay-television broadcaster ESPN International extended a rights deal for the NFL. The deal covers Spanish-speaking countries in Latin America and will run for four seasons, from 2016 to 2019. The broadcaster will serve as the exclusive broadcaster of Sunday Night Football and Monday Night Football broadcasts and will show more than 48 NFL games per season. ESPN will also broadcast NFL RedZone, which provides coverage of all Sunday afternoon games.
- **Basketball:** UK public-service broadcaster the BBC extended its rights deal with domestic club competitions the British Basketball League and the Women's British Basketball League until at least the end of the 2016-17 season. The BBC will broadcast live coverage of 24 BBL and eight WBBL games via the interactive Red Button service and the BBC Sport website.
- **Boxing:** Aiba, the sport's global governing body, appointed the IMG agency as the distributor of worldwide rights for an Olympic Games qualifying event in Vargas, Venezuela.
- **Boxing:** Pay-television channel Fight Sports acquired live and exclusive rights in more than 50 countries to the heavyweight world title fight between Anthony Joshua and Dominic Breazeale on June 25.
- **Cricket:** Organisers of the 2016 edition of the Caribbean Premier League Twenty20 competition agreed a live-streaming partnership with social media platform Facebook. Under the agreement, all 34 games will be shown live on Facebook through Grabby, its live-streaming partner. The coverage will be available in 40 countries, including Pakistan and South Africa.
- **Cricket:** Indian pay-television broadcaster Sony acquired rights for the 2016 Caribbean Premier League.
- **Cricket:** Pay-television broadcaster OSN, which operates in the Middle East and North Africa, acquired rights for the 2016 Caribbean Premier League.
- **Cricket:** Pay-television broadcaster Sky New Zealand acquired rights for the Caribbean Premier League in a multi-year deal that begins with the 2016 competition. Every game will be shown live on the Sky Sport 2 channel.
- **Cricket:** North American sports broadcaster One World Sports signed a multi-year rights deal with the Caribbean Premier League. One World Sports launched a digital subscription service for the competition, with viewers able to watch the entire tournament for \$9.99 (€9).
- **Cycling:** Swedish commercial and pay-television broadcaster TV4 acquired rights for the 2016 Tour de France in a deal with Amaury Sport Organisation, which operates the event.
- **Cycling:** Colombian commercial broadcaster Caracol acquired rights for the 2016 Tour de France from ASO.
- **Cycling:** K Plus of VSTV, a joint venture between Vietnamese broadcaster VTV and French pay-television broadcaster Canal Plus, sealed a rights deal in Vietnam for the 2016 Tour de France.
- **Cycling:** Albanian public-service broadcaster RTSH acquired rights for the 2016 Tour de France from ASO.
- German media company ProSiebenSat.1 formed 7Sports, a new umbrella body to manage its sports interests. It will focus on four core pillars: ProSiebenSat.1's digital media business; its rights portfolio; sports management agency SAM Sports; and event-management subsidiary MMP.
- French public-service broadcaster France Télévisions extended an agreement for Globecast to provide media distribution services for its coverage of the Tour de France, Criterium du Dauphiné, Paris-Roubaix, Paris-Tours and Paris-Nice cycling events. The new five-year deal will run from 2016 to 2020.
- AMC Networks International-Iberia, the Iberian division of US entertainment company AMC Networks, struck a partnership with US gaming and media streaming provider Machinima to launch a new esports and gaming channel in Spain and Portugal. The channel will be available on pay-television, mobile and OTT platforms in the two countries.
- Multi-territory commercial and pay-television broadcaster Modern Times Group signed a multi-year carriage deal with Norwegian telco Telenor. MTG's free-to-air channels will be available on Telenor's cable, satellite and IPTV platforms in Norway and Sweden, and on its satellite service in Denmark. Subscribers to Telenor's Finnish service are also granted access to MTG's premium sports channels.
- Russia's National Media Group teamed up with Viasat World, the international pay-television channels division of Modern Times Group, to establish a joint venture in order to distribute Viasat's channels in the country. NMG will hold an 80-per-cent stake in the partnership. The venture will control each of Viasat's 15 channels in Russia and will be led by Alexei Krol, chief executive of Viasat Channels Russia.
- Chinese digital platform LeSports teamed up with China Digital Culture, an investment holding company that specialises in the entertainment and culture sectors. LeSports and CDC will cooperate on esports programming and events.
- Chinese investment group CITIC Guoan paid \$20m (€18.1m) to acquire a 2.3-per-cent stake in US live-action virtual reality broadcast technology company in NextVR.
- Malaysian satellite-television operator Measat launched a 24-hour, high-definition esports channel called Every Good Game.

**SPORTS CLIPS:** News from TVSM Daily from June 23 to July 6**MEDIA RIGHTS 3****Breeder's Cup, Swiss ice hockey, Formula One, Rugby World Cup and more**

- **Golf:** French pay-television broadcaster Canal Plus extended rights agreements covering the 2018 and 2020 Ryder Cups, the Open Championship, the US Open, the US PGA Championship, the Masters, the next four editions of the World Golf Championship, the Race to Dubai, the French Open, the Evian Championship and all PGA Tour and European Tour events.
- **Horse Racing:** The Breeders' Cup organisation, which oversees the Breeders' Cup World Championships, extended its rights distribution partnership with agency Henry Birtles Associates. The agency will retain its position as the event's global television rights distributor until the end of 2018.
- **Ice Hockey:** Swiss public-service broadcaster SRG and telco UPC have acquired domestic rights for competitions operated by the Swiss Ice Hockey Federation. The deal will run for five seasons, from 2017-18 to 2021-22. UPC will have rights to the National League A and B competitions, the Regio League and games featuring Switzerland's national teams. SRG will have National League A highlights, live coverage of selected playoff matches from the quarter-final stage onward, and live rights to all home games of the Switzerland men's senior team.
- **Motorsport:** Irish telco Eir extended a rights deal for the Formula One world championship (page 8).
- **Motorsport:** The Formula E electric car-racing championship agreed a rights deal with Facebook which covered the final race of the 2015-16 season in London.
- **Motorsport:** Digital streaming service ESPN Player struck a deal to show the final race of the 2015-16 Formula E season. The deal covered the Middle East, North Africa and the European markets of the Czech Republic, Russia, Slovakia and Ukraine.
- **Motorsport:** Social media platform Snapchat agreed to show coverage of the final race of the 2015-16 Formula E season via its Live Story feature.
- **Motorsport:** Digital media group Motorsport.com signed a rights deal with the TCR International Series touring car organisation. It will stream coverage of the TCR International, Regional and National series across each of its 21 editions in 14 languages, as well as via Motorsport.tv and Motor1.com, its sister websites.
- **Olympic Games:** Swiss public-service broadcaster SRG acquired free-to-air rights in the country for the 2018 winter Games in Pyeongchang and the 2020 summer Games in Tokyo, in a sublicensing deal with US media and entertainment company Discovery Communications. SRG will provide coverage across its television, online and mobile platforms, and also acquired non-exclusive radio rights. The coverage will be delivered in French, German, Italian and Romansh.
- **Rugby Union:** Irish pay-television broadcaster Eir Sport acquired rights for the 2019 Rugby World Cup as part of a broader deal with the World Rugby global governing body (page 8).

**MEDIA RIGHTS NEGOTIATIONS**

- Hans-Joachim Strauch, head of advertising sales at German public-service broadcaster ZDF, criticised US media and entertainment company Discovery Communications after talks stalled concerning ZDF and fellow public-service broadcaster ARD's potential acquisition of rights to the 2018 and 2020 Olympic Games.
- The England & Wales Cricket Board will launch a tender process for domestic rights this autumn, according to the *Daily Telegraph* newspaper. The new rights cycle will begin from 2020.

**ALSO SINCE LAST TIME**

- US broadcaster Univision sold \$135m (€123m) in advertising around its Copa América Centenario broadcasting – almost double the \$70m it paid for the domestic Spanish-language rights to the national team football tournament in 2014. The figure was about 20 per cent higher than originally anticipated.
- Social media website Twitter is seeking between \$2m (€1.8m) and \$8m for a range of 10-game advertising packages covering its live-streaming of the NFL American football league's 2016-17 season, according to the Digiday.com news website.
- US media company NBCUniversal will show a record 6,755 hours of action during the Rio 2016 summer Olympic Games. The NBC network will broadcast 260.5 hours of programming, with pay-television channel NBCU carrying a total of 2,084 hours of linear television programming across 11 platforms in the US. The NBCOlympics.com website and the NBC Sports mobile application will stream more than 4,500 hours of live coverage.
- The Kansas City Chiefs NFL franchise is negotiating with broadcasters in the St. Louis area over coverage of the team's 2016 pre-season games. The St. Louis broadcast market was left open after the St. Louis Rams franchise relocated to Los Angeles.
- Annual pre-tax losses at Canadian French-language pay-television broadcaster TVA Sports doubled to C\$39.2m (€27.2m/\$30m) in 2015. Rival French-language pay-television broadcaster RDS reported a 58-per-cent fall in pre-tax profits to C\$19.8m in the same year.
- UK pay-television broadcaster Sky, the primary domestic broadcaster of the English Premier League, launched a triple-play service, Now TV Combo, through its online streaming service, Now TV. The service will provide customers with access to a

## SPORTS CLIPS: News from TVSM Daily from June 23 to July 6

- monthly television pass, unlimited broadband and a host of call packages.
- UK public-service broadcaster the BBC is gathering a portfolio of content in readiness for the launch of a 4K ultra high-definition website, according to the Advanced Television website. The portfolio will consist of content the BBC has been producing as part of its association with its BBC Worldwide division, including coverage of the Wimbledon tennis championships.
  - French broadcaster Canal Plus rebranded its pay-television and free-to-air channels under an initiative entitled the New Canal. The D8, D17 and iTélé free-to-air channels were rebranded to become C8, CStar and C News respectively.
  - Canal Plus broadcast the first ultra-high-definition live sports broadcast using Dolby Atmos sound when it showed domestic coverage of the final of the French Top 14 rugby union competition. This was in partnership with broadcast services specialist Euromedia and US audio technology company Dolby.
  - Pier Silvio Berlusconi, vice-president of Mediaset, confirmed the Italian media group would provide free-to-air coverage of the Uefa Champions League club competition from the 2016-17 season. Tuesday evening games will be broadcast on the Canale 5 channel.
  - Irish telco Eir rebranded its pay-television Setanta Sports channels as Eir Sport. The new six-channel Eir Sport Pack will be made available for free to the company's broadband customers. The package will feature Eir Sport 1, Eir Sport 2, BT Sport 1, BT Sport 2, BT Sport Europe and BT Sport ESPN.
  - Russian sports media platform Match TV will provide coverage of the Rio 2016 summer Olympic Games across six channels: Match TV, TV Match Game, Match Our Sport, Match Arena, Match Fighter and Match Football 3.
  - The president of Poland's Office of Competition and Consumer Protection asked pay-television broadcasters Cyfrowy Polsat and Telewizja Polsat to provide information about their coverage of the Uefa Euro 2016 national team football tournament, as well as viewing charges for matches, after receiving complaints from consumers. The office pledged to investigate whether Cyfrowy Polsat had misled consumers by claiming that having a complete range of their sports channels would mean free access to every Euro 2016 game.
  - Brazilian pay-television operators Claro TV and Net announced they would deliver the Rio 2016 opening ceremony in 4K ultra-high definition. The ceremony will be broadcast on the Globo-owned SporTV channel.
  - Mexican Liga MX football club Chivas unveiled details of Chivas TV, its new in-house streaming platform that will exploit the rights to its home matches from the 2016 season. Chivas TV will also show training sessions, press conferences and interviews.
  - Race Center, a web-based platform designed to act as a second-screen experience for followers of the 2016 Tour de France cycling event, was launched by event organiser Amaury Sport Organisation in cooperation with global IT solutions and services provider Dimension Data.
  - The Ultimate Fighting Championship mixed martial arts series signed a multi-year deal with social media website Snapchat. UFC events will be covered via Snapchat's Live Story feature.
  - Broadcasters in at least 32 European countries agreed deals to show a total of more than 900 hours of coverage of the 2016 European Athletics Championships in Amsterdam.

## INDUSTRY MOVES

- Vincent Bolloré, chairman of Canal Plus, will step down this summer to focus on his role as chairman of the French pay-television broadcaster's parent company, Vivendi, according to French newspaper *Le Figaro*. • Robert Müller von Vultejus was appointed as head of the new Business Development Europe team of Lagardère Sports, the sports marketing division of conglomerate Lagardère. He was also appointed as the co-managing director of Lagardère Sports Germany. • Rajesh Kaul was promoted to the role of distribution and sports president at media company Sony Pictures Networks India. Rohit Gupta also switched from serving as SPN's network sales president to the company's network sales and international business president.

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