

REGULATION

Italy cites Spain as model for free-to-air Serie A match in change to Melandri Law

By Frank Dunne

A group of Italian MPs from the coalition government has submitted to parliament an amendment to the 2008 Melandri Law on collective selling which would require one live Serie A match per week to be shown on free-to-air television.

The proposal will be popular with the millions of Italian football fans that do not subscribe to pay-television but will face opposition from the clubs and pay-television operators Sky Italia and Vivendi-owned Mediaset Premium.

Some senior figures in the pay-television industry are convinced opposition from clubs will be so strong as to prevent the proposal ever becoming law.

The plan will be greeted with incredulity in Spanish football circles. Similar legislation in Spain, enacted in

1997, has been one of the biggest obstructions to the growth of the pay-television market in the country.

The slow growth of the sector has had a negative impact on the finances of LaLiga clubs. The Spanish league has for years lobbied for a repeal of the law.

The bill, which has been obtained by *TV Sports Markets*, includes several other changes to the Melandri Law:

- a ban on the same company being both media-rights adviser to the league and marketing partner to individual clubs, as Infront Sports & Media is at present
- tougher rules to ensure fair and equitable access to carriage on pay-television platforms for third-party channels and content providers, even

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ICE HOCKEY

UPC to begin 'new era' in Swiss TV market

By Robin Jellis

Telco UPC this week told *TV Sports Markets* its deal for media rights to the top Swiss ice hockey league would bring "a breath of fresh air to the market".

UPC earlier this month agreed a five-season deal with the Swiss Ice Hockey Federation, from 2017-18 to 2021-22. The deal – together with Swiss public-service broadcaster SRG – will be worth a combined average of CHF35.4m (€32.6m/\$36m) per season.

Local experts expect UPC will be paying close to CHF30m per season of

this total. UPC declined to disclose the value of its deal but said it "will cover by far the largest share of that total".

The new deal represents an increase of about 153 per cent in the value of the federation's existing five-season deal, from 2012-13 to 2016-17. That deal, with SRG and telco Swisscom, is worth a total of about CHF14m per season. The fee is split roughly half and half between the two. Swisscom has pay-television rights and SRG has free-to-air rights.

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FASTRACK 1

NEWS IN BRIEF

Premier League nets late deal in Russia with Match

The English Premier League this week finalised a deal with Russian broadcaster Match TV which will see its value in the country fall by about 57 per cent.

Gazprom Media-owned free-to-air and pay-television broadcaster Match TV will pay about \$5m (€4.5m) per season for rights in the league's new cycle, from 2016-17 to 2018-19.

This is far below what the Premier League earned from Russia in the previous cycle. From 2013-14 to 2015-16, pay-television broadcaster NTV Plus – whose channels have been rebranded as Match TV – paid about \$11.5m per season for the same rights.

The decrease is mainly due to the depreciation of the Russian rouble. Gazprom Media accrues revenue in roubles but pays fees for international content in dollars or euros. In July 2013, the rouble was worth double its current value against the dollar.

In addition to currency depreciation, Match TV is thought to have overspent on the budget it was set by Gazprom Media in February, meaning it is less able to pay high rights fees. A new budget is thought to have been finalised earlier this month which allowed the Premier League deal to be completed.

It is thought the Premier League had been in exclusive negotiations with Match TV since late 2015.

There was little competition for the rights. The league began its sales process before sports broadcaster Eurosport's Russian arm could conform to local law demanding all media companies in the country be at least 80-per-cent owned by a Russian entity (*TV Sports Markets* 20:8).

The deal with Match TV means the Premier League is now unsold in only one European territory: Albania. The league didn't sell rights in Albania during the 2013-16 cycle due to concerns over piracy (*TV Sports Markets* 20:12). ■

Public rights jump in value for LFP

The French football league last month agreed deals for beIN Sports and Canal Plus to show its matches in public places, increasing fees by 15 per cent.

The Ligue de Football Professionnel agreed four-season deals, from 2016-17 to 2019-20, with the two pay-television broadcasters worth a combined €11.5m (\$12.7m) per season. The LFP operates the top two tiers of French football, Ligue 1 and Ligue 2.

The two broadcasters held the same set of rights in the previous four-season cycle, from 2012-13 to 2015-16, for a total of about €10m per season.

The deals allow the two broadcasters to show matches in bars, hotels, hospitals and other public places. Canal Plus will pay €8.5m per season for two packages of rights. BeIN will pay €3m per season for four packages of rights.

Canal Plus acquired packages 1 and 2; beIN Sports won packages 3, 4, 5 and 6.

Package 1 contains two Ligue 1 matches per week. Canal Plus will have 28 first picks, 10 second picks and 38 third picks. It also contains magazine programmes on Saturday nights and Sunday afternoons. Package 2 covers one Ligue 1 match each per week and has 10 first picks and 28 second picks.

Package 3 contained the remaining seven Ligue 1 matches per week. It also included delayed rights to the top three matches per week. Of these, second- and third-pick matches can only be shown 12 times across a season, and no more than one each week.

Package 4 included the annual Trophée des Champions match as well as multiplex coverage of the 19th, 37th and 38th match days, when all 10 Ligue 1 matches start at the same time.

Package 5 contained a weekly magazine. Package 6 included video-on-demand excerpts from matches on a near-live basis.

Rights to show events in public places were carved out of the league's tender for domestic television rights. These were sold in April 2014, with the league

earning a total of €748.5m per season for its rights to both Ligue 1 and Ligue 2 (*TV Sports Markets* 18:7).

The league has now sold all domestic rights for the four seasons from 2016-17 to 2019-20. ■

Kwesé picks up Formula E in Africa

Electric car-racing championship Formula E has secured a modest rights fee in sub-Saharan Africa from pay-television broadcaster Kwesé Sports.

Kwesé has acquired exclusive pay-television and digital rights to the championship for the 2017-18 season in a deal worth just over \$100,000 (€91,000). Kwesé will also pay a nominal fee for non-exclusive digital rights only for the 2016-17 season.

Races in the 2015-16 season were simultaneously broadcast by pay-television broadcaster Fox Sports Africa and streamed on Kwesé Sports's website. This split of rights will continue in 2016-17.

Fox Sports Africa holds Formula E pay-television rights across the region from 2014-15 to 2016-17 as part of Fox Networks Group's 80-territory deal, agreed in August 2013. Fox Sports Africa has paid nothing toward the wider Fox deal since 2014-15.

It is thought the 80-territory deal originally included exclusive rights on all platforms in sub-Saharan Africa. However, Fox Sports Africa is thought to have given up this exclusivity as part of negotiations in other territories.

Formula E took back rights in Italy and the Netherlands in order to sell them on to public-service broadcaster Rai and pay-television broadcaster Ziggo Sport respectively. Fox Sports Africa did not want to pay a rights fee in the place of the broadcaster's Italian arm. It renegotiated its deal so the rights were non-exclusive and paid no fee.

Kwesé will hold rights in all Anglophone territories in sub-Saharan Africa. It will show all 10 races, qualifying sessions and practice sessions live in 2016-17 and 2017-18. ■

REGULATION

Serie A international rights could be sold in six-season deals

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those which do not possess a broadcast licence

- a liberalisation of the sale of international rights to allow for direct market-by-market sales and/or sales by region, with a maximum contract duration of six seasons instead of the current three
- allowing greater flexibility in the sale of rights to minor leagues and to leagues in other sports – such as basketball – and reducing the role of the antitrust authority in the initial approval stage for sales guidelines
- lifting the prohibition on the sublicensing of rights by broadcasters to third parties
- giving the league the possibility of exploiting archive rights jointly with individual clubs
- an increase in the proportion of media-rights revenue which is shared equally among the 20 Serie A teams
- changes to the solidarity payments for lower leagues and the grassroots, including scrapping the body that was created to oversee the distribution of revenues, and handing control back to the league
- using a proportion of media-rights income to cover the costs of policing matches.

The MPs argue that while the original law has been beneficial in helping professional football to improve its finances – with a 70-per-cent uplift in revenues since 2010 – it has not had the desired effect of opening up Italy's media market to competition.

They describe the market as “trapped in a barely competitive dialectic between national operators, and not open to new multinational and global players”.

The MPs said this had been amply demonstrated by the recent antitrust investigation into the sale of Serie A rights, which found that a private agreement between Mediaset and Sky had

altered the outcome of a competitive tender process (*TV Sports Markets* 20:7).

Free-to-air

If passed, the bill will require Serie A to create a new package of rights for one free-to-air match per round. The match must be shown in one of the slots outside the Sunday 3pm kick-off time, when the bulk of matches are played. The rights do not need to be exclusive. The league is allowed to sell the same rights for simulcast to a pay-television operator.

The preamble to the bill cites Spain's LaLiga and the Uefa Champions League as models. It says the success of the Champions League – where matches are split across free-to-air and pay-television in many markets – is evidence that the measure would not be prejudicial to the finances of the pay-television operators.

It argues that a free-to-air live match would serve as promotion for the whole Italian football system. There is nothing to stop a single media company, encompassing both pay-television and free-to-air channels, from acquiring the rights and using the free-to-air match as a shop window for subscription services.

It is questionable, however, whether the Champions League is a meaningful point of comparison. First, it is not as critical to pay-television operators as the domestic league as a driver of subscriptions.

Second, only three Italian teams can take part each season, meaning the large majority of games are of secondary interest to broadcasters. As such, it lends itself naturally to a division of rights between pay-television and free-to-air.

Infront dilemma

If the bill becomes law, Infront will have to decide whether it is more advantageous to remain as the league's media-rights adviser or to continue building up its portfolio of club marketing deals.

It will not be able to do both. Nor would it be able to sell rights to the clubs' archive content. The MPs say the measure will “give greater transparency to the system”.

Infront has been Serie A media-rights adviser since July 2008. In December 2013, the agency renewed its deal for six seasons, from 2015-16 to 2020-21, paying

a guarantee of €5.94bn (*TV Sports Markets* 17:23).

The agency also holds archive rights to 15 Serie A clubs which it then sells on to broadcasters. It also has long-term marketing rights deals with 14 clubs in Serie A and six in Serie B, for which it is thought to pay a total of about €100m per season.

Concerns have been raised by some of the clubs not represented by Infront that the agency has a conflict of interest in working for the league and selected individual clubs. The antitrust authority also raised questions about the agency's impartiality in its investigation into Serie A rights sales. The agency was fined €9.05m for its part in the process.

Infront Italy's Serie A advisory deal is thought to be the most profitable single contract held by the entire Infront company. However, the marketing deals give the agency a powerful political base in Italian football. It would be loath to lose either, but given the global ambitions of the agency's owners Wanda, some scaling back in Italy is not likely to be seen as a major threat to the business.

Changes to legislation would have no impact on existing contracts, so the agency would not have to make the choice for four to five more years.

Six-season deals

One of the most important changes proposed in the bill is an extension of the maximum contract duration from three to six seasons for international rights.

The MP & Silva agency, which has held Serie A international rights since they were centralised in 2010, has long argued for greater flexibility. Being able to offer longer contract durations to broadcasters enables them to build the product, for which they are prepared to pay a premium.

Top league rights are usually sold in three-season blocks but both the English Premier League and the German Bundesliga have done five- or six-season deals in certain territories.

The new bill claims to give the league greater freedom in terms of how the rights are awarded. It appears to suggest the rights could be awarded to an agency without a tender process. But legal sources say this would never be allowed.

Flexibility

There are a number of areas where the bill seeks to make the process of selling media rights faster and less bureaucratic. If the bill were passed, Serie A would have to submit its sales guidelines for the approval of the country's communications authority only. At present the antitrust authority also has to approve the guidelines.

Lower football leagues, such as the third division Lega Pro, and leagues in other sports, such as basketball, would be exempt from the law.

The bill says lower leagues have been penalised by the rigid demands of the Melandri Law. The media rights to Lega Pro, for example, have dropped in value by 80 per cent since the law was introduced.

"These are products which should be sold more freely," it says, "even allowing intermediaries to package them with other rights to make them more attractive to media operators."

Sublicensing OK

The Melandri Law forbids broadcasters who acquire rights from sublicensing them to third parties. This prohibition would be scrapped under the new bill.

Its authors say it was introduced because sublicensing was seen as an activity that brought no financial gain to the clubs.

The bill says that allowing sublicensing would help to open up the market. For example, it would allow a new player unable to acquire rights at the time of the auction to get them via a sublicensing deal which would help it launch a viable business.

Archive rights

Currently, archive rights – match images more than eight days old – belong to the clubs, which sell them to broadcasters who have acquired the live rights. This is lucrative for the clubs but has been an irritant for the broadcasters as it prevents them from acquiring a full broadcast product in central deals.

Under the bill proposals, archive rights could be exploited by both the clubs and the league. The league will be able to sell archive rights for the season in progress

and the previous season, but only to be used in the context of programming dedicated to the league as a whole.

The clubs will still be able to exploit their own archive rights on dedicated club channels or sell them to third parties wanting to produce programming dedicated to a particular club.

Carriage deals

The preamble to the new bill says the original law did not go far enough in guaranteeing the winner of any Serie A rights carriage on the country's major pay-television platforms.

The 2008 law focused on ensuring that rights-holders selling content had to be treated in a fair, transparent and non-discriminatory manner by platform operators. That requirement will now be extended to all content creators, including third-party channels.

It is also extended to operators not in possession of a broadcast licence. A company winning rights without a licence would have to secure one within six months of the award of the rights and before the start of the new contract.

If it was unable to, the rights would be awarded to the second-highest bidder in the auction.

There is some puzzlement in broadcast circles about the need to legislate on this. A source at a channel syndicator said Italy was not one of the most difficult markets in Europe for negotiating carriage deals.

It is thought the proposal is primarily targeted at encouraging internet companies, who would not normally hold a broadcast licence, to bid for rights.

Revenue share

The Melandri Law laid down that income from the sale of Serie A media rights should be divided among the teams according to three criteria: 40 per cent equally, 30 per cent based on sporting results, and 30 per cent based on the size of a club's supporter base.

The amendment will require 50 per cent to be distributed equally and leave the league to decide how the rest is split. The measure is inspired by the greater level of competitive balance in England's Premier League, where 50 per cent of television revenues are split equally. It is

likely to face opposition by the biggest clubs, who could lose out financially.

Solidarity

Responsibility for the distribution of 10 per cent of Serie A media-rights income to the lower leagues and the grassroots could be handed to Lega Serie A. The MPs also want money to be set aside for education in sporting ethics and to help eradicate illegal sports betting.

The Melandri Law called for the creation of a body to oversee the distribution. The Foundation for General Mutuality in Professional Team Sports distributes about €40m per season.

The body is made up of representatives from Serie A and Serie B clubs, three councillors nominated by the football federation, one by the Italian Olympic Committee, one by the Italian basketball federation, Federbasket, and one from the Italian basketball league, Lega Basket.

In March 2015, the foundation came under intense scrutiny following claims in the media that it was being used as "an ATM machine" by clubs in Lega Pro to cover their day-to-day running costs (*TV Sports Markets* 19:5).

The bill also calls for the cost of police overtime to be covered by media-rights income. Italian football still has a profound hooligan problem which requires a high level of policing at most matches. This measure is also likely to be strongly opposed by clubs.

Timing and status

The bill was submitted on May 17 but has yet to be allotted a slot for parliamentary debate. Its authors, led by MPs Lorenza Bonaccorsi and Daniela Sbrollini, are aiming for it to become law by early 2017.

Some Italian media sources claim, however, that the bill does not have the full support of the prime minister Matteo Renzi and is not a government priority.

Renzi's government does not need to call an election until May 2018. However, Renzi has threatened to step down this autumn if political reforms he has authored are not approved in a referendum. If he were to lose any subsequent election to the centre-right, the proposed reform of the Melandri Law would probably be scrapped. ■

ICE HOCKEY

UPC beats Swisscom to SIHF rights, set to launch new channels

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The broadcasters will cover production costs on top of their rights fees in the new deal. This is also the case in the existing deal where production costs are about CHF4m per season.

Production is currently handled by TPC, a subsidiary of SRG. A new production deal is yet to be finalised.

Local experts say the increase in rights fee was almost solely driven by strong competition between UPC and Swisscom. *TV Sports Markets* understands Swisscom offered only slightly less than the total value of the UPC/SRG deal – about CHF34m per season for all rights.

UPC's deal for SIHF pay-television rights in the new cycle signals its first move into the Swiss sports-rights market.

The telco's vice president of content and strategy, Roger Feiner, told *TV Sports Markets* this week UPC had acquired the rights because "sport is an emotional topic, people are interested in it and for UPC, ice hockey and sport in general are important for creating content for our customers".

Feiner added: "The existing system of Swiss live sport will be shaken up with this award of rights. UPC will now for the first time be setting up a broadcaster with its own editorial content."

UPC will launch a bouquet of channels called MySports ahead of the 2017-18 ice hockey season. The telco will launch one channel in its basic package, which costs a minimum of CHF33 per month.

It will also launch at least five premium channels which will be available on its platforms and those of its distribution partners. The cost of these channels is yet to be decided.

The telco says its platforms, and those of Suissedigital – an association of Swiss communication networks with which UPC has an agreement – will reach more than 3m households, equivalent to more

Swisscom close to deal with the Swiss Football League

Telco Swisscom is close to renewing media rights to the top Swiss Football League – welcome news after its loss of Swiss ice hockey league rights to rival UPC (see separate story, page 1).

The league announced on June 9 it had come to a decision over the destination of its rights but is yet to announce the winner.

The SFL told *TV Sports Markets* this week a contract with Swisscom was "under negotiation". The league and Swisscom are in the process of finalising a long-form contract.

TV Sports Markets understands the SFL and Swisscom have agreed a deal which will be worth slightly less than CHF35m per season. The deal will cover media rights only.

Media rights from 2017-18 onward were tendered by the league and its adviser, the Profile Partners agency, on April 25 with bids due by May 20. The rights will cover the top two tiers of Swiss football, the Super League and the Challenge League.

SFL media and marketing rights are currently held by Swisscom as part of a consortium in a five-season deal, from 2012-13 to 2016-17, worth a total of CHF32m per season.

The consortium was comprised of Swisscom, InfrontRingier – the joint venture of the Infront Sports & Media agency and Swiss media company Ringier – and banking company Raiffeisen.

Swisscom acquired the media rights for about CHF15m per season – both free-to-air and pay-television. Marketing rights were acquired by

InfrontRingier and Raiffeisen for about CHF17m per season.

Raiffeisen is the league's title sponsor, while InfrontRingier sells the remaining marketing rights.

In the new tender, the league is selling media and marketing rights separately.

Swisscom shows coverage on its Teleclub pay-television channels and has a sublicensing agreement with public-service broadcaster SRG for free-to-air rights worth about CHF6m per season. The deal covers one non-exclusive live match each week from the top tier – 36 per season in total – plus highlights.

The new deal will represent a second successive increase in media-rights revenue for the league.

Swisscom and SRG agreed a three-season deal, from 2006-07 to 2008-09, and took up an option to renew for three more seasons, from 2009-10 to 2011-12. The deal was worth about CHF11m per season. This fee was split roughly half and half between Swisscom and SRG.

Swisscom's new deal will include rights in Austria, France, Germany and Italy as well as Switzerland. It acquires rights in these territories and warehouses them to protect its pay-television business from overspill.

Rights in all other territories are held by the Lagardère Sports and Entertainment agency, also in a five-season deal from 2012-13 to 2016-17. According to the league's annual reports, it was expecting to earn about CHF375,000 from its international rights in 2015-16. ■

than 85 per cent of the country.

The SIHF told *TV Sports Markets* this week: "We wanted a partner who can offer audiences the widest possible content and a strong illustration of ice hockey on free TV.

"In the end, the offer of UPC convinced us – on the one hand due to its distribution network, on the other hand

because UPC believes in our sport and is willing to invest a lot."

The league added it had "no concerns" about selling its rights to UPC despite the fact it currently has no television channels.

UPC's deal is a blow to Swisscom, which operates the Teleclub pay-television channels. Until now, Teleclub

has been the main buyer of pay-television rights in the country. The Teleclub channels are thought to reach between 1.3m and 1.4m households.

One source close to Swisscom, however, said losing the rights could actually prove beneficial. In May, Switzerland's competition commission fined the telco CHF71.8m for abusing its dominant position in live sports broadcasting on pay-television. Losing the SIHF contract will mean Swisscom no longer holds all top domestic rights.

Although it has lost Swiss ice hockey rights, Swisscom is in the final throes of negotiating a renewal of its deal for Swiss Football League rights (see box, page 5).

Bidding

SIHF rights in a new cycle were tendered by the federation on May 2, with bids due by May 27. The SIHF was advised on the sale of its rights by the Profile Partners agency (*TV Sports Markets* 20:8).

There were two rounds of bidding. Local media reports say there were four bidders: UPC, Swisscom, SRG and another, as-yet unidentified, broadcaster. One local source suggested this may have been international pay-television broadcaster Eleven Sports Network.

Content

The SIHF contract covers both domestic ice hockey leagues and matches of various national teams.

From 2017-18, UPC will have rights to the top-tier National League A, the second-tier National League B, the Regio League – the amateur championship – and matches of the men's U-20 national team. This is the same set of rights which Swisscom currently holds.

SRG will have highlights rights to National League A matches. It will also have live rights to certain matches from the play-offs, specifically two quarter-final matches, one semi-final and the final. These live rights will be non-exclusive.

The public-service broadcaster will also show all home friendly matches of the senior men's national team. SRG holds the same rights in its current deal.

The most valuable rights in the contract are National League A matches, and in particular the play-off matches. ■

IN-FLIGHT/IN-SHIP

Pitch to create new in-flight offering, buys F1 & LaLiga

By Robin Jellis

The Pitch International agency this month acquired Formula One and LaLiga rights as part of a move to create a new in-flight offering, *TV Sports Markets* understands.

The in-flight and in-ship sector has been dominated for years by the IMG agency and its Sport 24 channel. Only last month IMG launched a second channel, Sport 24 Extra (*TV Sports Markets* 20:11).

But Pitch has ousted IMG from its three-year contract for Formula One in-flight and in-ship rights. Pitch's new three-year deal, from 2017 to 2019, will be worth just over \$1.5m (€1.4m) per year. This is roughly treble the value of IMG's current three-year deal, from 2014 to 2016, worth about \$500,000 per year.

The value has increased due to the strong competition for the rights. As well as IMG and Pitch there is understood to have been a third, unidentified bidder.

Pitch's rights will be global, although they will be partially non-exclusive. As part of its sponsorship of Formula One, airline Emirates has some in-flight rights.

The agency has also agreed a three-season deal with Spain's LaLiga, from 2016-17 to 2018-19, worth about \$1.5m per season. It is the first time LaLiga in-flight and in-ship rights have been sold.

IMG was less keen on the LaLiga rights as it already has strong football content – it holds rights to the English Premier League, the German Bundesliga and Uefa's Champions League and Europa League. It was also dissuaded by the fact it could not acquire rights on a global scale.

Rights in the Middle East and North Africa have been carved out of the deal as these are included in LaLiga's broadcast deal with beIN Media Group.

Pitch has a history of distributing in-flight and in-ship rights, although for smaller properties. It has until now distributed rights to the FA Cup, the Six Nations and rugby autumn internationals.

The agency's aggressive move into the sector is understood to have been driven by developments in connectivity and satellite delivery, which make it easier and cheaper to provide a good-quality image.

Although IMG has developed a position as the market leader in the space, experts say its Sport 24 business has weaknesses.

First, it only offers two linear channels. This means viewers have limited choice and must watch what has been scheduled.

The Premier League forms the bedrock of IMG's Sport 24 offering. Other rights-holders are thought to be frustrated by the prominence Sport 24 gives the league. Last September, IMG renewed its rights for three seasons, from 2016-17 to 2018-19, for between \$6m and \$6.5m per season (*TV Sports Markets* 19:18).

Second, IMG's channels are carried exclusively by airlines which are fitted with Panasonic equipment – just over 300 planes have access to the Sport 24 channels. One informed source suggested IMG charges each plane that takes the channels at least \$10,000 per month.

Pitch plan

Pitch will continue to sell in-ship rights to individual passenger lines as previously, but its in-flight model is expected to be more flexible than IMG's as it will cater to the desires of each airline.

The agency is likely to have two offerings. First, a linear channel with live, near-live and highlights programming – similar to the Sport 24 channels.

Second, a video-on-demand service which will have a selection of sports events in a library of content.

Pitch is likely to agree non-exclusive deals to secure the widest possible distribution. It will create a tailor-made offering for each airline rather than offering one or two linear channels. The agency is in advanced discussions with connectivity and hardware companies.

Pitch's service will not be ready for the start of the 2016-17 season as the roll out of such technology is slow. It is likely to launch by the end of 2016 or early 2017.

Upcoming rights

Two football rights-holders which may be selling their in-flight and in-ship rights in the coming months are the Bundesliga

and Uefa, for the Champions League and Europa League competitions. IMG currently holds rights to both.

Its deal for Bundesliga rights runs for two seasons, 2015-16 and 2016-17, and is worth about €400,000 per season. This is a big increase on the €250,000 per season it paid from 2012-13 to 2014-15.

IMG's three-season deal for Champions League and Europa League rights, from 2015-16 to 2017-18, is worth about €2m per season. Its rights are non-exclusive in Brazil, Japan, Latin America and the US due to existing broadcast deals Uefa has in place in these territories.

Pitch is also understood to be targeting rights to the 2018 Fifa World Cup. IMG held rights to the 2014 edition.

IMG this week acquired rights to the 2016 Olympic Games. One source estimated the deal is worth about \$1m. ■

FOOTBALL

Perform makes J-League centre of Japan OTT play

By Richard Welbirg

The Perform Group this week told *TV Sports Markets* its deal for Japan's J-League represented "great value" compared to many domestic football leagues, despite a rights fee four times higher than the previous value.

The agreement, with the Japan Professional Football League, is the first time an OTT operator has beaten a traditional pay-television broadcaster to the rights of a top-tier football league.

Perform's deal will run for 10 years, from 2017 to 2026, and is worth an average of ¥21bn (€185m/\$205m) per year. It covers the J1, J2 and J3 tiers and marks the first time all matches from each tier have been broadcast. Matches will be shown on Perform's DAZN platform.

The company's chief executive, Simon Denyer, told *TV Sports Markets* this week: "We are building a new platform. As in any rights deal we are looking as long-term as possible, because inevitably we will lose money in the early years and we

need to be sure we have a long enough term to make it back."

It is a 320-per-cent increase on the value of the league's existing five-year deal, from 2012 to 2016, worth about ¥5bn per year with pay-television operator SkyPerfecTV (*TV Sports Markets* 17:1).

The J-League has retained some free-to-air rights. It will be able to sell two live J1 matches per round to a national broadcaster and a small number of matches to regional broadcasters.

Changing market

In late 2014, Sky sought a renewal of its deal at a reduced fee as the broadcaster faced almost no competition (*TV Sports Markets* 19:2).

But the Japanese market has changed radically as new media platforms have moved into sports rights. Mobile operator SoftBank also entered the market earlier this year, with a \$180m deal for English Premier League and Spanish LaLiga rights (*TV Sports Markets* 20:5).

The league's tender, launched this spring, was timed to take advantage of this. SoftBank and SkyPerfecTV both bid significantly more than the current value.

The strong competition was the primary driver of the huge increase. After initial bidding, the league moved into direct negotiations with Perform.

Production

Perform will grow the existing J-League production team over the next six to seven months to prepare for producing every league game. The company has set up a new office in Tokyo with production infrastructure. Even prior to the J-League deal, Perform was committed to showing 10,000 events per year on DAZN.

Sky's production of top-tier J1 games, using five to six cameras, is poor by international standards. Perform will invest heavily to improve the standard.

Wi-fi and fibre connections will be installed in all J1 stadia through a deal with Japanese telco NTT. The connections will improve the broadcast signal.

DAZN

The J-League will become the key property in the portfolio of football-focused platform DAZN, which will

launch in Japan in August. It will also carry some domestic baseball and volleyball coverage. The cost of a DAZN subscription is yet to be announced.

Denyer said Perform had focused on buying rights to international properties before acquiring domestic rights.

Perform lost out on the Premier League rights to SoftBank, but Denyer claimed the company's research indicated its two key international football acquisitions – Italy's Serie A and Germany's Bundesliga – rated just as highly due to the number of Japanese players in both leagues. ■

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

TV AFRICA

Infront teams up with WPP for Olympic feed

By Callum McCarthy

The Infront Sports & Media agency has been working with advertising giant WPP to source sponsors for its free-to-air 2016 Olympics Games feed in sub-Saharan Africa, *TV Sports Markets* understands.

In January 2014, Infront and the TV Media Sport agency bought free-to-air rights to the 2014 and 2016 Games across sub-Saharan Africa from the International Olympic Committee for about \$3m (€2.7m) (*TV Sports Markets* 19:15).

It is thought Infront will pay ESP, a WPP-owned agency under the GroupM brand, commission for its help in selling sponsorship inventory. These sales have totalled almost \$1m. ESP provided Infront with access to brands signed up with other WPP-owned agencies such as MediaCom, Mineshare, Maxuc and MEC.

As a result, Infront was able to secure sponsorship deals with multiple brands more efficiently. Agreeing direct deals with individual brands can take months due to administrative processes, while an agency representing a brand can sign off deals more quickly.

Industry insiders believe Infront has earned more money via this method of selling its inventory than if it had

attempted to secure direct deals with brands as it has had more time to agree a larger number of deals.

The lucrative deals via ESP also mean Infront and TVMS have been under considerably less pressure to extract high media-rights fees from African free-to-air broadcasters. These broadcasters can rarely afford high rights fees for top sporting events.

While some experts have questioned the wisdom of removing control of advertising from free-to-air broadcasters, many with experience of the free-to-air market in Africa believe it's a positive step. Many broadcasters struggle to source sponsors and advertisers as they lack relationships and sales experience.

Infront had to provide official Olympic sponsors – known as TOP partners – with a first-option and an exclusive negotiating window as a condition of its deal with the IOC. The agency also had to ensure sponsors would not conflict with TOP partners.

It is thought that one TOP partner, Coca-Cola, has a contract with a WPP agency and will part-sponsor Infront's feed in Africa. Industry experts believe this method of selling free-to-air rights

will become the norm in the region.

Telco Econet Media, owner of pay-television start-up Kwesé TV, will use the same method to secure sponsorship and advertising for its free-to-air English Premier League feed in sub-Saharan Africa (*TV Sports Markets* 20:5).

Like Infront, Econet will access brands on a retainer with WPP agencies via ESP, which will act as a gateway between sports rights-holders and big brands.

Deals

Infront and TVMS will distribute at least six hours of live and delayed Olympic programming from each day of the 2016 Games to broadcasters across sub-Saharan Africa.

While both agencies operate collaboratively on sales and production, it is thought TVMS is responsible for traditionally tricky markets in which it has long-established relationships. It is also responsible for producing the English-, French- and Portuguese-language feed at its Paris production facility. Infront signs off all deals.

Deals for the 2016 Games have been completed in several major markets including Kenya, Nigeria and Tanzania.

Free-to-air rights in Kenya were sold to public-service broadcaster KBC for about \$150,000. It is thought the value of the rights in Kenya is much lower than it could have been due to uncertainty over Kenya's participation at the 2016 Olympics.

A deal with Tanzanian pay-television operator Azam – which will exploit the rights on its DTV and ZBC2 commercial channels – is thought to be worth between \$200,000 and \$300,000.

In Nigeria, the rights were sold to the Nigerian Olympic Committee who will sublicense rights to a consortium of free-to-air broadcasters, including public-service broadcaster NTA and commercial broadcaster AIT. One informed source estimated the deal to be worth about \$300,000.

Elsewhere, public-service broadcasters in Angola (TPA); Burundi (RTNB); Côte d'Ivoire (RTI) and Mozambique (TVM) acquired rights to Infront and TVMS's feed. Telco and DTT platform Excaf Telecom has acquired the rights in Gambia and Senegal.

Free-to-air broadcaster TVS Monde Afrique will broadcast a French-language feed across sub-Saharan Africa. ■

BOXING

One-off Joshua deal indicative of Fight Sports strategy

By Callum McCarthy

Boxing promoter Matchroom Boxing and media company CSI Sports are in talks over a lengthier partnership after their deal for Anthony Joshua's WBO World Heavyweight Championship fight against Dominic Breazeale last month, *TV Sports Markets* understands.

In May, CSI Sports paid about \$75,000 (€68,000) for live rights to the Joshua-Breazeale fight in more than 50 territories, including Asia (excluding China), the Balkans, the Caribbean and India.

CSI Sports is keen to distribute and exploit rights to more Joshua fights as they provide good content and are

relatively inexpensive. It will either show coverage on its basic-tier Fight Sports channel, or sell as Fight Sports-branded content where its channel is not carried.

Fight Sports is available in 32 countries in Asia, Europe and the Caribbean. It will soon be available in Belgium as CSI Sports has acquired basic-tier sports channel Sport 10, which has about 1.3m subscribers on pay-television operator Proximus.

Fight Sports generates the bulk of its revenue from carriage deals with pay-television operators. It acquires content on an ad-hoc basis rather than agreeing long-term deals with rights-holders.

The Joshua-Breazeale fight is not the first premium individual event for which it has acquired rights in multiple regions.

In 2015, CSI Sports acquired rights to Floyd Mayweather's fights against Manny Pacquiao and Andre Berto in more than 30 territories. In May this year, it acquired Saúl Álvarez's lineal world middleweight

title fight against Amir Khan.

CSI Sports is currently in discussions with Matchroom Boxing to acquire rights to further Anthony Joshua fights where the rights become available, and could also acquire Matchroom fighter Kell Brook's fight against unified world middleweight champion Gennady Golovkin on September 10.

It is thought Fight Sports would be able to acquire rights to Joshua's next two fights in certain territories in line with the US deal with pay-television broadcaster Showtime. Experts believe Joshua's three-fight deal with Showtime is aimed at gaining exposure in the country before he is exposed to higher-profile fights.

CSI Sports is also thought to be in discussions about a carriage deal for its Fight Sports channel with African start-up pay-television operator Kwesé TV.

CSI Sports had wanted to acquire rights to Joshua's fights in sub-Saharan Africa

and use these to help secure a carriage agreement with Kwesé. However, this was scuppered after Matchroom agreed to sell all its content – including boxing – to Kwesé TV’s pay-television broadcaster Kwesé Sports, in a deal worth about \$450,000 per year from mid-2016 to mid-2021 (*TV Sports Markets* 20:11).

Fight-by-fight strategy

Despite his interest in certain Matchroom rights, Fight Sports co-chief executive Richard Miele is less interested in a deal for all Matchroom content.

Miele told *TV Sports Markets* this week

he believes bulk-content deals make combat sports less appealing to a casual audience.

He said: “If we did a blanket deal with Matchroom and said ‘hey, we have Matchroom boxing every Friday night’, only die-hard fans would tune in.

“But saying that you have Anthony Joshua? It becomes an event, and you can take the time to tell your audience about who that person is.”

Instead of agreeing bulk deals with promoters for live content, CSI Sports picks and chooses individual events to exploit in markets where its Fight Sports

channel is carried.

Miele says that creating and broadcasting ancillary content for promoters, even for events Fight Sports won’t be showing, is a key aspect of CSI Sports’s relationship with promoters.

He said: “It helps build their athletes’ recognition much quicker than a fighter fighting for 40 minutes, three times a year and only getting that television exposure. It takes years to build an athlete that way. Doing it the way we do it, it happens a lot sooner.” ■

[www.fox.com](#) For the full interview with Craig and Richard Miele, visit our website.

TV FRANCE

Canal Plus shores up golf and adds third-tier French football

By Robin Jellis

Beleaguered French pay-television broadcaster Canal Plus has retained a host of golf properties and added third-tier domestic football rights in recent weeks as it seeks to stem subscriber losses.

It agreed a four-year deal, from 2017 to 2020, for a swathe of golf properties for about €6m (\$6.6m) per year. This is up by about 30 per cent on the €4.5m per year it pays in its current four-year deal, from 2013 to 2016, for the same set of rights.

Canal Plus has acquired rights to: the Open Championship, the US Open, the PGA Championship, the Ryder Cup (of which there are two, in 2018 and 2020), the European Tour and the World Golf Championships. The 2018 Ryder Cup will be hosted in France.

The rights were sold by the IMG agency. Canal Plus had to provide a value allocation for each individual property.

Renewing these rights is a positive move by the broadcaster. Last month, its general manager Maxime Saada said the channel had lost 500,000 subscribers since the end of 2012, and that its subscriber base was expected to fall below 4m before the end of 2016. It has projected losses of €400m this year and €460m for 2017.

The rights were tendered by IMG. Canal Plus is thought to have been the only bidder – golf is a relatively niche sport in France and no other broadcasters show golf content in the country. The threat of a bid from telco Altice is thought to have forced Canal Plus to offer an increase.

The rights are important to Canal Plus as they provide a lot of well-produced and good-quality content for its Golf Plus channel, which costs €8 per month on top of a standard subscription. It also has what is understood to be a relatively lucrative deal with watchmaker Rolex to sponsor coverage on the channel.

As part of the deal, Canal Plus has committed to a certain amount of free-to-air coverage for the Ryder Cup in 2018. It will show some coverage of the tournament either on its digital-terrestrial channels or sublicense to a free-to-air broadcaster.

Canal Plus also holds rights to the PGA Tour in a separate five-year deal, from 2013 to 2017, worth about €1m per year.

Third-tier football

Canal Plus also acquired rights to the Championnat National in a three-season deal, from 2016-17 to 2018-19, worth €600,000 per season – an increase of more than 600 per cent on the value of the previous deal.

The broadcaster will also cover production costs on top of its rights fee; these are expected to be between €800,000 and €1m per season.

The rights were previously held by basic-tier sports broadcaster Ma Chaîne

Sport – owned by Altice – in a three-season deal, from 2013-14 to 2015-16, worth an average of just over €83,000 per season. It paid nothing in the first season, €100,000 in the second, and €150,000 in the third. MCS also covered production costs of about €800,000 per season (*TV Sports Markets* 17:17).

Altice is thought to have been prepared to more than double its existing fee to about €200,000 per season, but was beaten by the aggressive Canal Plus offer.

Local experts are surprised Canal Plus was willing to pay such a large increase for what is considered a property of limited appeal. It will, however, provide it with domestically-relevant football rights. Canal Plus also has money to spend on sport following its loss of English Premier League rights to Altice from 2016-17.

Canal Plus agreed the deal with the Fédération Française de Football, the French football federation. The federation made two packages of rights available in a tender. The first was for television rights to the best match each round; the second was for digital rights to all other matches.

The broadcaster acquired the first package and will show 36 matches per season – one match each Saturday at 3pm. It will show coverage on either its Canal Plus Sport or Foot Plus channels.

Video-sharing website Dailymotion acquired the second package and will work with the federation to show the remaining eight matches per week via the league’s online service, FFF TV. These will be shown by means of a multiplex as all other matches kick-off on Fridays at 8pm.

Dailymotion is understood to be paying a small minimum guarantee for these rights. The federation is seeking a brand to sponsor the content and is in advanced discussions with its existing partners.

Dailymotion is 90-per-cent owned by media company Vivendi, which wholly owns Canal Plus. ■

CRICKET

Cricket Australia enjoys results of American tender

By Richard Welbirg

Cricket Australia improved its exposure and income from North America in a series of deals agreed last week.

It struck five-season deals, from 2016-17 to 2020-21, with cricket-focused broadcaster Willow in the US and in Canada with pay-television broadcaster Asian Television Network, following a tender period which closed in late June.

It was the first time Cricket Australia has tendered its rights in the region.

Willow is understood to be paying an incremental increase on the rights fee of approximately \$2.4m (€2.2m) per season it pays in its current four-season deal from 2012-13 to 2015-16. That deal was brokered by the IMG agency (*TV Sports Markets* 17:3).

Although Australian cricket is not Willow's top cricket property – International Cricket Council rights are the anchor of its coverage – the broadcaster was keen to retain the rights.

Willow has a long-term relationship with Cricket Australia going back to its launch in 2010. Australian games air at a good time for viewers on America's west coast and in the Midwest. Furthermore, the Indian cricket team is set to play three tours in Australia over the course of the new deal, which is valuable to Willow's large audience of Indian expatriates.

Cricket Australia has also struck a deal with US pay-television broadcaster NBCSN for the 2016-17 season only. The deal was not agreed as part of the tender, but in separate discussions.

The governing body mooted the idea of

an exposure-based deal with another broadcaster to Willow in October 2015.

Willow was happy with Cricket Australia's proposal as long as the new partner had a considerably larger footprint and would therefore help to drive interest in cricket.

NBCSN is available in about 83m television households, compared to Willow's reach of approximately 5m homes. The deal covers 10 games from the Big Bash League domestic Twenty20 competition, and delivers unprecedented exposure for Cricket Australia. NBCSN is not paying a rights fee but has committed to promoting the tournament. ■

VOLLEYBALL

BEC World breaks bank to claim FIVB rights in Thailand

By Richard Welbirg

Thai media company BEC World has this month paid a massive premium to acquire International Volleyball Federation (FIVB) rights in the country.

BEC will pay \$17m (€15.4m) over four years from 2017 to 2020, or \$4.25m per year. The deal was brokered by the IMG agency. It is thought to be one of the FIVB's most valuable.

The exact increase from the previous cycle is difficult to gauge as rights to FIVB events hosted in Thailand have been included in the package for the first time.

Rights to events in Thailand were previously sold by the Thailand Volleyball Association. These were acquired by Bangkok Broadcasting and Television Company in 2013, 2014 and 2015, and by BEC this year. All were one-off deals.

Rights to events hosted outside Thailand from 2013 to 2016 were held by pay-television operator TrueVisions and free-to-air channel CH7, part of BBTC. The deal is worth about \$375,000 per year between the two and was also brokered by IMG.

IMG, together with Japanese agency Dentsu and XYZ Olympic Sports – a subsidiary of Brazilian marketing company Grupo ABC – holds global

commercial rights for major FIVB events.

The eight-year deal, from 2013 to 2020, was agreed in March 2012 (*TV Sports Markets* 16:6). Volleyball experts estimate that deal to be worth between \$75m and \$80m. It also contains a revenue share above the minimum guarantee.

Growth

The majority of the value lies in the Volleyball World Grand Prix for women's indoor national teams. The agreement also includes the Volleyball World League for men's indoor national teams and the Volleyball Club World Championship for men's and women's national teams.

Interest in women's volleyball has grown enormously in Thailand as the team has become increasingly successful in regional competition – it won the 2013 Asian Championship and took bronze at the 2015 event and the 2014 Asian Games.

One local rights expert said: "Volleyball is on a high here with the women's team doing really well both in Asia and at world level. The players are stars, and the team and coaches too."

International matches are a major ratings-driver, comparing favourably to free-to-air broadcasts of the English Premier League football on digital-terrestrial channel PPTV (*TV Sports Markets* 20:9).

While the growing interest and the pooling of rights to events inside and outside Thailand helped increase their value, BEC nonetheless paid a significant premium for the rights. Its offer was \$2.25m per year more than that of TrueVisions, thought to be the only other bidder.

Commitment

BEC will exploit the rights on free-to-air broadcaster Channel 3. One expert said the acquisition fills a gap in the channel's offering. The only sport rights it has are for MotoGP and Uefa European Qualifiers.

The media group is making a major commitment above and beyond its rights fee. It will show a minimum of 40 World Grand Prix matches each year, whereas TrueVisions and CH7 only guaranteed coverage of Thai matches and finals. ■

FASTRACK 2

NEWS IN BRIEF

WSG sweats as Sheikh Salman considers options

Sheikh Salman bin Ebrahim al-Khalifa, the president of the Asian Football Confederation, is planning to set up an ad-hoc committee of experts to evaluate the AFC's options for its rights beyond 2020, *TV Sports Markets* understands.

The decision casts further doubt on the claim last September by the World Sport Group agency, part of Lagardère Sports and Entertainment, that it had agreed an in-principle extension to its current deal (*TV Sports Markets* 19:17).

The agency had offered about \$1.25bn (€1.13bn) over eight years, from 2021 to 2028, or \$156m per year. Its current eight-year deal, from 2013 to 2020, is worth \$75m per year (*TV Sports Markets* 19:7).

It is understood the AFC committee will examine all available models for selling its rights, from taking the rights in-house and selling them directly to creating a semi-permanent relationship with a single agency, along the lines of Uefa's relationships with CAA Eleven and Team Marketing.

Not conducting a thorough examination of all possible options for its most valuable commercial contract would arguably be negligent.

Many industry observers believe the AFC had a change of heart about confirming a deal without a transparent tender process after the May 2015 arrests of senior officials from Concacaf and Conmebol, the confederations for football in the Americas, on corruption charges (*TV Sports Markets* 19:11).

In September, Seamus O'Brien, founder of World Sport Group and executive chairman of Lagardère Sports and Entertainment, told *TV Sports Markets* a deal had been done early in 2015 and was awaiting sign-off.

O'Brien said the deal had been approved at committee levels, and was "going through the procedures of finally being done". The delay in signing off the deal has been due to the presidential

election in May – at which Salman was re-elected – and subsequent changes to the AFC executive committee.

The AFC has said it has not "concluded any commercial partnership agreements for a new rights package with any specialised agency".

The plan to create an expert group to advise on the AFC's future strategy was confirmed this week by two senior football sources. However, the AFC's director of communications, Colin Gibson, said the story was "wrong". ■

Fox Sports Italy gets Afcon rights

Italian premium sports channel Fox Sports paid about €600,000 (\$662,000) for the rights in the country to two editions of the Africa Cup of Nations in a deal this month with the Lagardère Sports and Entertainment agency.

Fox acquired the rights to the 2017 tournament in Gabon and the 2019 tournament in Cameroon. The package also contains other African football content, including the semi-finals and final of the African Champions League.

Marco Foroni, head of Fox Sports Italy, said the Afcon was "a beautiful competition, full of colour and passion".

He said it featured some of the world's top established players and young emerging talents. "The 2015 event featured over 25 players from Serie A, so fans of Italian clubs will follow their players with interest."

Faroni added the tournament would provide high-level football in January, at a time when Fox's most important property, the Bundesliga, was having its winter break. The product is also much improved. In 2017, all 32 matches will be produced in high definition for the first time.

He said the experience this summer of Sky Italia, which is also owned by Rupert Murdoch's 21st Century Fox, with two major football tournaments – Euro 2016 and the Copa América Centenario – showed that one-off tournaments could generate very big audiences, driving solid advertising

revenues. Fox had considered bidding for the Copa but had been put off by the time-zone difference. This was not a problem for tournaments in Africa.

Fox studied the audiences of sports broadcaster Eurosport on the Sky Italia platform for the Afcon and saw a large percentage increase in the audience between 2013 and 2015. The increase for the final was over 200 per cent.

Faroni declined to comment on the rights fee but said it had not necessarily been the decisive factor for Lagardère. Each bidder had to make a presentation about how they would broadcast and promote the event.

"It was really important to Lagardère that the whole profile of the event was raised in Europe. We don't just come for the kick-off and then drop out at the end," he said.

Fox Sports is carried exclusively by Sky Italia. Faroni said the tournament would be cross-promoted heavily on the Sky Sports channels and on the digital platforms of both Fox and Sky.

For 2015, rights in Italy were held by Eurosport, which had exclusive rights across Europe outside France and the UK, where its rights were non-exclusive.

For the new package of rights, Lagardère is thought to have informally sounded out Eurosport about the possibility of a new pan-regional deal before deciding to sell on a market-by-market basis. The broadcaster is understood to have been lukewarm.

The lack of a one-stop solution for the rights in Europe is thought by some experts to be a double-edged sword for Lagardère. In a handful of key markets the agency may secure a better rights fee and better presentation than that of Eurosport. But there are some markets, particularly in Eastern Europe, where it will struggle to sell the rights at all.

Fox faced limited competition in Italy. Fox Networks Group is also thought to have picked up the rights in the Netherlands. Lagardère is also understood to be close to deals in multiple other European markets. ■

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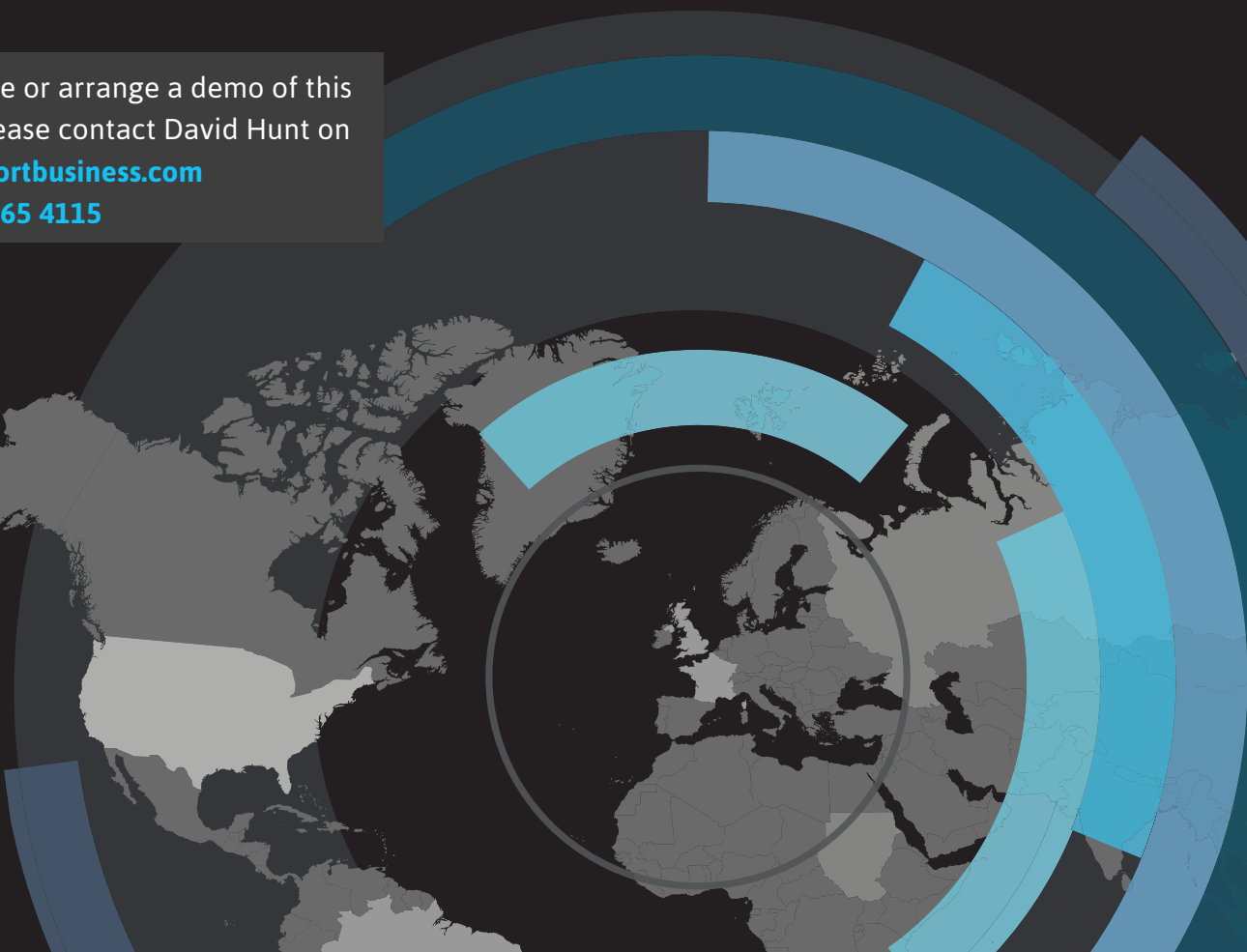
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SPORTS CLIPS: News from TVSM Daily from July 7 to 20

MEDIA RIGHTS 1

Football: Euro 2020, Afcon, English Premier League, Bundesliga and more

- **Football:** Swedish public-service broadcaster SVT and commercial and pay-television broadcaster TV4 acquired rights to the Euro 2020 national team tournament.
- **Football:** Pay-television broadcaster Fox Sports acquired rights in Italy to the 2017 and 2019 editions of the Africa Cup of Nations national team tournament (page 11).
- **Football:** International sports broadcaster Eurosport acquired rights in Russia to England's second-tier Championship and League Cup knockout tournament. The deal will reportedly cover the 2016-17 season.
- **Football:** Spanish commercial broadcaster Atresmedia acquired rights for the International Champions Cup pre-season tournament. Live coverage of games featuring Spanish Liga teams will be available on the Antena 3 and La Sexta channels. The remaining matches will be live streamed via the Mega and Atresplayer platforms.
- **Football:** Tanzanian pay-television operator Azam Media signed a five-season extension to its rights deal with the Tanzania Football Federation for domestic Premier League. The deal will cover the 2016-17 to 2020-21 seasons and will be worth a total of TZS23bn (€9.5m/\$10.5m).
- **Football:** Russian broadcaster Match TV acquired rights to the English Premier League for three seasons from 2016-17 to 2018-19 (page 2).
- **Football:** Dutch public-service broadcaster NOS acquired rights to the Uefa Women's Euro 2017 national team tournament. NOS will broadcast all games featuring the Dutch national team, along with the tournament's opening match and final.
- **Football:** The MP & Silva agency acquired platform-neutral rights to the German Bundesliga and Bundesliga 2 domestic competitions in several European territories. The four-season deal runs from 2017-18 to 2020-21 and covers Albania (including Kosovo), Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark (including the Faroe Islands and Greenland), Finland, Georgia, Greece, Iceland, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Macedonia, Malta, Moldova, Montenegro, Norway, Portugal (including Madeira and the Azores), Romania, Russia, Serbia, Slovenia, Sweden, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Ukraine.
- **Football:** The Japanese Professional Football League, the organiser of club football in the country, signed a 10-season rights deal with digital sports media group Perform (page 7).

SINCE LAST TIME

- The International Basketball Federation (Fiba) said Euroleague Properties and Euroleague Commercial Assets ended German court proceedings concerning their ongoing dispute over the future of the European club game. Fiba was informed the two parties had "surrendered" all proceedings which they had previously initiated.
- Argentina's Primera División football clubs requested that the government's Football for All scheme, which ensures free-to-air coverage of domestic football competitions, be disbanded at the end of the year. A letter signed by 26 of the 30 Primera División clubs was reportedly sent to the government. Arsenal, Olimpo, River Plate and San Lorenzo are said to be the clubs not to sign.

MEDIA INTERNATIONAL

- Swiss telco UPC unveiled plans for MySports, a new sports broadcast platform (page 1).
- Portuguese pay-television broadcaster Sport TV will launch a new free-to-view channel in August to coincide with its coverage of the 2016 summer Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro.
- French telco SFR formed SFR Media, a new unit to group together all of its media activities, including the SFR Sport operation. SFR Media will comprise SFR Presse, SFR RadioTV and SFR Sport, the suite of sports channels created following SFR's acquisition of Altice Media Group France in May.
- Portuguese telco Nos launched its own television channel, Canal Nos. The channel will serve as a platform for sports content, music, movies and entertainment programming.
- UK telco BT announced a partnership with EE, its mobile operator subsidiary, under which the latter's customers will gain free access to BT Sport pay-television channels for six months.
- UK pay-television broadcaster Sky began coverage of this year's edition of golf's Open Championship with a free service plan. Sky's Now TV online-streaming service offered 24 hours of free access to the new 'Sky Sports The Open' channel, as well as six other Sky Sports channels, on July 14.
- Technology industry website The Information reported US sports broadcaster ESPN is planning to test a direct-to-consumer model by selling a package of live programming for online streaming. The OTT offering will reportedly include "niche" properties and select college sports.
- French pay-television broadcasters Canal Plus and beIN Sports extended their non-exclusive distribution deal. The initial agreement was struck in 2012 and allows Canal Plus to carry the beIN Sports channels.
- UK pay-television operator Virgin Media agreed a deal to acquire Irish commercial broadcaster UTV Ireland. Virgin Media struck

SPORTS CLIPS: News from TVSM Daily from July 7 to 20**MEDIA RIGHTS 2****Diamond League, NFL, VTB United basketball, college sports and more**

- **American Football:** The Fox Sports division of US network Fox signed a four-year deal to cover post-season college game the Foster Farms Bowl. The partnership was brokered by NFL team the San Francisco 49ers and runs from 2016 to 2019.
- **American Football:** NFL franchise the Baltimore Ravens extended a local rights agreement with WBAL, a regional affiliate of US media group NBCUniversal. The deal will reportedly run for six years from 2017 to 2022.
- **Athletics:** French pay-television broadcaster Canal Plus extended a deal for the Monaco leg of the Diamond League series. The new four-year deal will cover the 2017 to 2020 meets.
- **Basketball:** NBA team the Portland Trail Blazers extended a local rights agreement with CSN Northwest, part of the NBC Sports Group division of US media company NBCUniversal. The deal will reportedly cover the 2017-18 to 2020-21 seasons. CSNNW will continue to provide live coverage of every match. It will share regional broadcasts with KGW Channel 8, the local affiliate of the NBC network.
- **Basketball:** Pan-European club competition the VTB United League agreed its first deal for overseas and betting broadcast rights. According to the league's honorary president Sergey Ivanov, the deal for the 2016-17 season was worth €1m (\$1.1m). It was not announced who had acquired the rights.
- **Bodyboarding:** Australian live streaming platform Epicentre.TV acquired rights to the men's World Bodyboarding Tour as part of an agreement with the Association of Professional Bodyboarders. The five-year deal will run from 2017 to 2021. Epicentre.TV will provide live coverage and negotiate international broadcast rights on behalf of the APB.
- **Cricket:** US sports broadcaster NBCSN and cricket-dedicated media company Willow agreed rights deals with the Cricket Australia governing body in the US. Asian Television Network acquired Cricket Australia rights in Canada (page 10).

the €10m (\$11m) agreement with UK commercial broadcaster ITV, UTV's parent company. It includes a 10-year output deal in Ireland for ITV-produced programming.

- Cycling television channel Bike agreed a carriage deal with UK satellite platform Freesat.
- Pay-television broadcaster Star India will launch two new sports channels, Star Sports Select HD 1 and Star Sports Select HD 2. The channels will be added to direct-to-home and cable-television platforms in August.
- German pay-television broadcaster Sky Deutschland will make its Sky Sports News HD channel available for free from December.
- Chinese satellite broadcaster QHTV, which is part of regional broadcaster Hunan Broadcasting System, signed a content production partnership with the Chinese Triathlon League.
- The Press.pl website reported that Polish commercial and pay-television broadcaster Polsat and international sports broadcaster Eleven Sports Network were planning to launch new channels in the country. Polsat's new channel will reportedly feature combat sports such as boxing and mixed martial arts, and launch in August, while Eleven Sports Network intends on launching a third channel by the end of September.
- Spanish public-service broadcaster TVE launched a virtual reality platform on July 20. The Olympic-themed platform is called Vive Rio: Heroínas and will include five short virtual-reality documentaries with Spanish athletes.
- O2 Sport, a subscription sports broadcaster operated by telco O2 in the Czech Republic, will launch three channels dedicated to football, ice hockey and tennis. O2 TV Fotbal will launch on August 8, O2 TV Tennis will launch at the beginning of 2017, and O2 TV Hokej will launch next autumn. The existing O2 sport channel will be renamed O2 TV Sport.
- BeIN Media Group launched beIN Sports LaLiga, its new Spanish channel dedicated to domestic football in the country. The pay-television channel will show eight Primera División games each round and the Copa del Rey knockout competition.
- The Olympic Committee of Portugal (COP) launched a new online video platform in partnership with internet service provider SAPO. CanalCOP will feature exclusive Olympic-related video and multimedia content. It will follow Portuguese athletes' preparations for Rio 2016, showcase the history of the Olympic movement in the country and include exclusive interviews.
- Media company CSI Sports, which owns pay-television channel Fight Sports, acquired the Sport 10 channel in Belgium.
- Pac-12 Networks, the content and multi-platform media company for the Pac-12 US college sports conference, agreed a carriage deal with regional pay-television provider Frontier Communications. The Pac-12 Network will be available in Los Angeles and Palm Springs to Frontier subscribers by September 1.
- Pac-12 Networks agreed a carriage deal with regional pay-television provider Cox Communications. From August 2, the service will be added to Cox's Essential tier and will be available to subscribers throughout Arizona and key Cox markets in California. Cox subscribers will also be able to access all seven Pac-12 Networks channels through the Pac-12 Now app.
- Social media company Twitter expanded its content partnership with the NBA. Twitter and the NBA, through the latter's NBA Digital partnership with US media group Turner, will deliver a free live stream of a new weekly pre-game show specifically

SPORTS CLIPS: News from TVSM Daily from July 7 to 20

MEDIA RIGHTS 3

Cricket Australia, Formula E, Olympic Games, Rugby League and more

- **Motorsport:** Telco Econet, which operates in sub-Saharan Africa, signed a two-season deal for rights in the region to the Formula E electric car-racing championship (page 2).
- **Multi-sport:** Portuguese pay-television operator Cabovisão joined telcos Nos and Vodafone in an agreement to share broadcast rights for sports events. Nos and Vodafone signed an initial memorandum of understanding in May.
- **Olympic Games:** The Caribbean Association of National Olympic Committees finalised rights deals in Belize for the 2016 summer Olympic Games. Channel 5 and Channel 7 will be the sole rights-holders for the Games in the country.
- **Olympic Games:** IMG agreed a deal with the International Olympic Committee to distribute the international in-flight and in-ship rights to Rio 2016 (page 6).
- **Rugby League:** Australian commercial broadcaster Seven acquired rights in the country to the 2017 Rugby League World Cup national team tournament. The deal was first reported in *TV Sports Markets* 20:7.
- **Triathlon:** Chinese state broadcaster CCTV agreed a deal to cover the new Chinese Triathlon League across its various platforms.
- **US College Sports:** Social media platform Twitter signed a rights partnership with US college sports conference the Pac-12. Twitter will serve as the premier streaming partner for Pac-12 Plus, live events produced by the conference's 12 universities. Twitter will live-stream a minimum of 150 games over the 2016-17 academic year.
- **US College Sports:** The IMG College division of the IMG agency extended a multimedia rights and licensing deal with Tulane University in the US. The 10-year agreement from 2017 until the end of 2026.
- **Volleyball:** Media company BEC World acquired exclusive rights in Thailand to events operated by the sport's global governing body, the FIVB (page 10).
- **Wrestling:** US series TNA signed a rights deal with Chinese video-sharing platform Youku, which is owned by ecommerce giant Alibaba. The series' Impact Wrestling programme will now stream on a dedicated channel on the platform on Wednesday evenings.

targeted for Twitter integration, which will be available to logged-in and logged-out users. An additional exclusive Twitter show will be announced ahead of the 2016-17 season.

- Pay-television operator Virgin Media signed a multi-year extension to its Irish carriage agreement with Sky, and ended its association with pay-television company Eir Sports. Virgin will carry the Sky Sports 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5, Sky Sports News HQ and Sky Sports Mix channels.
- The English Football League signed seven-season partnerships with UK-based digital agency Realise and internet video technology provider NeuLion. The agreements will cover the 2016-17 to 2022-23 seasons. NeuLion will provide streaming, merchandising and payment services, while Realise will design and develop club web and mobile sites.

MEDIA RIGHTS NEGOTIATIONS

- The UK's *Daily Mail* newspaper reported that UK pay-television broadcaster Sky would not broadcast the 2016 edition of the US Open tennis grand slam. It will reportedly not take up the option of sublicensing the rights from sports broadcaster Eurosport.
- Organisers of Brazilian club football tournament the Primeira Liga will explore a tender process for the broadcast rights to the expanded second edition of the competition in 2017.
- The Atlantic Coast Conference US college sports organisation will launch its own broadcast network after agreeing a 20-year deal with sports broadcaster ESPN, according to reports. The ACC Network will reportedly be active by August 2019 and be preceded by a digital channel, to be formed this autumn. Both the fresh deal and the rights extensions will reportedly run through until the end of the 2035-36 academic year.

ALSO SINCE LAST TIME

- Viasat, the pay-television operator run by multi-territory commercial and pay-television broadcaster Modern Times Group, unveiled plans to provide virtual reality and ultra-high-definition coverage in Sweden of the Rio 2016 summer Olympic Games. The Viasat Ultra HD channel will launch ahead of the Games' opening ceremony on August 5. Viasport 360 will be free to Gear VR owners from August 2 and available from the Google Play store from August 23.
- Social media company Twitter launched a live-streaming service for the Wimbledon tennis grand slam. The stream was available through the UK tournament's official Twitter feed.
- Mixed martial arts promotion the Ultimate Fighting Championship streamed live coverage of the UFC 200 event on July 9 in 4K ultra-high-definition as part of a collaboration with internet video technology provider NeuLion. The event was streamed via the UFC's OTT service, Fight Pass.
- The Netherlands Authority for Consumer & Markets asked the European Commission for permission to handle the proposed merger between mobile phone operator Vodafone and Ziggo, the cable-television operator owned by media company Liberty

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- Global. The EC will assess whether itself or the ACM is the most suitable body to handle the merger. A decision is required by early August. Vodafone is set to invest €1bn (\$1.1bn) in the joint venture, which was agreed in February.
- Virtual reality technology company NextVR signed a partnership with MLB Advanced Media, the interactive media and internet arm of Major League Baseball. The partnership began with the Home Run Derby event on July 11. The virtual-reality experience of the Home Run Derby was made available on-demand after the conclusion of the event, with additional highlights added at a later date. The partnership will lead to NextVR launching a new MLB-dedicated channel.
 - US media company NBCUniversal expected to sell at least 15 per cent more advertising for Rio 2016 than it did for the London 2012 summer Olympic Games. NBC had deals in place with more than 100 advertisers as of July 13 and had already hit its sales target for coverage of the Games.
 - LaLiga, the organising body of Spanish club football, and its production partner the Mediapro agency outlined plans to broadcast games from the 2016-17 season in 4K. One match per week will be broadcast in the format. Overhead cameras will also be installed at seven Primera División grounds, while the Santiago Bernabéu and Camp Nou – the home grounds of Real Madrid and Barcelona respectively – will be fitted with technology to enable 360-degree replays.
 - Pan-European motorsports channel Motors TV was placed into a financial safeguard procedure in France, its home country. Motors TV reportedly requested such measures in an effort to negotiate with creditors and reorganise its operations.
 - A key proposal that would have damaged revenues from broadcast rights to cricket in India has been blocked. The independent RM Lodha committee had recommended that television advertising during match coverage be restricted to drinks, lunch and tea breaks and not allowed between overs. India's Supreme Court instead recommended that the Board of Control for Cricket in India take a "considered decision" over the committee's suggestion.
 - The China Arena Football League, an American football competition, partnered with sports media, marketing and event management company Hupu. The two parties will work on digital platform development and operations, as well as brand and media management during the league's inaugural season, which begins in October.
 - Italian Serie A football club Roma claimed it was the first European team to live stream a full match via its official page on social media platform Facebook, in its 3-2 win over Russian team Terek Grozny on July 17.

INDUSTRY MOVES

- Glen Killane was appointed as Irish telco Eir's first managing director of television and sport. He will lead the company's new television operations, including Eir Sport, formerly known as Setanta.
- Alain Weill was appointed as chief executive of SFR Media, the new unit formed by French telco SFR that grouped together the company's media activities in the country.
- François Pesenti was appointed as chief executive of SFR Sport, the suite of sports channels that was created following SFR's acquisition of Altice Media Group France in May.
- UK broadcaster Sky News reported that British billionaire Sir Philip Green would become chairman of Dugout, a new digital media platform that is due to launch in partnership with a number of leading European football clubs.
- The Discovery Italia division of media and entertainment company Discovery Communications appointed Luigi Filippo Ecuba as its senior director of sport. Ecuba will lead Discovery Italia's sports strategy in Italy, Spain and Portugal.
- Discovery Italia appointed Luca Corsolini as Olympic senior consultant for Italy. Corsolini will work in the sports department overseen by newly-appointed senior director of sport, Luigi Filippo Ecuba.

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