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FOOTBALL

Uefa to focus on free-to-air deals as EBU plays a pragmatic role

By Callum McCarthy

Uefa's latest deal for its national team rights in Austria is evidence of a change in strategy for sales in Europe from 2018-19, as European football's governing body attempts to meet its targets for both revenue and exposure.

Rights for the 2014-15 to 2017-18 cycle in Austria were acquired by the European Broadcasting Union, the consortium of public-service broadcasters. In the new cycle, from 2018-19 to 2021-22, Uefa has sold directly to Austrian public-service broadcaster ORF.

CAA Eleven, Uefa's sales agent for its national team rights, sold a package of free-to-air rights from 2018-2022 to ORF last month in a deal worth just under €35m (\$39m). The package contains European Qualifiers, Nations League matches and the entirety of the Euro 2020 tournament.

TV Sports Markets understands Uefa has no plan to sell its national team rights in a multi-territory deal to the EBU. Instead, the EBU will advise and provide support to each of its members on individual, single-market bids to Uefa, when requested to do so by its members.

In recent years the EBU has made successful collective bids for Uefa properties: in April 2013 it acquired rights to European Qualifier matches in 30 territories, from 2014-15 to 2017-18, for about €90m (\$100m); and in June 2015 it bought rights to 23 matches of the Euro 2016 tournament in 26 territories, for close to €120m (*TV Sports Markets* 17:11; 19:13).

Sources close to the EBU say it will still play a prominent role in helping its members secure rights, despite not bidding on a multi-territory basis. It is understood there is still the possibility of a small collective EBU bid for territories where Uefa has difficulty achieving its targets.

Uefa is especially keen to sell the entirety of Euro 2020 to free-to-air broadcasters across Europe. This is a departure from its previous strategy where rights in some territories were split between free-to-air and pay-television broadcasters in order to maximise revenue, and because free-to-air broadcasters struggled to schedule so many matches.

The amount of Euro 2016 coverage provided by European free-to-air broadcasters varied from showing all 51 matches to showing a minimum of 11 matches covering that country's national team games, the opening match and marquee fixtures from the later rounds.

Uefa's change in strategy is understood to be because the governing body wishes to tailor-make

packages containing European Qualifier matches, the Nations League and Euro 2020 in order to take advantage of each market's unique competitive landscape.

An additional reason for the switch is that some EBU members wanted to bid jointly with pay-television broadcasters.

Austria

A direct comparison between Uefa's new €35m deal with ORF and the value of the rights in the previous cycle is not possible due to the addition of the Nations League tournament. However, in pure revenue terms the governing body has earned an increase of about 75 per cent.

In the 2014-18 cycle, ORF acquired Austria's European Qualifier matches and 23 Euro 2016 matches through multi-territory deals agreed by the EBU. The broadcaster contributed about €11m for Euro 2016 rights, and about €9m for European Qualifier rights. This time, ORF's bid was made outside the EBU framework.

ORF's deal for the 2018-22 cycle covers exclusive free-to-air rights to all Austria matches in the European Qualifiers and the Nations League, the entirety of the Euro 2020 tournament, plus a small selection of third-party rights.

The broadcaster will be able to select third-party European Qualifier matches from other teams in Austria's group, or rights to the semi-finals and final of the Nations League.

It is thought there was relatively strong competition for the rights in the new cycle, with at least one other broadcaster – commercial broadcaster ATV – also bidding.

The deal is considered a good one for both parties as Uefa has reached its sales target for the market, while ORF has roughly doubled its inventory of matches for a total rights-fee increase of just under 100 per cent.

Pay-television rights in the country are also believed to have been sold, with Uefa expected to announce the result of the tender in the coming weeks.

Poland

In Poland, Uefa has also sold free-to-air and pay-television rights to public-service broadcaster TVP and commercial and pay-television broadcaster Polsat respectively, in deals worth a total of just under €60m. Like ORF, TVP has also acquired all 51 matches of Euro 2020.

While the addition of the Nations League makes a direct comparison between the 2014-18 and 2018-22 cycles impossible, Uefa will earn almost double its current income from Poland in deals with the two broadcasters. This is mostly due to a huge bid from TVP.

TVP will pay just under €50m for exclusive free-to-air rights to all European Qualifier matches of the

Poland national team, all Poland matches in the 2018-19 and 2020-21 Nations League tournaments, and exclusive rights to the entirety of Euro 2020.

The large fee is thought to be the result of strong financial backing from Poland's new government, which was desperate to secure all national team matches for the public-service broadcaster.

Polsat is thought to have been strongly interested in acquiring the entire package of rights from 2018-22 – as it did in the previous cycle, from 2014-15 to 2017-18. One local expert said Polsat was encouraged by the Polish government not to bid for all rights this time, paving the way for TVP's deal.

Instead, Polsat will pay just under €10m for rights to all third-party European Qualifier and Nations League matches, next-day delayed rights to all Poland matches in the two competitions, and rights to simulcast the semi-final and final of the Nations League should Poland be involved in either match.

Pay-television broadcasters NC Plus and Eleven Sports Network are understood to have been interested in acquiring the rights bought by Polsat.

In the previous cycle, from 2014-18, Polsat acquired exclusive free-to-air and pay-television rights to all European Qualifier matches and the Euro 2016 tournament for about €32m. Each property was assigned a value of about €16m (*TV Sports Markets* 17:23).

The deals in Austria and Poland are the fifth and sixth Uefa has completed in its new cycle. It has sold rights for all three properties in Norway, Sweden and the UK, and has sold European Qualifiers and Nations League rights in Denmark. A Euro 2020 deal in Denmark is yet to be agreed (*TV Sports Markets* 20:14). ◆

BETTING RIGHTS

ISG beats Perform and Sportradar to Serie A rights

By Frank Dunne

New sports-rights agency Interregional Sports Group beat rival offers from betting rights specialists Sportradar and Perform to pick up domestic betting rights to Italy's Serie A.

The deal is worth €500,000 (\$558,000) per season from now until the end of the 2017-18 season. This is 25 per cent higher than the league's original reserve price of €400,000 per season. Lega Serie A agreed the deal late last week after a protracted sales process which began in November 2015.

It was the second signal of intent from the start-up agency in the same week following its takeover of UK production company Skibbly Media on September 8.

New income

The domestic betting rights deal represents a fresh revenue stream for Serie A clubs. In the previous three-season cycle, from 2012-13 to 2014-15, the league did not sell betting rights in Italy. The Italian online betting market had only recently been deregulated and the market was considered to be underdeveloped.

In the current cycle, Serie A's international betting rights were sold as part of the wider €185.7m-per-season deal for international media rights with the MP & Silva agency, from 2015-16 to 2017-18 (*TV Sports Markets* 18:20). The invitation to tender for these rights did not require the agency to put a separate valuation on the betting rights.

MP & Silva sold on the betting rights for the 2015-18 cycle to the IMG agency as part of a €21m-per-season deal which included a host of sports properties (*TV Sports Markets* 18:23). MP & Silva's internal allocation for Serie A is thought to have been €5m per season.

New player

ISG, which launched earlier this year, describes itself as a "challenger within the premium international sports marketing sector". It is wholly owned by its founders and joint chief executives Tony Ragan and Simon Burgess, who both have a track record in digital media. The company has three main divisions: rights, production and technology.

Its production division was boosted by the takeover of Skibbly Media, whose clients include Uefa,

European football's governing body, and World Rugby, the global governing body of rugby union. The division is run by Laurence Archer, former head of content for Team Marketing, Uefa's sales agent for its club competitions.

ISG's website says its clients are "the biggest in global sports" and it carries the logos of Europe's top five football leagues, as well as those of Uefa, Fifa – football's world governing body – American football's NFL and multi-territory broadcasters beIN Sports and Fox Sports.

The website also carries the logo of the Infront Sports & Media agency, the media-rights adviser to Serie A. The two companies share the same Milan address but there is no structural link between the two. Burgess told *TV Sports Markets* this week that ISG had an "independent professional working relationship with Infront on some projects in Italy".

He added: "Infront lease out areas in the studio complex at Via Deruta to a number of independent production and broadcast technology companies.

"We recently took out a long-term lease for office space in the Deruta complex. As the MCR [master control relay] for all Serie A productions is also in the complex it seemed a sensible location for our European office as we are working on a number of broadcast virtualisation projects in Italian football."

MP & Silva also had an office in the complex but closed it in 2012.

Long process

The league had originally intended to sell the Italian betting rights for the whole three-season cycle, from 2015-16 to 2017-18. It delayed the process for two reasons.

First, it had to conclude deals for the more important and more valuable domestic and international rights. Second, there was a long period of analysis of how best to structure the product because the Italian betting market was still relatively immature.

On November 4 last year, an ITT document was published asking for bids by November 16, with a reserve price of €400,000 per season. The league did not receive an acceptable bid.

On November 23, it asked for parties interested in entering private negotiations to register by November 27.

The three parties to register interest – ISG, Perform and Sportradar – met the league on December 11. Each was invited to make a formal offer by December 17. The league still did not receive an offer it considered acceptable. It shut down the process and came back to the market in July this year, having modified the offering.

Instead of selling rights which would enable an operator to create its own audiovisual content, the league was offering a product created and edited by the league which the winner of the auction would have the right to distribute to betting operators.

This reduced some of the costs involved for the bidders, which would allow them to make a greater margin. The successful bidder would also have the right to promote themselves as the “official partner of Serie A for the betting sector”.

However, one expert added that this may have made Perform and Sportradar less keen on the rights – the two usually acquire a raw feed which they work into their own platforms.

On August 15, Sportradar raised a number of questions about the ITT. These covered: the exact number of matches included and whether the betting rights were exclusive; the types of match data that would be supplied and whether these rights could be acquired exclusively; whether Sportradar’s own data scouts could be accredited to collect data at matches; and the league’s stipulation that content could be shown on a maximum of five channels.

Sportradar also added: “We have reservations as to whether we can fully accept all terms and conditions of the contract unreservedly... Will the Lega be prepared to allow us a degree of flexibility on certain terms? Will we be able to negotiate certain terms we have reservations over?”

The league replied to the questions on August 18 and added there was no flexibility to negotiate the terms of contract. The rights were awarded to ISG at a league assembly on September 9.

New market

The Italian sports betting industry is currently worth just over €500m per month, of which about 60 per cent comes from online betting.

Online gambling has been legal in theory since 2007, but the sector only began to grow rapidly after the European Commission brought infringement proceedings against Italy in 2009 due to limitations on non-Italian companies entering the market.

In March 2010, the Italian gaming authority, the Agenzia delle Dogane e dei Monopoli, began issuing the first online gambling licences to foreign companies. The number of licensees is capped at 200. ♦

TV GERMANY

Handball league awaits offers as Sport1 ties up other properties

By Robin Jellis

The German handball league, the Handball-Bundesliga, will receive bids for its domestic media rights one week from today, *TV Sports Markets* understands.

The Handball-Bundesliga tendered the rights on August 24 with bids due by September 23.

The league's rights are currently held by sports broadcaster Sport1 in a five-season deal, from 2012-13 to 2016-17, worth just under €3m (\$3.3m) per season. Sport1 also covers production costs to all matches, worth just over €1m per season.

Sport1's deal is for all rights. It retains most live rights for its channels, sublicenses some coverage to public-service broadcasters ARD and ZDF, and has a deal with the MP & Silva agency for the league's international rights. The league is understood to be signatory to all deals.

ARD/ZDF have a three-season deal with Sport1, from 2014-15 to 2016-17, worth close to €200,000 per season. The deal is for 10 live matches per season plus highlights – the rights are of particular relevance to ARD's regional channels.

MP & Silva's deal for the league's international rights is for four seasons, from 2013-14 to 2016-17. The deal excludes Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg and the Alto Adige region of Italy. It was agreed with both Sport1 and the league. These rights are worth just over €1m per season.

The league is thought to be seeking wider distribution, better-quality production and a higher rights fee from any new deals it agrees.

The Handball-Bundesliga has not offered prescribed packages to the market; bidders can make offers for the rights they want. The league held lengthy talks with all potential buyers before launching the tender. Local experts expect there to be strong interest in the rights.

Strong interest

Sport1 is understood to be interested in free-to-air rights only in any new deal, while ARD/ZDF is understood to be seeking to acquire rights similar to those in its current deal.

Pay-television broadcaster Sky Deutschland may be interested as the rights would complement its coverage of the handball Champions League. It currently holds these rights in a three-season deal,

from 2014-15 to 2016-17, worth about €1.2m per season (*TV Sports Markets* 18:17).

OTT platform DAZN, which launched last month, has acquired a raft of strong international football properties but is yet to buy live rights to a German property (*TV Sports Markets* 20:15).

Deutsche Telekom is expected to be interested following deals for similar properties: in June 2014 it acquired rights to the top basketball league, the Basketball Bundesliga, for €1m per season from 2014-15 to 2017-18; and in January this year it bought rights to the top ice hockey league, the Deutsche Eishockey Liga, for €3.6m per season from 2016-17 to 2019-20 (*TV Sports Markets* 18:12; 20:2).

Experts say the Handball-Bundesliga is more popular than domestic basketball, ice hockey and volleyball.

One local expert said DAZN and Sport1 could launch a joint bid following close co-operation between the two. On September 1, DAZN and Sport1 announced a broad content-sharing partnership.

Any new Handball-Bundesliga deals are expected to be finalised this autumn. Local rights experts believe the fee will rise by about 50 per cent. This would take the rights fee to about €4.5m per season, well above the value of Sport1's previous deal.

In June 2009, Sport1 – then known as DSF – acquired rights in a four-season deal, from 2009-10 to 2012-13. It paid a fee of €1.2m per season plus €600,000 per season in advertising time (*TV Sports Markets* 13:11). Sport1 renegotiated the last season of this deal when agreeing its current deal.

The league is thought likely to sell its international rights directly to an agency in a new deal from 2017-18.

Women's Bundesliga

The women's football Bundesliga will still not earn a fee for its media rights despite switching from Eurosport to Sport1 in a new deal.

Sport1 late last month agreed a two-season deal, from 2016-17 to 2017-18, to show matches from the German women's top tier. It will cover production costs of about €20,000 per match. Sport1 agreed its deal with the German football federation, the Deutscher Fußball-Bund.

Eurosport's previous deal was for three seasons, from 2013-14 to 2015-16, and covered Europe and Asia-Pacific – although the broadcaster is understood to have only shown coverage in Germany. Eurosport also covered production costs of about €20,000 per match, but paid no rights fee.

The DFB sought a two-year deal to take it until the end of the 2017-18 season, as this is when most of its rights will have been centralised by Uefa. From 2018-19, Uefa will market all German friendly and qualifying matches.

Under a deal agreed with the DFB in November 2014, ARD and ZDF have live rights to friendly matches

of the German women's national team and highlights of the women's Bundesliga. The deal is for two seasons, from 2016-17 to 2017-18, and is worth €3.7m per season (*TV Sports Markets* 18:22).

NHL deal close

Sport1 is also understood to be close to a three-season deal, from 2016-17 to 2018-19, for National Hockey League rights in Germany, Austria and Switzerland.

The broadcaster held exclusive NHL rights across the three territories for two seasons, from 2014-15 to 2015-16, for about \$500,000 per season. Sport1's new deal is understood to be worth a similar amount despite the fact its rights will be non-exclusive in Switzerland.

Sport1's previous deal was agreed with the Advisers Media International and Medge Consulting agencies, which sold rights in Europe, the Middle East and Africa in a five-season deal, from 2011-12 to 2015-16, worth about \$20m per season (*TV Sports Markets* 18:9).

The rights are being sold this time by the IMG agency, which helps the NHL distribute its worldwide 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.

IMG last month agreed a three-season deal, from 2016-17 to 2018-19, with pay-television broadcaster Teleclub for non-exclusive rights in Switzerland only, worth about \$500,000 per season. Teleclub will show up to four live regular-season NHL games per week, plus the playoffs.

The broadcaster was keen to acquire NHL rights following its loss of rights to the top Swiss ice hockey league. In July, telco UPC agreed a five-season deal together with public-service broadcaster SRG for Swiss Ice Hockey Federation rights, from 2017-18 to 2021-22, worth a combined average of CHF35.4m (€32.4m/\$36.1m) per season (*TV Sports Markets* 20:13). ◆

TV PORTUGAL

Enemies become friends in 'rational' rights-sharing switch

By Callum McCarthy

Industry experts believe the Portuguese sports-rights market is set to stagnate for the foreseeable future after the country's three biggest telcos took equal stakes in dominant pay-television broadcaster Sport TV, ending any possibility of competition between them.

Telcos Altice and Vodafone have also each acquired 25-per-cent stakes in Sport TV after Nos and Global Media Group – both owned by Portuguese businessman Joaquim Oliveira – both sold 25-per-cent stakes in the broadcaster. Until July, Nos and Global Media Group each held 50-per-cent stakes in Sport TV.

In addition, telcos Altice, Cabovisão, Nos and Vodafone came to a comprehensive co-operation agreement during July and August. The agreement means Sport TV and the channels of Portugal's three biggest clubs – Benfica, Porto and Sporting Lisbon – will be available on each telco's respective pay-television platform.

This consolidation has ended competition between Altice and Nos. The two had battled to acquire rights to the home matches of clubs in Portugal's top-tier Primeira Liga in December 2015 and January 2016 (*TV Sports Markets* 20:1).

Then, Nos acquired rights to Benfica's home matches and its club channel Benfica TV – from 2016-17 to 2025-26 – as well as all of Sporting Lisbon's commercial rights including its home matches and club channel, from 2018-19 to 2027-28. During the same period, Altice acquired Porto's commercial rights and club channel, from 2018-19 to 2027-28.

In total, Nos agreed 10 long-term exclusive deals with Primeira Liga clubs. These were the subject of complaints to Portugal's competition authority, the Autoridade da Concorrência, by Vodafone and Altice. Portuguese competition law states that no party is entitled to buy exclusive rights to any club's home matches for a period longer than three seasons.

Mario Vaz, chief executive of Vodafone Portugal, this week told *TV Sports Markets* the co-operation agreement and the acquisitions of stakes in Sport TV were not influenced by the Portuguese competition authority's concerns over anticompetitive practices.

Instead, Vaz said both the agreement and acquisitions of stakes in Sport TV are the result of "greater rationality" in the Portuguese market, which industry experts believe to have little potential for growth given the country's small population and precarious economic situation.

Altice will now exploit its rights on Sport TV – which it now part-owns – instead of going into direct competition with Nos. It was previously thought Altice would launch its own sports channels in Portugal using the rights it had acquired.

Experts believe competition between Altice and Nos would not have benefitted either telco as it would have further diluted pay-television revenues in what is a small market. Sport TV is thought to have been running at a loss for the past four years due to the competition it faced from Benfica TV, and more recently Altice.

Juan-Luis Wehmeier, a sports marketing consultant with extensive experience of the Portuguese market, told *TV Sports Markets*: “Altice acquiring these Primeira Liga rights got them a seat at the table and enabled them to acquire the stake in Sport TV. We could have had a football war, but we certainly don’t have that now.”

Lack of competition

While Vaz says the right-sharing and Sport TV deals were “not motivated by any external entities”, it is possible Portugal’s competition authority may choose not to take action over the domestic football deals done by Altice and Nos.

Should these deals have remained exclusive to the respective telcos, industry experts believe the deals would have been struck down by the competition authority.

The Autoridade da Concorrência is now thought to be satisfied that Portuguese consumers will have equal opportunity to subscribe to Sport TV and the club channels of Benfica, Porto and Sporting.

However, some observers have described the alliance between the biggest three telcos – Altice, Nos and Vodafone – as cartel-like. Sport TV now faces almost no competition in the marketplace as its former competitors are now its business partners.

As a result, rights-holder and agency sources anticipate most future media-rights deals in the country to decline in value.

Sport TV’s only remaining competitor in Portugal appears to be pay-television broadcaster Eurosport. However, local experts don’t believe the broadcaster will challenge Sport TV aggressively: Eurosport’s acquisition of Formula One rights last September was considered a one-off (*TV Sports Markets* 19:18).

Eurosport was not involved in the bidding process for Primeira Liga club rights and has long-term carriage deals with Altice, Nos and Vodafone. Sources close to the broadcaster indicate it sees little potential for growth in Portugal and will not become an aggressive player.

In hot water

Sport TV is currently facing a popular action – a lawsuit filed by a government body on behalf of its citizens – from the Portuguese government’s ‘competition observatory’, the Observatório da

Concorrência. The body has accused the broadcaster of abusing its dominant position in the market and artificially increasing its subscription prices.

The action concerns the period between January 1, 2005 and June 30, 2013. The body judged Benfica TV to have begun competing with Sport TV on July 1, 2013, after it bought rights to the English Premier League for three seasons, from 2013-14 to 2015-16, for €2.3m per season (*TV Sports Markets* 17:5).

Benfica TV is no longer a competitor to Sport TV. Nos acquired the rights to carry the Benfica TV channel as part of its deal for Benfica home matches in January. It also acquired rights to all other sports properties previously bought by Benfica TV.

In 2013, Sport TV paid a fine of €3.7m for a different abuse of its dominant position – demanding excessive carriage fees from other pay-television platforms. ◆

TV INDIA

India becomes 'two-horse race' after Sony buys Ten Sports

By Richard Welbirg

Sony Pictures Networks India's acquisition of the Ten Sports channels is likely to restrict the Indian media-rights market and make life difficult for rights-holders below the top tier, local experts have told *TV Sports Markets*.

Media group Sony last month entered into a definitive agreement to acquire the Ten Sports arm of media group Zee Entertainment Enterprises in a deal worth \$385m (€345m). Zee bought Ten Sports owner Taj TV for \$107m, taking an initial 50-per-cent stake in 2006 and increasing its holding in 2010.

The acquisition reduces the number of sports pay-television broadcasters in the Indian market to three: Sony – the largest player – Star, and the increasingly niche Neo Sports.

One expert said the deal made the Indian market “a two-horse race”, adding that “for quality content it will become a battle between Sony and Star but for non-premium content it will get tougher.”

Zee exits sport

The expert added that Zee had been looking to sell Ten Sports for at least three years as the broadcaster had consistently posted losses.

Over these three years, Ten has not made substantial investments in new properties or competed directly against Sony or Star, the most powerful broadcasters in the Indian subcontinent.

It has instead focused on renewing its existing properties and reducing the scale of its operating losses in anticipation of a sale. Zee's ebitda loss of INR349m (€4.7m/\$5.3m) from the Ten Sports channels in the 2016 financial year was its smallest in a decade.

Despite spending considerably less on media rights than Sony or Star, the Ten Sports channels have remained competitive from a ratings perspective.

According to India's Broadcast Audience Research Council, Ten 1 was the third-ranked sports channel over the most recent measurement period, from August 27 to September 2.

Peter Hutton, Eurosport chief executive and formerly chief operations officer at Taj TV, told *TV Sports Markets*: “For Zee, it's a great return on the acquisition cost only six years ago – more than trebling their money – as well as taking what is now a loss-making business off their books.”

“As an entrepreneurial group, they clearly will have plans to invest in other areas and this capital will be quickly reinvested.” It is understood Zee will now focus on its general entertainment business.

Sony rationale

For Sony, acquiring the Ten Sports channels significantly helps it close the gap to Star. At a stroke, its sports channel offering has grown from four to nine. Star has 10 sports channels.

Ten’s sport-rights portfolio includes the rights of five international cricket boards, which will improve Sony’s offering of India’s most popular sport.

Sony holds linear broadcast rights to the Indian Premier League Twenty20 competition, one of the country’s must-have properties. It pays about \$775m for the rights in a 10-year deal from 2008 to 2017, but it has little other cricket (*TV Sports Markets* 12:2).

Rights to these five cricket boards may also act as a safeguard if Sony is to lose IPL rights from 2018, which are likely to be tendered before the end of the year.

Hutton added: “Sony can approach the new IPL tender with a much more secure sports business. The long-term WWE rights and array of live cricket mean its sports package now has ‘must-have’ content for the long term.

“While the IPL is a huge property that Sony will no doubt want to renew, it’s no longer a disaster if they lose it.”

Sony’s existing IPL deal included a right of first refusal. The broadcaster had a 60-day window from the end of the 2016 IPL to lodge a bid, and the Board of Control for Cricket in India was obligated to name a price if it did not accept Sony’s offer.

That deadline has now passed and, while Sony lodged a bid, it has not received a counter-offer from the BCCI – the IPL’s commercial rights-holder.

The board has been under significant pressure from the Indian Supreme Court to increase transparency in its dealings, and has written to Sony asking it to enable an open tender. The broadcaster is likely to take legal action against the board. ◆

BASKETBALL

NBA nets bumper deal in Hong Kong as LeSports replaces PCCW

By Robin Jellis

National Basketball Association media rights soared in value in Hong Kong by more than 500 per cent this week as LeSports displaced incumbent rights-holder PCCW.

The new five-season deal with OTT player LeSports HK, from 2016-17 to 2020-21, will be worth about \$21.5m (€19.3m) per season.

This represents enormous growth on the average of about \$3.5m per season paid by telco PCCW over three seasons, from 2013-14 to 2015-16. PCCW exploited the rights on its Now TV pay-television platform.

As well as the huge increase in rights fee it is understood LeSports will support the NBA by heavily promoting its brand in Hong Kong. The NBA held lengthy talks with PCCW over a renewal, but the telco wasn't willing to offer as much as LeSports.

LeSports's aggression is understood to be driven by its desire to secure globally-recognised sports brands. Last September, the acquisition of English Premier League rights in Hong Kong was its first deal outside China. LeSports will pay just under \$130m per season in a three-season deal, from 2016-17 to 2018-19 – double the previous fee (*TV Sports Markets* 19:17).

And last month – ahead of the launch of its OTT platform in Hong Kong – it bought rights to the 2016 US Open tennis tournament in a sublicensing deal with sports broadcaster Eurosport worth about \$500,000 (*TV Sports Markets* 20:15).

France

Although an NBA renewal with pay-television broadcaster beIN Sports was reported in the French media last week, *TV Sports Markets* understands a new deal is yet to be agreed. BeIN's current four-season deal, from 2012-13 to 2015-16, is worth an average of about \$6.5m per season (*TV Sports Markets* 18:10).

The NBA is understood not to have tendered its rights or held talks with other broadcasters as it favours a renewal with beIN. The two parties are now in advanced negotiations.

A new deal with beIN is expected to run for four seasons, from 2016-17 to 2019-20. One basketball rights expert said the rights fee would increase, although probably not beyond \$8m per season.

Interest in the NBA in France is quite strong; there are currently nine French players in the league, including stars Nicolas Batum and Tony Parker. However, games often air late at night and ratings are low.

Before selling rights in the most recent cycle to beIN, the NBA had deals with three broadcasters in the 2010-11 and 2011-12 seasons. The total value of those deals was \$5.5m per season.

Now-defunct pay-television broadcaster Orange Sport paid about \$2.5m per season, while pay-television broadcaster Canal Plus and sports broadcaster Ma Chaîne Sport each paid about \$1.5m per season (*TV Sports Markets* 14:20; 14:23).

Mena

BeIN and the NBA are also in separate discussions over a renewal covering the Middle East and North Africa. BeIN currently holds rights in Mena in a three-season deal, from 2013-14 to 2015-16, worth an average of about \$6.5m per season. It is understood a renewal with beIN is likely to run for five seasons, from 2016-17 to 2020-21.

The NBA has a long-term relationship with beIN and was keen to renew. Deals in both France and Mena are expected to be completed within two to three weeks. The 2016-17 NBA season begins on October 25, with the Cleveland Cavaliers playing the New York Knicks. ◆

FOOTBALL

Abu Dhabi and Dubai channels share cost of Gulf league rights

By Callum McCarthy

A gentlemen's agreement between media groups belonging to the governments of Abu Dhabi and Dubai means the United Arab Emirates Pro League's media-rights income will remain flat.

Abu Dhabi Media and Dubai Media Incorporated will each pay about AED127.5m (€30.9m/\$34.7m) – or AED42.5m per season – for an equal share of global rights to the league, for three seasons from 2016-17 to 2018-19. This fee is thought to include production costs which are also shared between the two.

As well as the Pro League, the deal also includes rights to the Presidents' Cup and League Cup club competitions, plus other second-tier competitions operated by the UAE Football Association.

The league's previous deal with the same two broadcasters ran for three seasons, from 2013-14 to 2015-16, for the same fee. Both deals were completed after consultation between the UAE Pro League Committee, which handles the league's commercial rights, and the board of directors of each broadcaster.

The fee has stayed flat as governments in both cities rein in spending during tougher economic times for the UAE. The Pro League is officially overseen by the UAE Football Association, but it is de facto run by the federal UAE government.

In the new deal, and as in the 2015-16 season, all matches will be shown on pay-television via each media group's sports channels – Abu Dhabi Sports and Dubai Sports. It is hoped this will drive subscription revenue for these channels as well as improving match attendance.

Before the 2013-14 season, Pro League matches were available free-to-air via satellite. The league gradually moved to pay-television in the 2013-14 and 2014-15 seasons. In the 2013-14 season, two matches per week were shown, encrypted, on pay-television. This increased to three in 2014-15.

Competition for Pro League rights is actively avoided by the league and the broadcasters. The rights have been shared between Abu Dhabi Sports and Dubai Sports since the creation of the Pro League Committee in 2008. No other broadcasters are invited to make bids.

Local experts say any competition between the two broadcasters over price or the rights available could cause a rift between the ruling families of each emirate, potentially damaging the stability of the league. The Pro League is comprised of 14 teams – five from Abu Dhabi; five from Dubai; two from Sharjah; and one each from Ras al-Khaimah and Fujairah.

The broadcasters only compete against one another for viewership. Both Abu Dhabi Sports and Dubai Sports invest heavily in production to try to increase ratings – a form of competition considered healthy for the league.

The league is only shown in the Middle East and North Africa region – its international rights have remained unsold since the Pro League began in 2008. There has been little to no interest in the rights outside Mena, and neither Abu Dhabi nor Dubai is interested in selling the rights.

Selling international rights would also likely increase the risk of piracy during a crucial time for the league's growth on pay-television. One source said fans of the Pro League are still adapting to the change after years of free-to-air coverage.

The league has been simulcast on Abu Dhabi Sports and Dubai Sports since the formation of the Pro League in 2008, but was either shown on free-to-air channels or unencrypted versions of their pay-television channels. Before 2010, the Pro League sought zero revenue from fans, allowing free admission at matches and showing all matches on free-to-air.

The Pro League is each broadcaster's most important domestic football property. Abu Dhabi Sports has conceded all top European domestic league rights to pay-television rival beIN Sports, and now shows smaller leagues with niche appeal such as Tunisia's Ligue Professionnelle 1 (*TV Sports Markets* 19:18). ◆

BASKETBALL

DB Video to extend Belgian league deal despite struggles

By Robin Jellis

DB Video will extend its contract for media rights to Belgium's top-tier basketball league for a further season despite losing money on the current deal, *TV Sports Markets* understands.

Production company DB Video's current deal for Basketball League Belgium Division I rights runs for three seasons, from 2015-16 to 2017-18. DB Video pays the league a fee of about €250,000 (\$279,000) per season for the rights and covers production costs of about €1.25m per season.

On Monday, the league and DB Video will announce the deal has been extended to cover the 2018-19 season, and that the number of games the production company provides will increase.

DB Video produces coverage of matches and distributes a feed to broadcasters in the country. Its current contract stipulates it must show a minimum of 70 games per season – last season it showed 78.

This will increase to a minimum of 160 from this season, increasing DB Video's production costs by another €500,000 per season to a total of €1.75m per season. The rights fee will remain the same.

The production company has two relatively valuable sublicensing deals in place: with pay-television broadcaster Telenet covering Flanders, and with pay-television broadcaster BeTV covering Wallonia. Deals with both broadcasters run for three seasons, from 2015-16 to 2017-18. Each are worth just under €300,000 per season.

The deals with Telenet and BeTV are non-exclusive. Broadcasters in Belgium generally try to agree non-exclusive deals to reduce their costs.

Sports broadcaster Eleven Sports Network showed little interest in acquiring any coverage as its channels are already carried by Telenet and Voo, the telco which owns BeTV.

Pay-television broadcaster Proximus, which held the league's rights in the last cycle, is not interested due to a lack of return in investment on its previous deal and a change in personnel at the company.

Previous deal

Proximus held the league's rights in a two-season deal, from 2013-14 to 2014-15, worth €1m per season plus production costs of about €300,000 per season (*TV Sports Markets* 17:19).

This was a 20-per-cent fall on the value of the league's previous three-season deal with Proximus, from 2011-12 to 2013-14, worth about €1.2m per season plus production costs. That contract contained a clause to renegotiate the deal after two seasons, which Proximus took up.

Despite the reduced cost of the rights in the 2013-14 and 2014-15 seasons, the broadcaster felt ratings were too low to countenance a renewal.

Local sources also say Proximus did not extend its deal following a change in chief executive. In January 2014, Dominique Leroy was appointed as Proximus chief executive, replacing Didier Bellens.

Proximus's lack of interest encouraged DB Video to bid for the rights. It had produced coverage for Proximus in previous seasons and feared that if Telenet acquired the rights it would work with a rival production company.

Telenet has an agreement with production company Videohouse for the technical production of its channels and services until July 2017.

Other DB Video deals

As well as the live rights deals with Telenet and BeTV, DB Video also has news access deals with Flemish-language public-service broadcaster VRT and French-language public-service broadcaster RTBF.

The production company also has deals with eight regional broadcasters for home matches of local teams: ATV, BX1, Focus-WTV, RTC Télé Liège, Télé MB, Télésambre, TV Limburg and TV Oost.

DB Video can also generate additional revenue from selling advertising spots around its coverage of the league. However, it is understood to have struggled with advertising sales last season.

In total, DB Video earned about €1.25m in the 2015-16 season, a shortfall of €250,000.

It hopes that having more staff selling sponsorship and advertising rights, and the increased number of matches from this season, will help grow this revenue stream. ◆

FOOTBALL

MP & Silva successfully holds out for Serie A increase in Turkey

By Callum McCarthy

The MP & Silva agency has secured a solid increase in the value of Serie A media rights in Turkey, but will wait to see how the market develops before committing to a deal for more than one season.

Pay-television operator Digiturk will pay about €2.2m (\$2.5m) for exclusive Serie A rights during the 2016-17 season, an increase of about 25 per cent on its previous one-season deal, covering the 2015-16 season only, worth about €1.8m.

Digiturk's new deal will run for at least this season, but it is thought to have the option to extend it to cover the 2017-18 season – if it meets MP & Silva's asking price.

MP & Silva is thought to have received multiple offers for the Serie A rights, but none were considered valuable enough to agree a multi-season deal. The Digiturk deal ensured Serie A was broadcast live from its third match day after the first two weeks went unaired in Turkey.

Serie A rights were a lower priority for broadcasters as they waited for other deals to be completed. Linear rights to the English Premier League have now been sold on a non-exclusive basis to Digiturk and pay-television rival D-Smart, while digital and mobile rights have been sold to telco Turkcell.

Local broadcasters also wanted to wait for the outcome of talks with the Turkish Football Federation over the structure of a tender for Turkish Süper Lig rights.

In turn, MP & Silva was happy to wait for two main reasons. First, the agency wanted to wait for the completion of beIN Media Group's acquisition of Digiturk before making a sale. Second, the agency felt the exclusivity of the rights should have yielded higher offers from broadcasters, as non-exclusive deals are becoming more common in Turkey.

The agency is comfortable completing one-season deals as it believes the Turkish sports-rights market will yield greater fees in future. BeIN's takeover of Digiturk will provide the operator with protection against the weakening Turkish lira, and the entrance of Saran as a broadcaster from November is expected to increase competition for rights in the territory.

Saran has opted to launch a channel following low broadcaster offers for the sports rights it holds, such as the Premier League, National Basketball Association and Formula One.

Furthermore, broadcasters that miss out on Süper Lig rights from 2017-18 will need season-long football content to prevent churn, increasing demand.

MP & Silva holds Serie A international rights in a three-season deal, from 2015-16 to 2017-18, worth €185.7m per season (*TV Sports Markets* 18:20). ♦

FOOTBALL

Lagardère opts for JTBC and grows value of AFC in Korea

By Richard Welbirg

Asian Football Confederation rights have increased in value by 86 per cent in South Korea after cable-television broadcaster JTBC outbid the country's free-to-air cartel.

JTBC will pay about \$10m (€9m) per year for AFC rights over four years, from 2017 to 2020. The deal was brokered by Lagardère Sports, the AFC's global media and marketing rights partner. JTBC will also cover the production costs of home matches played by South Korea national teams in AFC competition.

Rights in the previous four-year cycle, from 2013 to 2016, were acquired by KBS but shared with fellow commercial broadcasters MBC and SBS. The three broadcasters dominate the country's terrestrial market and each also have dedicated basic-tier sports channels. As the 'Korean Pool', they often agree not to compete for rights, or to share them, in order to minimise costs.

JTBC is a relatively new entrant, having launched its first basic-tier channel in 2011. Average revenue per user is very small in South Korea's pay-television market, so sports channels are mainly advertising-funded and are found in basic rather than premium packages.

In the 2013-16 cycle, KBS paid \$5.375m per year. One source told *TV Sports Markets* this total was then split 4:3:3 between the members of the pool, with KBS paying the slightly larger proportion.

JTBC's deal covers 12 AFC properties – the same content that KBS bought. The key properties are the AFC Champions League, the 2019 Asian Cup national team tournament, and the third round of Asian qualifying for the 2018 Fifa World Cup.

KBS is thought to have bid \$8.75m per year in the new four-year cycle, on behalf of the pool. JTBC was prepared to outbid KBS because it needs top-tier local content for its channels to compete against the broadcasters in the Korean Pool.

JTBC was awarded the rights after one round of bidding. The tender was held in spring of this year.

Local sources said there was also a bid from the sports division of production and distribution company Next Entertainment World, which is yet to launch a sports channel.

Lagardère distributes AFC media and marketing rights globally over the eight years from 2013 to 2020. The agency guarantees the confederation a minimum of \$600m, or \$75m per year, over the period (*TV Sports Markets* 19:7). ◆

ICE HOCKEY

Introduction of Red Star Kunlun yet to stimulate Chinese market

By Richard Welbirg

Red Star Kunlun's entry as the first Chinese team in the Kontinental Hockey League has helped the league massively increase its exposure, but is yet to have any impact on its bottom line.

Chinese state broadcaster CCTV has acquired broadcast rights for the 2016-17 season. It will show two matches per week – one involving Red Star and one other top match – on its CCTV 5+ channel.

CCTV is not paying a rights fee, nor is it contributing to the production costs of Red Star home games. CCTV's deal was agreed with the Chinese Ice Hockey Federation, acting on behalf of Red Star.

The Lagardère Sports agency, whose U! Sports subsidiary has been the KHL's international media and marketing rights partner since the 2010-11 season, is handling production.

U! Sports is trying to find a buyer for digital rights in the country. A tender was planned, but Chinese digital players showed little interest in what they feel is an unproven property.

CCTV deal

Like many of CCTV's deals, its agreement for KHL rights is a rolling one-season deal. CCTV shows North American ice hockey league the NHL on similar terms. Although it doesn't pay a rights fee it pays between \$300,000 (€270,000) and \$400,000 per season in technical costs.

The latest agreement represents the second time the state broadcaster has acquired KHL rights. Earlier this year it showed the KHL's best-of-seven playoff final, the Gagarin Cup.

That purchase was driven by the rumours of a Beijing-based team joining the league, and because interest in ice hockey is being encouraged by the Chinese government ahead of the 2022 winter Olympic Games, which will be hosted in Beijing (*TV Sports Markets* 20:12).

The CIHF stepped in to broker the deal for 2016-17 as no agreement was struck in time for Red Star's season-opener against Amur Khabarovsk on September 1. KHL linear broadcast rights were delegated to the club when its participation was confirmed in mid-June. Local sources said the CIHF helped broker the CCTV deal as there was a lack of any media-rights expertise at the club.

The CCTV deal was finalised on September 4, the day before Red Star's first home game. ◆

MOTORSPORT

TV2 hungry for content as it adds MotoGP to sports portfolio

By Callum McCarthy

Hungarian broadcaster TV2 has made aggressive moves into the sports-rights market in recent weeks, acquiring English Premier League, National Hockey League and MotoGP rights.

Late last month, TV2 acquired exclusive MotoGP rights in a three-year deal, from 2017 to 2019, for about €300,000 (\$335,000) per year. The deal was agreed with Dorna Sports, MotoGP's commercial rights-holder.

TV2 will exploit pay-television rights on its new pay-television sports channel, Spíler TV. A free-to-air highlights package will be shown each race week on commercial channel TV2.

It is difficult to gauge how much the value in Hungary has increased as the last time MotoGP rights were sold in the country Dorna agreed a deal covering both Hungary and Romania with pay-television broadcaster Digi Sport. That three-year deal, from 2014 to 2016, is worth €550,000 per year.

It is understood that Dorna chose to sell rights in Hungary and Romania separately after receiving a strong offer from TV2. This is thought to be due to the size of each territory's pay-television market: there are about 7m pay-television households in Romania, double the amount in Hungary. Dorna is yet to agree a new deal in Romania from 2017.

Other deals

The acquisition of MotoGP represents TV2's second sports-rights deal after it acquired a package of Premier League and NHL ice hockey rights from the IMG agency.

Digi – owned by telco RCS-RDS – passed on IMG's asking price of \$6m per season for Premier League rights in Hungary, from 2016-17 to 2018-19, and was unwilling to pay an increase to retain MotoGP rights in Hungary and Romania (*TV Sports Markets* 20:15). ◆

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MEDIA RIGHTS DEALS

SEPTEMBER 1 TO 14

FOOTBALL

- ◆ Turkish telco Turkcell acquired mobile and digital rights to the English Premier League, from 2016-17 to 2018-19, in a deal with the Saran Media agency. Turkcell will show games on IPTV service Turkcell TV Plus.
- ◆ State-owned media groups Abu Dhabi Media Company and Dubai Media Incorporated jointly agreed a new three-season deal for the UAE Pro League (page 19).
- ◆ French pay-television broadcaster beIN Sports acquired rights to the 2017 Africa Cup of Nations national team tournament. The deal includes the Caf Champions League and Super Cup, and African qualifiers for the 2018 Fifa World Cup.
- ◆ Pay-television operator Canal Plus Afrique agreed a five-season rights deal with the Fédération Ivoirienne de Football for rights to its top-tier Ligue 1, from 2016-17 to 2020-21. Canal Plus will also make financial and editorial contributions toward production.
- ◆ German commercial broadcaster RTL acquired a package of free-to-air highlights rights to the top-tier Bundesliga and second-tier Bundesliga 2 over four seasons, from 2017-18 to 2020-21. The highlights programme will be shown on its RTL Nitro channel.
- ◆ Pay-television broadcaster Sky Deutschland acquired a package of free-to-air highlights rights to the Bundesliga 2 over four seasons, from 2017-18 to 2020-21.
- ◆ French digital-terrestrial channel L'Équipe

acquired rights to Saint-Étienne's competitive games on a delayed basis through a content partnership with the Ligue 1 team. L'Équipe will also broadcast the team's friendly matches.

OTHER SPORTS

- ◆ **American Football:** The China Arena Football League agreed a deal for live and delayed rights with online video platform iQIYI for its inaugural season, with a view to completing a longer-term deal. All 18 games from the 2016 season will be shown live and delayed by iQIYI.
- ◆ **American Football:** North American sports broadcaster One World Sports acquired rights in the US to the China Arena Football League for the 2016 season. The broadcaster will show the entire 18-game schedule.
- ◆ **Baseball:** South Korean commercial broadcaster SBS was awarded host-broadcasting rights to the 2016 Women's Baseball World Cup by the World Baseball Softball Confederation. SBS oversaw the production of 26 of the 32 matches and held exclusive linear and digital rights to the competition.
- ◆ **Baseball:** Pay-television broadcaster ESPN acquired rights to the Women's Baseball World Cup in Australia, New Zealand, the Pacific Islands and Papua New Guinea. ESPN showed matches featuring the Australian team.
- ◆ **Baseball:** Japanese network BS-TBS acquired free-to-air Women's Baseball World Cup rights.
- ◆ **Baseball:** Japanese pay-television broadcaster J Sports acquired rights to the

MEDIA RIGHTS DEALS

SEPTEMBER 1 TO 14

Women's Baseball World Cup.

◆ **Baseball:** Malaysian pay-television broadcaster Astro acquired rights to the Women's Baseball World Cup.

◆ **Baseball:** Pay-television broadcaster Eleven Sports Network acquired rights in Singapore to the Women's Baseball World Cup.

◆ **Baseball:** Pay-television broadcaster Videoland acquired rights in Chinese Taipei to the Women's Baseball World Cup.

◆ **Baseball:** Mexican media company AYM Sports acquired rights in Mexico, Puerto Rico and the US to the Women's Baseball World Cup.

◆ **Basketball:** French free-to-air channel Numéro 23 acquired rights to the Pro A, the top-tier club competition in the country, for the 2016-17 season only. Numéro 23's coverage will start with the game between ASVEL and Le Mans on September 20. Telco Altice, which holds Pro A rights, has a 39-per-cent stake in Numéro 23. Coverage was shown last season on L'Équipe.

◆ **Basketball:** LeSports, which is operated by Chinese internet company LeEco, acquired rights to the National Basketball Association in Hong Kong and Macau for five seasons, from 2016-17 to 2020-21 (page 17).

◆ **Boxing:** French digital-terrestrial television channel L'Équipe acquired rights to the September 10 world middleweight title fight between Gennady Golovkin and Kell Brook.

◆ **Cycling:** International sports broadcaster Eurosport acquired exclusive linear and digital

rights in Germany to the 2016 edition of the International Cycling Union's Road World Championships. Eurosport will show the event on its free-to-air Eurosport 1 channel.

◆ **Drone Racing:** UK pay-television broadcaster Sky invested \$1m (€890,000) in the US-based Drone Racing League and will broadcast the competition on its newly-launched free-to-air Sky Sports Mix channel. Sky will show 10 hour-long episodes in the 2016 season, which begins in October.

◆ **Floorball:** The Swedish Floorball Association extended a rights deal with Swedish media company TV4 Group to cover the 2016-17 and 2017-18 seasons. Commercial broadcaster TV4 and pay-television broadcaster C More will continue to broadcast club and national team matches.

◆ **Golf:** Australian commercial broadcaster Seven acquired platform-neutral rights to the World Cup of Golf tournament, which begins on November 24.

◆ **Handball:** Polish pay-television operator NC Plus secured a three-season deal for the Superliga, Poland's top-tier domestic competition, from 2016-17 to 2018-19. NC Plus will show a minimum of 68 games per season, as well as highlights programmes and coverage of the league's Star Weekend event.

◆ **Hockey:** Pay-television broadcaster SuperSport acquired exclusive rights across sub-Saharan Africa for South Africa's Premier Hockey League for five years, from 2016 to 2020. SuperSport will show 24 matches live in 2016.

MEDIA RIGHTS DEALS

SEPTEMBER 1 TO 14

- ◆ **Ice Hockey:** UK pay-television broadcaster Premier Sports acquired rights to the World Cup of Hockey tournament. Premier Sports will show all games live with the exception of the game between Russia and Sweden on September 18, and the second semi-final on September 25, which it will air on a delayed basis.
- ◆ **Ice Hockey:** The Sport 24 in-flight and in-ship channel acquired rights to the World Cup of Hockey. All games will be shown live either on the Sport 24 channel or Sport 24 Extra, which launched on June 1.
- ◆ **Ice Hockey:** Sport 24 acquired rights to show three matches per week from the National Hockey League. It will also show the Stanley Cup Playoffs and the Stanley Cup Final.
- ◆ **Motorsport:** UK commercial broadcaster Channel 5 acquired free-to-air rights to the Formula E electric car-racing world championship for two seasons – 2016-17 and 2017-18. Channel 5 will show all Formula E events live. Sister DTT broadcaster Spike will show qualifying sessions.
- ◆ **Motorsport:** Brazilian pay-television channel SporTV extended a rights deal with domestic motor-racing championship Stock Car. The deal expires at the end of the 2020 season.
- ◆ **Motorsport:** Brazilian media company Globo extended its free-to-air deal with Stock Car until the end of the 2018 season.
- ◆ **Multi-sport:** Vietnamese public-service broadcaster VTV was named as host broadcaster for the 2016 Asian Beach Games, which will be held in the country from September 24 to October 3. VTV will show the opening and closing ceremonies as well as live coverage of the beach volleyball, beach soccer, beach handball and beach sepak takraw competitions.
- ◆ **Paralympic Games:** Singaporean media company Mediacorp acquired rights for the 2016 Games. Coverage will be shown on free-to-air channel Okto Sports and its OTT platform Toggle. The deal includes live coverage of the opening and closing ceremonies, events featuring Singaporean athletes and two daily highlights programmes.
- ◆ **Paralympic Games:** Sony Pictures Networks India acquired rights for the Rio 2016 Games. Coverage will be shown on pay-television channels Sony Six and Sony ESPN, and on digital-streaming platform Sony LIV.
- ◆ **Surfing:** The International Surfing Association named the Broadreach Media agency as the exclusive distributor of its media rights in Europe, the Middle East, Africa, the Pacific Islands and Asia, with the exception of Japan. Broadreach will distribute rights to all ISA properties except the World Championships, on which it will act as a sales consultant.
- ◆ **US College Sport:** The University of California, Berkeley signed a multimedia rights deal with the Learfield Sports agency, ending its existing relationship with the IMG College division of the IMG agency. The 10-season deal runs from 2017-18 to 2026-27. The deal covers marketing and sponsorship rights.

MEDIA RIGHTS DEALS

SEPTEMBER 1 TO 14

MEDIA RIGHTS NEGOTIATIONS

- ◆ Football Federation Australia chief executive David Gallop said it was unlikely pay-television broadcaster Fox Sports would renew its domestic rights deal for the top-tier A-League competition before the start of the new season. The broadcaster's current deal ends after the 2016-17 season. It has an exclusive negotiating period with the FFA until the end of September.
- ◆ UK commercial broadcaster Channel 4 did not cover the Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe horse racing event citing a high asking price.
- ◆ Vodafone Spain sealed an agreement with rival telco Telefónica that will allow it to show coverage of the Formula One motor-racing championship and the MotoGP motorcycling series. Vodafone earlier this year filed a complaint with the Comisión Nacional de los Mercados y La Competencia, Spain's competition regulator, over Telefónica's unwillingness to make its coverage of the series available on rival platforms until July. Vodafone claimed the move contravened a condition imposed by the CNMC when the regulator approved Telefónica's takeover of Spanish pay-television operator Canal Plus in April 2015. Vodafone requested access to Formula One and MotoGP coverage in January.
- ◆ International sports broadcaster Eleven Sports Network declared its interest in acquiring rights to the Pro League, the top tier of club football in Belgium. Anouk Mertens, managing director of Eleven Sports Network België, told Belgian newspaper *Het Nieuwsblad* it would make a "competitive bid" for the rights.
- ◆ The Cook Islands, Fiji, Niue, Samoa, Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu will miss out on free-to-air coverage of the Super Rugby, Rugby Championship and Mitre 10 Cup tournaments this year after a promised distribution deal fell through. New Zealand Foreign Affairs Minister Murray McCully said a commercial dispute had emerged after Sanzar – the governing body of rugby in Australia, New Zealand and South Africa – sold its rights to an agency that did not provide the content to the islands' broadcasters, according to New Zealand's Stuff news website. A free-to-air deal for the Pacific Islands was announced last year.

NEWS IN BRIEF

SEPTEMBER 1 TO 14

- ◆ French telco SFR-Numericable announced its coverage of the top-tier English Premiership rugby union league will be exploited on the SFR Sport 2 channel, with up to three matches to be shown every match day.
- ◆ The *Australian Financial Review* newspaper reported that the Australian government had no plans to expand the remit of the anti-siphoning list to include digital media players and telcos. The current rules prevent pay-television broadcasters from bidding for media rights to events before free-to-air networks can make offers. A spokesperson for pay-television operator Foxtel said the government should consider reforming the rules.
- ◆ Liberty Media agreed a deal with a consortium led by private equity fund CVC Capital Partners to acquire the Formula One motor-racing world championship. Liberty paid \$4.4bn (€3.95bn) to purchase an initial 18.7-per-cent stake in the series and will acquire the remaining shareholding in 2017. The agreement values the series at \$8bn. CVC will remain shareholders in the series but voting shares that control the championship will pass to Liberty.
- ◆ Sports media agency Interregional Sports Group agreed a deal to acquire sports production company Skibbly Media. UK-based Skibbly Media was renamed ISG Productions as part of the agreement. It will continue to provide live, post-production, highlights and global distribution services for clients.
- ◆ UK pay-television broadcaster BoxNation will offer pay-per-view coverage of the heavyweight world title boxing rematch between Tyson Fury and Wladimir Klitschko via pay-television platform Sky. It will be the first time BoxNation Box Office has been available via Sky.
- ◆ Pac-12 Networks – the multi-platform media company for the Pac-12 US college sports conference – signed a partnership with Sling TV, the OTT subsidiary of pay-television provider Dish. Sling TV will stream all six of Pac-12 Networks’ regional feeds to Sling Blue and Sling Orange customers who subscribe to the ‘Sports Extra’ add-on pack.
- ◆ German sports broadcaster Sport1 signed a content partnership with DAZN, the OTT service operated by the Perform Group. The two will share rights to sports properties. Pay-television channel Sport1 Plus will show Women’s Tennis Association events for three years, from 2017 to 2019, while free-to-air channel Sport1 will show coverage of the annual Stuttgart tournament and the WTA Finals in Singapore. Sport1 Plus will show selected live matches from Spain’s LaLiga, Italy’s Serie A, France’s Ligue 1, Scotland’s Premiership and Belgium’s Pro League top-tier football leagues. Sport1 will also show English Premier League highlights each week.
- ◆ Telcos Orange and Vodafone extended offers on their sports packages in Spain. Vodafone’s introductory offer of €5 (\$5.60) per month was extended to the middle of September, matching Orange’s introductory offer of €6 per month.
- ◆ Caiway – a regional pay-television operator in the Netherlands – agreed a carriage deal with pay-television broadcaster Fox Sports. Under the deal a subscription to the Fox Sports Eredivisie plan, which includes live coverage of the

NEWS IN BRIEF

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country's top tier football league, will now cost €7.50 (\$8.40) per month. The whole Fox Sports subscription costs €15 per month.

- ◆ International sports broadcaster Eleven Sports Network launched its third channel in Poland, Eleven Extra, which will be made available via pay-television operator NC Plus.
- ◆ The Sina Sports division of Chinese internet operator Sina agreed a deal with the US Tennis Association, through which it created a feature page for expanded coverage of this year's US Open. The page featured match highlights and special features, with the USTA providing Sina Sports with interviews and press conferences.
- ◆ Sina entered into a strategic partnership with the International Paralympic Committee. As part of the deal, Sina Sports has dedicated a section of its website to the 2016 summer Paralympic Games. The page features videos, interviews and articles provided by the IPC, with highlights clips shown on social media platform Sina Weibo. The partnership is designed to expand the IPC's digital presence in Asia, where the next three Paralympic Games will be staged.
- ◆ DAZN agreed a multi-year content partnership in Japan with mixed martial arts promotion the Ultimate Fighting Championship. The deal provides DAZN access to all live events and original programming.
- ◆ Australia's National Basketball League launched NBL TV, a streaming service that will provide live coverage of every game during the 2016-17 season. The service – which was developed with telco Telstra – will be available

on television, mobile, tablet and computers. Full-season ticket-holders of Australian NBL clubs will be given a free All Access Pass for 2016-17, with all games available. Non-season ticket-holders will be able to watch home and away games of a nominated team for free.

- ◆ Australia's Multi Channel Network agreed a deal to represent the advertising interests of pay-television broadcaster beIN Sports. MCN will handle the advertising interests of beIN Sports's channels and its digital assets in the country.
- ◆ Perform agreed a deal with the National Football League to commercialise the American football league's digital assets in Australia for the 2016-17 season. The deal covers digital content across mobile, computer and video platforms.
- ◆ Australian media company Seven West Media – which controls commercial broadcaster Seven – acquired a 33-per-cent stake in daily fantasy start-up Draftstars, the official fantasy sports partner of the Australian Football League. Seven West Media will provide media support, product development and investment to drive brand awareness and usage.
- ◆ Brazilian sports broadcaster Esporte Interativo agreed a carriage deal with pay-television operator Sky. The EI Maxx and EI Maxx 2 channels were added to the platform on September 13.
- ◆ The *Wall Street Journal* newspaper reported that BAMTech – the video technology business of MLB Advanced Media, the interactive media arm of Major League Baseball – was approached by Twitter to support the social media platform's coverage of the NFL.

NEWS IN BRIEF

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◆ The World Baseball Softball Confederation live-streamed coverage of the Women's Baseball World Cup via its official channel on video-sharing platform YouTube in territories where rights deals were not agreed.

◆ The IPC said the 2016 summer Paralympic Games will reach a cumulative global audience of 4bn people. A record 154 countries will cover the Games through television, radio and online platforms – a 30-per-cent increase on the 2012 summer Games, which were available in 115 countries and reached a cumulative global audience of 3.8bn.

◆ The International Olympic Committee confirmed its newly-launched Olympic Channel would cover this year's Paralympic Games. The channel will provide around 300 hours of live action in total. Coverage also includes highlights, behind-the-scenes features, interviews and the closing ceremony on September 18.

◆ Virtual reality broadcast technology company NextVR partnered with the USA to provide highlights of the latter stages of the US Open grand slam tournament. Multiple in-stadium cameras were installed at Arthur Ashe Stadium to provide viewers with a variety of angles, while highlights were made available on-demand after each match. A VR tour of the redeveloped Arthur Ashe Stadium was also available.

◆ The International Basketball Federation (Fiba) partnered with the Swiss Basketball governing body to multi-cast two of Switzerland's qualifying games for EuroBasket 2017. Switzerland's matches against Cyprus on September 7 and Iceland on September 10 were

simulcast on Swiss Basketball's official pages on YouTube and social media platform Facebook. Fiba's French and global Facebook pages, as well as its YouTube channel, also broadcast the matches. Swiss Basketball produced the matches, with Fiba providing technical services to facilitate the live streaming.

◆ Agon Limited, the World Chess Championship commercial rights-holder, agreed a partnership with live video services provider Livestream to broadcast November's 12-round event live in virtual reality. The VR broadcast of the match, which takes place from November 11-30, will be available exclusively through worldchess.com.

◆ The IPC signed a content partnership with social media platform Snapchat. The platform used its 'Live Stories' feature to launch the first global 'Paralympic Live Story' on September 15.

INDUSTRY MOVES

◆ LeSports, which is operated by Chinese internet company LeEco, appointed Zhang Zhiyong as its president. Zhang will report to LeSports chief executive Lei Zhenjian.

◆ US media company Discovery Communications appointed Ralph Rivera as managing director of the digital operation of its international sports broadcaster, Eurosport. Rivera takes up the role on September 26 and will report to Discovery's executive vice president of international development and digital, Michael Lang. Rivera will be responsible for expanding the eurosport.com website and the Eurosport Player digital service.



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