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FOOTBALL

The FA tweaks tender as global players line up for buyout deal

By Frank Dunne

The Football Association's invitation to tender for its international rights from 2018-19 to 2023-24 opens the way for a type of deal that has become increasingly rare: a single agency buyout worth hundreds of millions of dollars.

Several experts who have seen the FA's tender document believe this type of deal is the most likely outcome. Global offers can also be made by media groups.

For the current six-season cycle, from 2012-13 to 2017-18, the FA sold its rights on a market-by-market basis, agreeing a mixture of agency and broadcaster deals. These sales brought in a total of about \$71m (€64m) per season (*TV Sports Markets* 20:15).

The decision to allow a single global bid this time is due to the FA receiving aggressive unsolicited bids for its international media rights from at least three agencies this summer. There was also at least one unsolicited bid for the global betting rights.

However, the tender – which was sent out on September 12 – also allows for single-territory and multi-territory bids. The FA is thought to have received pre-emptive bids from a number of multi-territory media groups, including one offer for rights in the Middle East and North Africa from pay-television operator OSN.

OSN's chief executive, Martin Stewart, served as the FA's chief financial officer from January to June this year. In the current cycle, rights in Mena are held by beIN Media Group in a deal worth \$51m over the six seasons.

The FA has already sold its rights in the UK. In April, it extended a deal with public-service broadcaster the BBC and pay-television broadcaster BT Sport for three seasons, from 2018-19 to 2020-21. The deal is worth about £65m (€78m/\$87m) per season – a 27-per-cent increase on the association's current four-season domestic deal with the same two broadcasters (*TV Sports Markets* 20:7).

Potential bidders for the international rights have already sought clarification from the FA on what it intends to do with the rights that are carved out of the tender. These include near-live clips, betting rights and virtual-reality applications. One executive said broadcasters and agencies would struggle to evaluate their bids without guidance on the matter. Bids are due by October 11.

The FA's evolving rights strategy: 2012-18 vs 2018-24

	2012-13 to 2017-18	2018-19 to 2023-24
Inventory	59 FA Cup matches per season 1 Community Shield match per season 5 England World Cup qualifiers over two seasons 16 England friendlies over six seasons 31 England U-21 matches over six seasons	79 FA Cup matches per season 1 Community Shield match per season 6 FA Youth Cup matches per season
Duration	6 seasons ¹	3 or 6 seasons
Packages	4: England live; England delayed; FA Cup live; FA Cup delayed	1: All rights
Digital	Winners of TV rights can acquire digital rights for an additional fee: for live games 5% for internet rights, 3% for mobile; for delayed rights, 2% and 1%	Platform neutral
Near-live clips	Part of live package; licensees must produce at own cost	Carved out
Delayed clips	For live rights winner: must be bought as part of archive deal For delayed rights winner: packages 5/15/60 mins from the FA	Produced at licensees's cost
Archive rights	To be acquired separately from Pitch International	Acquired from FA for additional 1%
Betting rights	Not mentioned in ITT ²	Carved out but global bid allowed
VR rights	Not mentioned in ITT	Carved out

Source: TV Sports Markets Rights Tracker

¹ England senior matches were for the first two seasons only

² Betting rights were later sold to AMI from 2015-16 onward

'Wild West'

There are three main reasons why major rights-holders, including Fifa, Uefa and the International Olympic Committee, have moved away from agreeing global buyout deals with a single agency.

First, the partner would be taking a large risk, the kind that contributed to the failures of the ISL and Kirch agencies about 15 years ago, and Kentaro in 2014. Second, the rights-holder does not have a say in the sales process and usually has limited control over how its brand is exploited. Third, the old-fashioned buyout deal typically did not allow for the rights-holder to share in additional revenue.

As one expert said this week of the FA's strategy: "We're back to the Wild West days when agencies bought out the rights and as a rights-holder you didn't know if they were making \$1m or \$100m profit."

The FA is thought to be against a revenue-share agreement for two reasons. First, it wanted a tender that offered the same terms to all bidders, whether broadcasters or agencies, and broadcasters generally do not share revenue. Second, in order to plan long-term it needs to know in advance what its revenue streams will be.

One rights expert pointed out a third reason why the FA may have opted against a revenue-share deal: it is impossible to know if the information on rights sales coming back from agencies is reliable, as many major agencies routinely bundle content and assign values in line with internal imperatives.

The tender includes clauses designed to ensure the FA receives information from an agency regarding its contracts with licensees, and does not exploit the rights in a way which could damage the FA brand.

One expert warned, however, that it would struggle to make such clauses stick. “There is some obligation to share information about the media-rights deals agreed, but if I am paying upwards of half a billion dollars to buy out the rights, why would I share information? Those clauses will be negotiated out during the long-form agreement talks.”

The FA accepts it would have to cede some control if a bidder was willing to meet or exceed its targets.

It is arguable that companies like WME/IMG, Wanda/Infront and MP & Silva/Baofeng are so financially robust that acquiring global FA rights would not overstretch them. One independent football rights expert said that in the current market it would be surprising if the international rights went for less than \$100m per season – over 40 per cent more than their current value.

This is despite the exclusion of England national team matches following their centralisation by Uefa, European football’s governing body. It is understood that the majority of the value in the FA’s rights is in the FA Cup competition.

However, as one senior executive pointed out, the recent trend for federation deals is increasingly based on limiting agency risk and maintaining a high degree of federation control.

Examples include the Perform Group’s agreements for Women’s Tennis Association and International Basketball Federation rights, worth \$525m and €500m respectively (*TV Sports Markets* 18:23; 20:3).

Near-live

The association is thought to be considering three strategies for the exploitation of its near-live clips:

- Providing the clips exclusively to sponsors and commercial partners
- Retaining the clips to use for FA-branded channels and platforms
- Selling the rights on the open market to agencies or broadcasters.

The first of these would mark a radical departure from normal rights-holder practice. Several observers believe the FA’s new commercial director – Mark Bullingham, who replaced Stuart Turner in May – may be leaning toward this due to his background in sponsorship. Prior to joining the FA, Bullingham was chief executive of the Omnicom-owned Fuse Sports & Entertainment agency.

One problem the FA faces is that it cannot know how much sponsors would be prepared to pay for exclusive near-live clips. The association is unlikely to begin negotiations for its next round of sponsorship deals until later in the year.

Even though near-live rights have been carved out, media companies and agencies bidding for the live rights are expected to make aggressive proposals for the near-live rights to ensure they cannot be sold to rivals.

Betting rights

Betting rights were excluded from the last tender, which was drawn up in 2011. This was largely because the association had ethical concerns. Other governing bodies, such as Fifa, Uefa and the IOC, as well as the English Premier League, refuse to sell betting rights due to concerns ranging from gambling addiction to the use of data in illegal betting and match-fixing.

After a long internal debate, the association made the rights available in 2015. Following informal discussions with a number of players in the market, the FA agreed a deal with the Advisers Media International agency for three seasons, from 2015-16 to 2017-18. The deal is thought to be worth about £2m, or just under £670,000 per season. AMI sold on the rights to the IMG agency.

The view within the FA is that streaming content for betting operators is now widely accepted as another kind of media right and has not created any ethical problems for other rights-holders.

The FA intends to sell global betting rights separately but will accept a single global offer for them. Most companies bidding for global media rights would want the betting rights to guarantee exclusivity in each market. However, any deal would be treated as a separate contract to the media-rights deal.

Virtual reality

Virtual-reality rights have also been carved out of the new tender and will be sold separately. The FA believes the technology is still underdeveloped from a commercial perspective and is evaluating whether it can be applied in a meaningful way to enrich the match experience for viewers.

Many of the products currently on the market use digitised versions of action, rather than the action itself, and it is unclear whether there will be a market for this among fans and media companies.

There are also still issues of users experiencing nausea after using VR headsets for extended periods of time. It could be several years, if at all, before the FA brings these rights to the market.

Archive

The association has changed its strategy for the distribution of its archive rights, bringing sales in-house for the new cycle.

In the current cycle, broadcasters must acquire archive content in a separate deal with the Pitch International agency. Pitch acquired these rights in a six-season deal, from 2012-13 to 2017-18.

The deal includes a minimum guarantee of £500,000 per season and a revenue share which has earned the association a further £500,000 per season. In the new cycle, archive rights can be acquired directly from the FA for a fee of one per cent on top of the media-rights fee.

Taking archive rights in-house was not a move designed to squeeze more revenue out of broadcasters.

It followed naturally from the association's decision to digitise all its archive content to ensure it can be preserved for longer at optimal quality.

Having created a fully-searchable digital archive it made sense for the FA to exploit these rights. The association is not thought to have ruled out some kind of parallel exploitation by an agency. All archive rights deals are non-exclusive.

The FA would need a substantial uplift in total revenues to earn as much as it does in its deal with Pitch. It is thought the price in the new tender is being kept low as the FA wants to encourage broadcasters to show as much of its archive content as possible.

Platform-neutral

The last time the FA designed its global sales strategy it did so against the background of the copyright case between UK publican Karen Murphy and the Premier League. The climate was one of uncertainty about the validity of market-by-market sales within Europe, particularly regarding internet rights.

As a consequence the association decided it was safer to split its rights by technology platform. A successful bidder for linear television rights could also bid for internet and/or mobile rights.

Many of the association's concerns – that market-by-market sales or geo-blocking might be outlawed completely – proved unfounded. For the new cycle, this differentiation between delivery systems has been scrapped. Rights are now available on a platform-neutral basis.

Given the convergence in the market between media and telecommunications operators, and the massive shift to consumption of content on mobile devices, such a separation is arguably now redundant. ◆

ICE HOCKEY

SHL gets 90% fee increase in Sweden's most valuable deal

By Robin Jellis

Pay-television broadcaster C More last week agreed the most valuable Swedish sports-rights deal in history, paying an increase of about 90 per cent to renew Swedish Hockey League rights.

C More's six-season renewal, from 2018-19 to 2023-24, will be worth an average of about SEK670m (€70m/\$78m) per season. This is vastly higher than its current four-season deal, from 2014-15 to 2017-18, worth just under SEK350m per season (*TV Sports Markets* 17:6).

The increase in value is much bigger than when the league last sold its rights. Then, its fee rose about 16 per cent from SEK300m per season in the previous four-season cycle, from 2010-11 to 2013-14, when the rights were bought by C More and commercial broadcaster TV4 – both owned by media group Bonnier.

Swedish Hockey League rights fees over five cycles

Broadcaster	Duration	Per-season fee (SEKm)
Canal Plus	2004-05 to 2005-06	80
Canal Plus / TV4	2006-07 to 2009-10	200
Canal Plus / TV4	2010-11 to 2013-14	300
C More	2014-15 to 2017-18	350
C More	2018-19 to 2023-24	670

Source: *TV Sports Markets Rights Tracker*

Note: *Canal Plus rebranded as C More in 2012*

The SHL is widely considered the most important property in the Swedish market as it is a strong driver of pay-television subscriptions.

The league's income has risen dramatically for three main reasons: strong competition between broadcasters; C More's desperation to retain the rights as part of its positioning as a broadcaster of Swedish sport; and increased flexibility in the tender.

The SHL tendered its rights in August with bids due on September 3. The league was advised on the sale of its rights by the Commercial Sports Media agency. It was previously advised by the Profile Partners agency.

Despite having two seasons left to run on its current deal with C More, the league was keen to sell its rights early to benefit from strong competition in the country.

The Swedish market is now the core of C More's business, so the broadcaster was always likely to bid aggressively to retain the rights. Commercial and pay-television broadcaster Modern Times Group was also keen on the SHL; acquiring the rights would have severely weakened C More, its main pay-television rival in the country.

US media group Discovery Communications – which owns the SBS commercial channels and Eurosport pay-television channels – was thought to be seeking a premium Swedish sports property following its deal for Norway's top-tier football league, the Tippeligaen, last December (*TV Sports Markets* 19:23).

Meanwhile, telco TeliaSonera – which currently owns no sports rights – seriously studied a bid. It is understood that TeliaSonera was the mystery bidder in last October's auction for English Premier League rights (*TV Sports Markets* 19:18).

The league sought offers of either four, five or six seasons. The SHL was willing to agree a longer-term deal following discussions with broadcasters: a longer contract would help any winning bidder recoup their investment in the rights. Having more time to prepare the launch of new channels also encouraged bids from market entrants, such as TeliaSonera.

In another change from the last time it sold its rights, the league didn't define set packages of rights, instead asking bidders to put forward their plan to exploit rights across various platforms.

One source said MTG's offer was the highest after one round of bidding, at about SEK500m per season. Discovery is thought to have made a much lower bid.

Scope of rights

In its current deal, C More is required to sublicense coverage of some play-off matches, including the final, to a free-to-air broadcaster.

In the new tender, the league moved away from the expression of 'free-to-air' and instead asked bidders for 'free viewing' plans. C More's new deal will end in summer 2024 when the linear broadcast market could be markedly different and consumer habits may have changed dramatically.

Swedish public-service broadcaster SVT currently holds rights to a package of free-to-air highlights rights over the same four seasons as C More's live rights contract in a deal agreed with the league.

The league and C More have yet to define what coverage will be made available for free in the new deal. The SHL is expected to announce this in the coming weeks.

Under the new deal, C More will continue to cover production costs of about €6m per season. Production company Mediatec handles C More's coverage.

C More's deal is for global rights, although almost all the value is for Sweden. The broadcaster chooses to acquire SHL rights on a global basis to ensure it can control who holds rights in other territories.

In the current cycle, the league's international rights are distributed on behalf of C More by Commercial Sports Media. The rights generate about €300,000 per season. All deals are approved by C More and the SHL. No decision has been made about how the international rights will be distributed from 2018-19 onward.

Market position

Most local experts believe C More had to retain its SHL rights at all costs. In recent years, C More has positioned itself as a broadcaster of Swedish sport and this strategy would be difficult to sustain without SHL rights.

Current C More sports properties

Current properties	Territory	Duration	Per-season fee
Swedish Hockey League	Global	2014-15 to 2017-18	SEK350m
Allsvenskan and Superettan football	Sweden	2016 to 2019	SEK200-225m
HockeyAllsvenskan	Sweden	2016-17 to 2020-21	Minimum of SEK35m
Handbollsligan (men's and women's)	Sweden	2017-18 to 2022-23	
Swedish Floorball Association	Sweden	2016-17 to 2017-18	None
Elitserien speedway	Sweden	2014 to 2017	
PGA Tour	Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden	2016 to 2021	\$6m
Wimbledon	Finland, Norway, Sweden	2014 to 2016	€700k
Women's Tennis Association	Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden	2013 to 2016	\$900k
ATP World Tour	Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden	2014 to 2016	€1.6m

Source: TV Sports Markets Rights Tracker

Note: Handball and floorball deals agreed together with TV4, also owned by Bonnier

Local experts say C More was forced into this strategy after losing out on premium sports rights to MTG across the region. MTG holds rights to most top European football leagues in the country (Premier League, Spain's LaLiga, Italy's Serie A and France's Ligue 1) as well as Uefa Champions League, Formula One and National Hockey League rights.

Discovery, meanwhile, has lost its marquee property in the country – Uefa European Qualifier rights. Its current four-season deal, from 2014-15 to 2017-18, is worth €75m across Denmark, Norway and Sweden. It covers all matches, including those of the Swedish national team.

Rights in Sweden alone have been acquired by TV4, from 2018-19 to 2021-22, in a deal worth about €65m that includes Uefa's new Nations League competition (*TV Sports Markets* 20:14).

C More losses

The renewal comes at a tricky time for C More, which has continued to post losses in its annual financial results. In 2015, the broadcaster posted a loss of about SEK550m across the Nordics: Sweden is thought to have accounted for about SEK200m. This is higher than in 2014, when C More posted a loss across the Nordics of just under SEK500m.

Formerly a pan-Nordic broadcaster, C More retrenched to the Swedish market after Bonnier sold the C More operations in Denmark and Norway to Discovery and TV2 respectively. Bonnier also owns Finnish commercial and pay-television broadcaster MTV3.

Bonnier took full control of C More in June 2014, buying the remaining 35-per-cent of the broadcaster from telco Telenor.

Allsvenskan

C More last week also extended its deal for rights to the second-tier ice hockey league, the HockeyAllsvenskan. Its current four-season deal, from 2015-16 to 2018-19, is based on a minimum fee of SEK35m per season, plus a 50:50 share of pay-per-view revenue (*TV Sports Markets* 19:11).

The new deal is thought to involve a renegotiation of the current deal and will run for five seasons, from 2016-17 to 2020-21. It is thought the rights fee and revenue share will remain the same, but that C More's investment in production will increase from 2016-17.

In 2015-16, production of the 330 games was split between C More and the clubs. The league feels that if C More handles all production the quality will improve. The broadcaster spent up to SEK20,000 on producing games between the biggest domestic clubs.

No other broadcasters were approached about a deal – the extension was agreed directly between the league and C More. The league was advised on the deal by Profile.

Other rights

It is understood ATP and Women's Tennis Association rights are on the market in the Nordic territories. C More currently holds rights to both but it is unclear if it will seek to retain them.

The broadcaster's four-year pan-Nordic WTA deal, from 2013 to 2016, is worth about \$900,000 per year. C More sublicensed rights in Denmark to MTG across the period for about \$500,000 per year. There is strong interest in the performances of Caroline Wozniacki in Denmark (*TV Sports Markets* 17:1).

C More's three-year pan-Nordic deal for ATP World Tour rights, from 2014 to 2016, is worth about €1.6m per year. This is slightly higher than the value of its previous three-year deal, from 2011 to 2013, worth about €1.4m per year. Both deals included all World Tour Masters 1000 and World Tour 500 events. ◆

TV TURKEY

Saran to launch channel in response to low broadcaster bids

By Callum McCarthy

The Saran Media agency will become Turkey's newest sports broadcaster in November, abandoning its role as a broker of media-rights deals in favour of exploiting rights itself.

Saran will work with pay-television operator D-Smart to deliver the new channel, which is expected to replace one of D-Smart's pay-television Smart Spor HD channels.

Carriage deals have so far been agreed with two platforms – pay-television operator Digiturk and telco Turkcell. These deals will expire shortly after the end of the 2018-19 Premier League season. Telco Türk Telekom is thought to be interested in a deal to carry the channel.

Saran's new channel is not likely to compete for Turkish Süper Lig rights when they are tendered at the end of this year, but is likely to at least attempt to maintain its current portfolio of rights. Many of its deals for marquee properties expire during or after 2017.

Properties available for exploitation on Saran's new channel	Duration
Premier League	2016-17 to 2018-19
Formula One	2015 to 2017
NBA	2014-15 to 2016-17
Turkish Volleyball Federation	2016 to 2020
Chinese Super League	2016 to 2018

Source: TV Sports Markets Rights Tracker

The decision to change from agency to broadcaster is thought to have been made over the course of June and July, and was strongly influenced by the difficulty of negotiations over the sale of Premier League rights to local broadcasters.

In January, Saran bought Premier League rights in Turkey for just below \$15m (€13.4m) per season from 2016-17 to 2018-19. Saran would have made a considerable loss had it sold the rights exclusively, as broadcasters refused to pay anything close to Saran's original fee (*TV Sports Markets* 20:1).

It is also thought to have made a large loss on 2016 Olympic Games rights, which were sold in a last-minute deal to state broadcaster TRT. Saran had acquired the rights last September for just over €10m from commercial broadcaster Fox (*TV Sports Markets* 19:17).

Saran carved out a niche as a gatekeeper to the Turkish media-rights market based on its knowledge of the market and its ability to secure free-to-air and pay-television coverage.

But the disparity between the fees Saran paid for rights and the fees Turkish broadcasters were willing to pay for them has grown substantially since the beginning of 2015.

The depreciation of the Turkish lira has made Saran's role as an agency in the country very difficult. Saran often buys properties in dollars but receives rights fees in lira from local broadcasters. The lira is down 33 per cent against the dollar compared to this time three years ago and is not expected to rebound.

Saran will now try to recoup money on its rights deals from carriage fees, subscriptions, advertising and broadcast sponsorship. Industry experts believe Saran has the potential to make more money this way, especially as its channel will be on D-Smart and Digiturk, Turkey's two biggest pay-television operators.

Plans

Saran plans to build its channel on three main properties: the Premier League, the National Basketball Association and Formula One.

In order to meet its obligations to the Premier League, Saran has distributed non-exclusive rights to each of the three operators with which it will have carriage. D-Smart, Digiturk and Turkcell have received the same package of six matches per week over three seasons, from 2016-17 to 2018-19. These rights will revert to Saran when its channel is launched.

Its difficulty selling NBA pay-television rights also influenced its decision to launch a channel. Saran pays about \$2.5m per season for NBA rights in Turkey, from 2014-15 to 2016-17. Local broadcaster interest in the property has cooled over recent seasons (*TV Sports Markets* 20:5).

Saran will exploit the NBA's pay-television rights on its channel for the 2016-17 season, but has also sold a package of free-to-air NBA rights to commercial broadcaster TV8 ahead of the new season, which begins on October 26. The deal runs for the 2016-17 season only – the final season in Saran's three-season deal with the league. Saran also has a non-exclusive carriage agreement in place with D-Smart for NBA TV, from 2014-15 to 2016-17.

Saran is thought to pay about \$1m per year for Formula One rights in Turkey, from 2015 to 2017. Live rights in 2016 only are held by D-Smart, while commercial broadcaster CNN Turk shows a package of highlights each race day.

It is unclear what other sports rights will be exploited on Saran's channel as it currently has sublicensing deals in place for several other properties.

Licensing

Operators have been promised the channel will go on-air during the first week of November. It is thought Saran is currently finalising the acquisition of a licence for its channel from Radyo ve Televizyon Üst Kurulu, Turkey's media regulator.

Local sources have stressed the difficulty of this process at the present time. RTUK withdrew licences from 25 Turkish television channels and radio stations after the attempted coup in July.

Saran's path is thought to be clearer than most other applicants as it only plans to show sport. It does not plan to exploit any mixed martial arts or boxing rights, which would complicate its application process as violence on television is strictly regulated by RTUK.

Should Saran not receive a licence by November 1, it could sublicense its portfolio of rights to D-Smart, which could broadcast on its behalf via Smart Spor.

Süper Lig tender

An invitation to tender for Süper Lig rights is expected to be issued in December, *TV Sports Markets* understands.

Final preliminary talks with broadcasters will take place next week, informing them of the structure of the tender and the date it will be published. The tender will enforce a no-single-buyer rule, but it is as-yet unclear how the rights will be packaged.

The Turkish football federation – the league's commercial rights-holder – is thought to be considering two options.

First, it could split pay-television rights by creating packages of matches, like the English Premier League and the German Bundesliga.

Second, it could split rights by distribution mechanism, allowing a mobile or IPTV operator to acquire all matches alongside a traditional pay-television operator.

The chief executive of telco Turkcell, Kaan Terzioğlu, has temporarily withdrawn his membership from the TFF board while a final decision is being taken. Local sources believe Terzioğlu has supported the argument for rights to be split according to mechanism, as Turkcell operates both IPTV and mobile services.

Meanwhile, a new commission structure has been decided upon which will benefit the Turkish Union of Clubs.

Currently, buyers of Süper Lig rights pay 18 per cent VAT and 12 per cent in commission to the TFF on top of their rights fee. In 2015-16, commission payments totalling just over \$51m were paid to the federation.

From 2016-17, the 12-per-cent commission will be split two ways: eight per cent to the clubs' union and four per cent to the federation.

The fee is expected to reach just over \$55m this season as the league's rights fees increase season-on-season in accordance with inflation (*TV Sports Markets* 19:1). ♦

PARALYMPIC GAMES

IPC opts for early extension with Channel 4 for 2018 & 2020 Games

By Richard Welbirg

Channel 4 is expected to pay a small increase to extend its deal with the International Paralympic Committee to cover the 2018 and 2020 Games.

The two parties last week signed a letter of intent ensuring the commercial broadcaster will continue as UK Paralympics rights-holder for four years, from 2017 to 2020. The letter sets out the principles of a new contract, but negotiations over certain details are ongoing.

Channel 4 is thought to have offered about £9m (€10.5m/\$11.7m). The deal will cover all IPC rights over the four-year period, including the 2018 winter Games in Pyeongchang and the 2020 summer Games in Tokyo, in which the great majority of the value lies.

The broadcaster paid about £8m for rights to the 2014 and 2016 Games. It paid the same amount for rights to just the 2012 Games in London, the first it broadcast (*TV Sports Markets* 16:22; 17:17).

Timing

The announcement, ahead of the completion of the deal, seems timed to take advantage of the Paralympics' high public profile following the conclusion of the Rio Games on September 18.

It also allows the publicly-owned but commercially-funded broadcaster to deflect criticism it has incurred over its three-year, £75m deal for the *Great British Bake Off* programme – taking the rights from public-service broadcaster the BBC.

The broadcaster was attacked for paying such a large fee to take a general entertainment programme from another publicly-owned broadcaster.

Reasoning

Channel 4 faced no competition in extending its rights. One source close to the BBC said the public-service broadcaster would not be prepared to pay even close to Channel 4's outlay.

The time zone of both Games also poses a problem for advertising-funded Channel 4, as many events will air during the working day.

But there is no sense that Channel 4 tried to use its position as the only bidder to reduce the value of the rights. The broadcaster has a very strong relationship with the IPC.

Broadcasting the Paralympics helps Channel 4 fulfil its public-service remit. In a May report commissioned and funded by the broadcaster, 'The Consequences of Privatising Channel 4', its "commitment to, and coverage of, the 2012 Paralympics" was highlighted as part of its broader social contribution.

The property also fits Channel 4's self-image as an innovative and progressive broadcaster.

In a September article for the *Daily Telegraph*, chief creative officer Jay Hunt wrote of the Paralympics: "It's a multi-million pound investment in developing and showcasing disabled talent. The sort of loss-leading commitment only Channel 4 would make."

The IPC has consistently praised Channel 4 for its coverage. In advance of the Rio games, IPC president Sir Philip Craven said that "Channel 4, through their amazing coverage and campaigns, redefine the boundaries of possibility in terms of how broadcasters cover the Paralympics".

The deal also covers the 2017 Paralympic World Championships, which will take place in London from 14-23 July next year. ◆

FOOTBALL

Canal Plus Afrique makes first major domestic league play

By Callum McCarthy

Canal Plus Afrique made its first major investment in a domestic African football league earlier this month, acquiring rights to the Côte d'Ivoire Ligue 1.

Pay-television operator Canal Plus will pay an average of CFA656m (€1m/\$1.1m) per season over five seasons, from 2016-17 to 2020-21, for pay-television rights to Ligue 1, the Ivorian top-tier domestic league. Canal Plus will make value-in-kind investments on top of its rights fee.

The deal was agreed between Canal Plus and the Fédération Ivoirienne de Football, the country's football governing body.

The operator will also heavily invest in the two companies responsible for producing the league's matches – African Broadcast Services and Fifprod – as well as providing technical and administrative assistance to the FIF and Ligue 1's organising committee. One informed source believes the total value of these investments will exceed the value of the rights fee.

This is the first time Ligue 1 will be broadcast on pay-television. Until now, league matches have only been shown by public-service broadcaster RTI. The league's current three-season deal with RTI, from 2015-16 to 2017-18, is thought to be worth about \$100,000 per season plus production costs. This deal will continue alongside Canal Plus's deal for pay-television rights.

RTI will continue to broadcast two matches per matchday in Côte d'Ivoire only, as it did in the 2015-16 season. Canal Plus will broadcast up to four matches per matchday across 23 French-speaking territories in sub-Saharan Africa, including Côte d'Ivoire.

It is thought Canal Plus's investment in the league will give it some influence when the league considers a new free-to-air deal beyond 2017-18.

Canal Plus's deal also includes rights to Côte d'Ivoire's National Cup final, League Cup final, Super Cup (played between the winners of the league and National Cup), and the final round of fixtures from the second-tier Ligue 2.

Competition

The FIF has been seeking a deal with a pay-television broadcaster for at least a year, and held private talks with a number of broadcasters. It is thought pay-television operator StarTimes was Canal Plus's

only serious competitor. StarTimes submitted a bid in late August which was bettered by Canal Plus days later.

Canal Plus began talks with the federation at last year's Discop trade fair in Johannesburg after it expressed willingness to consider investing in local leagues. Until its deal for Ligue 1, Canal Plus had only bought rights to European football leagues.

When deciding which local league to invest in, Canal Plus was interested in Ligue 1 for three main reasons.

First, the operator has more subscribers in Côte d'Ivoire than any of its other African territories.

Second, domestic football in Côte d'Ivoire is thought to be better organised than in other countries – Ligue 1 almost always keeps to its schedule and the federation is more stable than others in sub-Saharan Africa.

Third, Canal Plus was pleased with the FIF's record of working with a broadcast partner – there have been very few problems between the federation and RTI in terms of gaining access to stadiums and reliable scheduling.

Selected African football league deals

Property	Broadcaster	Duration	Per-season value
South African Premier Soccer League	SuperSport	2012-13 to 2016-17	\$29m
Nigerian Professional Football League	SuperSport	2015-16 to 2018-19	\$8m
Algerian Ligue Professionnelle 1	ENTV	2016-17 to 2017-18	\$4.6m
Kenyan Premier League	SuperSport	2016 to 2021	\$2.6m
Tanzanian Premier League	Azam	2016-17 to 2020-21	\$2.1m
Ghanaian Premier League	SuperSport	2014 to 2016	\$2m
Zambian Super League	SuperSport	2016 to 2020	\$1m
Côte d'Ivoire Ligue 1	Canal Plus	2016-17 to 2020-21	\$1.1m
Ugandan Premier League	Azam	2015-16 to 2017-18	\$540,000
Rwanda Premier League	Azam	2015-16 to 2019-20	\$470,000
Zimbabwean Premier Soccer League	SuperSport	2013 to 2017	\$400,000
Malawi Premier Division	Beta TV	2016 to 2018	\$370,000

Source: TV Sports Markets Rights Tracker

Cameroon talks

Although StarTimes has missed out on Ligue 1 rights it is thought to be in talks with Fecafoot – Cameroonian football's governing body – for rights to its Elite One top-tier domestic league.

StarTimes recently provided Cameroonian public-service broadcaster CRTV – the incumbent broadcaster of the Elite One – with state-of-the-art production equipment in order to broadcast the

women's Africa Cup of Nations, to be held in Cameroon between November and December this year.

StarTimes hopes this will help foster a relationship with CRTV, possibly enabling it to acquire Elite One pay-television rights.

The standard of Elite One football is considerably lower than Côte d'Ivoire's Ligue 1, and domestic football is far less developed. In addition, StarTimes will have difficulty working with Fecafoot as two separate factions are currently fighting a court battle for control of the federation. StarTimes remains interested, however, as it is keen to invest in local sport.

Industry experts believe investment in local sport could become a widespread trend as the strategy has already paid off for African pay-television broadcasters SuperSport and Azam.

SuperSport's acquisition of the South African top-tier Premier Soccer League and the top-tier Kenyan Premier League sharply increased subscriptions in those countries, while much of Azam's success as an operator in Tanzania is due to its deals for men's, women's and youth football with the Tanzanian Football Federation. ◆

BASKETBALL

Early Euroleague rights deal imminent in Greek market

By Robin Jellis

Basketball's Euroleague is close to a new media-rights deal in Greece even though its existing contract has two seasons to run, *TV Sports Markets* understands.

Euroleague rights in Greece are currently held by the Asset Ogilvy agency in a deal worth about €4.3m (\$4.8m) per season. Asset Ogilvy held the rights in a six-season deal, from 2010-11 to 2015-16, which was extended at the same fee for two seasons, 2016-17 and 2017-18 (*TV Sports Markets* 17:14).

It is understood a new deal in the country is imminent. It is unclear whether this will run from 2018-19, when the Asset Ogilvy deal ends, or if the agency's deal may be renegotiated.

In November 2015, Euroleague and the IMG agency announced a 10-season joint venture, from 2016-17 to 2025-26, worth a minimum of €630m. Under this, IMG is responsible for selling global media rights (*TV Sports Markets* 19:21).

For the upcoming season starting on October 12, Asset Ogilvy has deals in place with two broadcasters: public-service broadcaster ERT and pay-television broadcaster Nova. Both are in the last of three seasons, from 2014-15 to 2016-17. The agency has not yet sold rights for the 2017-18 season.

ERT currently shows one game per round exclusively, with all other games exclusively on Nova. Both broadcasters have rights to the end-of-season Final Four. The combined value of the deals is about €4.6m per season. ERT pays about €1.8m per season and Nova about €2.8m per season.

Other territories

The Euroleague and IMG are yet to announce new deals in several territories ahead of the new season. There are currently no deals in place in Germany, Poland, Russia or Spain. Of these territories, the rights will be most valuable in Spain despite difficult current economic conditions, as basketball is hugely popular. New deals are expected to be announced in these territories next week.

In August, the Euroleague and IMG agreed a new six-season deal in Israel with the Sports Channel, from 2016-17 to 2021-22, worth about \$6m per season (*TV Sports Markets* 20:15).

Greek league

New deals for rights to Greek basketball league matches in the Greek Basket League are also under discussion. Three top clubs – AEK, Olympiacos and Panathinaikos – currently sell their media rights individually while the remaining clubs sell their rights collectively. The total value of these rights in the 2016-17 season is just under €4m.

Pay-television broadcaster OTE has a four-season deal, from 2015-16 to 2018-19, for home Olympiacos games worth about €1m per season. The deal also covers friendly games.

OTE also has a three-season deal for home games of AEK, from 2015-16 to 2017-18, worth about €350,000 per season. The deal covers friendly and Eurocup games as well as league games.

Nova has a two-season deal for home games of Panathinaikos, from 2015-16 to 2016-17, worth about €1.1m per season.

Nova also has rights to the home games of the remaining 11 league clubs in a two-season deal, from 2015-16 to 2016-17, worth about €1.5m per season.

The individual club deals were agreed directly by the clubs, while the league sold its rights itself. The league previously worked with the Taf Sports Marketing agency.

As in the current cycle, Nova and OTE are likely to be bidding against one another. The balance of power between the two has shifted in recent years: OTE's subscriber numbers have overtaken Nova for the first time since the former's launch in February 2009 – then called Conn-X.

OTE is now understood to have slightly more than Nova's 460,000 subscribers. ◆

OLYMPIC GAMES

Parliamentary scrutiny on Olympic impasse in Germany

By Frank Dunne

German public-service broadcasters ARD and ZDF are unlikely to change their position over free-to-air rights to the 2018 and 2020 Olympic Games, despite being subjected to questions in parliament this month over their hard-line negotiating tactics, *TV Sports Markets* understands.

The two have been in talks for months with US media group Discovery Communications, the European rights-holder for the 2018, 2020, 2022 and 2024 Games. The two sides are reported to be €50m (\$56m) apart on price, with Discovery pushing for €150m and the two broadcasters offering only €100m.

On September 21, representatives from ARD, ZDF and Discovery were called before the sports committee of the Bundestag, the German parliament.

ARD and ZDF were asked why their reported offer was lower than the €129m they paid for the 2014 and 2016 Games, and lower than their proposed contribution for the 2018 and 2020 Games as part of the European Broadcasting Union's unsuccessful bid (*TV Sports Markets* 15:13; 19:20).

A source close to the broadcasters said they did not feel under any pressure to raise their offer as a consequence of the parliamentary questions. The two believe Discovery's asking price is unreasonable given the rights will be non-exclusive and that the 2018 and 2020 Games take place in South Korea and Japan respectively, bad time zones for European broadcasters.

The source also said it was accepted, and uncontroversial, that when members of the big five television markets bid as part of the EBU, their offer was higher than in standalone bids because in consortium bids there was an element of financial solidarity with public-service broadcasters in smaller markets.

The source added that ARD/ZDF were not trying to lowball Discovery as the opening gambit of a negotiation process. "Anyone who knows ARD and ZDF knows they don't go into negotiations with a low starting price expecting to get pushed up. They always offer what they genuinely believe the rights are worth and very rarely move from that valuation."

Discovery, which owns international sports broadcaster Eurosport, pointed out to the committee it had been able to agree deals with public-service broadcasters without major problems in numerous European countries, including neighbouring Austria and Switzerland.

The company stressed it was open to negotiation on price but could not wait indefinitely. It said that if no deal was reached for free-to-air rights it would broadcast the Games itself in its entirety. ◆

MOTORSPORT

Formula E opts for Channel 5 in return for first UK rights fee

By Robin Jellis

Motorsport's Formula E secured its first rights fee from the UK market in a deal agreed earlier this month with commercial broadcaster Channel 5.

The two-season deal, covering 2016-17 and 2017-18, is understood to be worth about £50,000 (€58,000/\$65,000) per season. Channel 5 will cover production costs of any races held in the UK on top of its fee.

Rival commercial broadcaster ITV previously held the rights in single-season deals covering the 2014-15 and 2015-16 seasons. It paid no rights fee for either season but did cover production costs of races held in the UK.

Two races were held in London in both 2014-15 and 2015-16. Each London event is thought to have cost ITV about £50,000 to produce. The 2016-17 calendar is yet to be finalised but there is currently no planned UK event.

Channel 5 will broadcast all Formula E events live, with qualifying sessions shown on digital-terrestrial channel Spike – both Channel 5 and Spike are owned by US media conglomerate Viacom.

ITV showed coverage of all non-UK races on its digital-terrestrial ITV4 channel while coverage of the London events were shown on its main ITV channel.

Ali Russell, Formula E's chief marketing officer, told *TV Sports Markets*: "We want to go on record and thank ITV for the support they've given us and the footprint they've given us on ITV and ITV4.

"It was a situation where we came to the end of a contract period and found the best partner to develop Formula E with a younger audience."

ITV is not thought to have been keen to extend its Formula E deal. It would likely have found it difficult to schedule Formula E races from January, when its coverage of UK horse racing begins.

In January this year, ITV replaced commercial broadcaster Channel 4 as the holder of UK horse racing rights. That four-year deal, from 2017 to 2020, will be worth £7.5m per year. ITV will show a minimum of 34 races per year on its flagship channel and 60 per year on ITV4 (*TV Sports Markets* 20:1).

Formula E approached all UK broadcasters over a deal. It is understood that its preference was to agree

a deal with a free-to-air broadcaster, as Russell said it wanted a broadcast partner that would “grow the audience”.

The 2016-17 season will include 14 races and begins in Hong Kong on October 9.

Channel 5 portfolio

Channel 5 has little live sport, but does have Football League highlights (from 2015-16 to 2017-18 worth close to £2m per season) and England & Wales Cricket Board highlights (from 2014 to 2017 worth about £1.2m per year) (*TV Sports Markets* 19:3).

Formula E is not the broadcaster’s first foray into motorsport. The broadcaster has a three-season deal to show World Rally Championship highlights, from 2016 to 2018. The deal is thought to be worth about €200,000 per season.

Pay-television broadcaster BT Sport holds live WRC rights in a three-season deal, from 2016 to 2018, worth about €300,000 per season. WRC also has a deal with Welsh-language public-service broadcaster S4C, from 2016 to 2018, worth just under €100,000 per season. ◆

MOTORSPORT

Econet bolsters motorsport rights portfolio with WRC deal

By Callum McCarthy

African telco Econet Wireless has completed a deal for World Rally Championship media rights in sub-Saharan Africa, further expanding its motorsport portfolio.

Econet Media, a subsidiary of Econet, will pay just under \$700,000 (€627,000) per year for exclusive English-language free-to-air and pay-television rights in a deal guaranteed to cover the 2017 and 2018 seasons. Econet will exploit the rights on its free-to-air and pay-television Kwesé Sports channels.

The deal includes an option for a further four years, from 2019 to 2022. The extension will be dependent on the Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile, motorsport's global governing body, renewing the media-rights sales mandate of WRC Promoter, the championship's commercial rights-holder. A renewal is all but certain.

Econet's deal represents an increase of about 75 per cent on the value of WRC's previous deal in sub-Saharan Africa, with pay-television operator StarTimes. StarTimes paid just under \$400,000 per year in a two-year deal covering 2015 and 2016 (*TV Sports Markets* 20:15).

The WRC did not tender the rights, preferring private negotiations with broadcasters. StarTimes is thought to have been interested in renewing its rights but didn't want to increase its fee. Pay-television broadcaster SuperSport was also interested in the rights and is believed to have submitted a bid.

The WRC is also able to sell French-language and Portuguese-language rights in sub-Saharan Africa. It does not currently have broadcast deals in place for these rights.

Non-exclusive deals could also be agreed with free-to-air broadcasters should an event be staged in the region. The last WRC event held in sub-Saharan Africa was the Safari Rally in 2002. Kwesé would retain non-exclusive free-to-air rights should an African event be added to the calendar.

Kwesé will mostly show WRC on a delayed basis, but has plans to show the final stage of each rally live. Econet will now hold Formula One, Formula E and WRC rights for at least the 2017 and 2018 seasons. ◆

TV SPORTS AWARDS



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MEDIA RIGHTS DEALS

SEPTEMBER 15 TO 28

FOOTBALL

- ◆ Pay-television broadcaster Setanta Sports acquired English Premier League rights in Kazakhstan for three seasons, from 2016-17 to 2018-19. The newly-launched Setanta Sports Kazakhstan channel will broadcast up to six live matches per week.
- ◆ Catalan public-service broadcaster TV3 agreed a deal with the Mediapro agency for highlights rights to Spain's top-tier Primera División, second-tier Segunda División and Copa del Rey knockout competition. The three-season deal runs from 2016-17 to 2018-19, with TV3's Esport3 channel to show the coverage.
- ◆ Austrian commercial broadcaster Puls 4 agreed a deal with the Austrian football federation for rights to domestic club knockout competition the OFB Cup. The two-season deal covers 2016-17 and 2017-18.
- ◆ The Rushmans consultancy agreed a deal to market the broadcast rights and advertising inventory for next month's national team friendly between Cuba and the USA. The game is being made available to broadcasters around the world by Rushmans, in association with the Pitch International agency and RTVC, the commercial enterprise of audiovisual content in Cuba.
- ◆ Vietnamese pay-television operator Vietnam Cable Television (VTVcab) agreed a two-season deal to broadcast the Uefa Champions League. The deal, with South Korean firm KJ Investment Group, grants VTVcab television, internet and mobile broadcast rights to the 2016-17 and 2017-18 editions of the competition.

OTHER SPORTS

- ◆ **Basketball:** Pay-television broadcaster Sky New Zealand acquired rights to Australia's National Basketball League club competition. The three-season deal, from 2016-17 to 2018-19, will be reviewed at the end of each season. Sky will show every game of the 2016-17 campaign via the Sky Sport 1, 2, 3 and 4 channels.
- ◆ **Basketball:** Australian public-service broadcaster SBS acquired exclusive free-to-air rights to the 2016-17 season of the NBL. SBS will show one game live each Sunday.
- ◆ **Basketball:** NBA team the Los Angeles Clippers agreed an extension to its partnership with cable-television channel Prime Ticket. Terms of the deal were not disclosed, but the *Los Angeles Times* newspaper said it would earn the Clippers between \$50m (€44.7m) and \$55m per season over six seasons from 2016-17 to 2021-22. Prime Ticket, which is operated by the Fox network, has the right to show all regular-season games not selected by a national broadcaster, first-round post-season Clippers games, and selected pre-season games. All games televised by Prime Ticket will be made available via the Fox Sports Go streaming platform.
- ◆ **Boxing:** UK pay-television broadcaster Sky acquired rights for the light-heavyweight world title fight between Sergey Kovalev and Andre Ward on November 19.
- ◆ **Cricket:** Media group Sony Pictures Networks India extended its rights deal for state-level Twenty20 competition the Karnataka Premier League to cover the 2016 season.

MEDIA RIGHTS DEALS

SEPTEMBER 15 TO 28

- ◆ **Darts:** Sports promoter Matchroom Sport signed a five-year deal with German sports broadcaster Sport1. Matchroom's leading events, including the Professional Darts Corporation's World Darts Championship, Premier League Darts and World Matchplay, will be broadcast live in Germany. The deal runs until the end of 2021.
- ◆ **Darts:** International sports broadcaster Eleven Sports Network acquired rights in Belgium to the 2017 PDC World Darts Championship. Eleven will broadcast 87 hours of live coverage of the event. It will also broadcast 15 hours of highlights from the PDC World Cup of Darts, which took place earlier this year.
- ◆ **Drone Racing:** Pay-television sports broadcaster ESPN acquired rights in the Americas to the Drone Racing League.
- ◆ **Drone Racing:** German media company ProSiebenSat.1 secured exclusive rights in Germany, Austria and Switzerland to the Drone Racing League after investing in the competition through its 7Sports subsidiary.
- ◆ **Golf:** The Sport 24 in-flight and in-ship channel acquired rights to the 2016 Ryder Cup tournament. Sport 24 will show live coverage of each day of the event and will air 30 hours of live action in total. It will also show a seven-hour repeat of the final day's action.
- ◆ **Gymnastics:** Pay-television broadcaster Sky acquired UK rights to the 2017 World Cup of Gymnastics event, which will take place at London's O2 Arena on April 8. The deal was agreed with sports promoter Matchroom Sport and the British Gymnastics governing body. Sky Sports will air live coverage of the men's and women's competitions throughout the day.
- ◆ **Horse Racing:** Sky acquired rights to this year's Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe. It will dedicate a three-hour programme to the event, which takes place on October 2.
- ◆ **Horse Racing:** International sports broadcaster Eurosport acquired highlights rights in the UK to the Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe.
- ◆ **Ice Hockey:** Polish public-service broadcaster TVP acquired rights for the World Cup of Hockey national team tournament plus NHL rights in a four-season deal from 2016-17 to 2019-20. TVP will show three live games per week.
- ◆ **Ice Hockey:** Swedish pay-television broadcaster C More acquired rights for the top-tier Swedish Hockey League for the six seasons covering 2018-19 to 2023-24 (page 8).
- ◆ **Ice Hockey:** C More extended a deal for rights to the second-tier Swedish ice hockey league, the HockeyAllsvenskan (page 8).
- ◆ **Mixed Martial Arts:** US cable-television channel AXS TV Fights agreed a multi-year rights deal with the newly-formed Legacy Fighting Alliance promotion. The channel will broadcast 30 live LFA events in 2017.
- ◆ **Multi-sport:** RTVC, the commercial enterprise of audiovisual content in Cuba, agreed a sports media-rights partnership with the Rushmans consultancy. Rushmans will distribute, market and co-produce Cuban sports content and events, both live and recorded.

MEDIA RIGHTS DEALS

SEPTEMBER 15 TO 28

◆ **Paralympic Games:** The International Paralympic Committee and Channel 4 signed a letter of intent for the commercial broadcaster to retain Paralympics rights in the UK (page 16).

◆ **Rugby Union:** Scottish Rugby extended its deal with the Pitch International agency for the distribution of international rights to Scottish national team Autumn Test matches. The deal will run until the end of 2021.

◆ **Skiing:** Swiss public-service broadcaster SRG struck a deal with the Infront Sports & Media agency for rights to a number of International Ski Federation events. It grants SRG rights to World Cup events for five seasons, from 2016-17 to 2020-21, and World Championship events in 2017, 2019 and 2021. The deal covers the Alpine, Nordic, snowboard and freestyle skiing disciplines of the World Cup; the 2017 Freestyle Ski and Snowboard World Championships; and the Alpine and Nordic World Championships in 2019 and 2021.

◆ **Skiing:** Swiss public-service broadcaster SRG extended its partnership with national governing body Swiss-Ski in a six-season deal from 2016-17 to 2021-22. SRG will act as host broadcaster for all events organised by the International Ski Federation in Switzerland.

◆ **Tennis:** Czech commercial and pay-television broadcaster Nova renewed an exclusive deal for the 2018 and 2019 editions of the Wimbledon grand slam tournament.

◆ **Tennis:** US pay-television broadcaster Tennis Channel agreed an exclusive deal for the Volvo Car Open women's tournament, which takes

place in Charleston, USA. The eight-year deal will run from 2017 to 2024.

◆ **US College Sport:** The IMG College division of the IMG agency extended its multimedia rights deal with the University of South Carolina. The 10-year agreement runs from 2017-18 to 2026-27. IMG College will continue to serve as the exclusive multimedia rights-holder of the university's Gamecock Athletics department.

MEDIA RIGHTS NEGOTIATIONS

◆ The Board of Control for Cricket in India opened a tender process for the next cycle of rights to the Indian Premier League Twenty20 competition. The BCCI set a deadline of October 25. The packages on offer include television rights in the Indian subcontinent for 10 years, from 2018 to 2027, digital rights in the subcontinent for five years, from 2018 to 2022, and media rights for the same five-year period for the rest of the world.

NEWS IN BRIEF

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- ◆ Social media company Twitter launched new applications on Apple TV, Amazon Fire TV and Xbox One to allow users of the three services to stream its sports content free of charge. The apps will feature content from the NFL; the NBA; MLB Advanced Media, the interactive media and internet company of Major League Baseball; Pac-12 Networks, the content and multi-platform media company for the Pac-12 US college sports conference; and Campus Insiders, a digital video network for college sports. Access will not require a Twitter account. The Apple TV application is available globally via the App Store, while Twitter for Xbox One is accessible in Australia, Brazil, Canada, Mexico, the UK and the US. Twitter for Amazon TV and Fire TV Stick is available in the UK and the US.
- ◆ Olympic Broadcasting Services, the host broadcaster for all Olympic Games, was accused of breaching labour laws during the summer Olympic and Paralympic Games in Rio de Janeiro. A Brazilian court ordered the seizure of OBS equipment and vehicles after prosecutors accused OBS of breaches that included employees working irregular hours and for more than 10 hours a day.
- ◆ NBCUniversal chief executive Steve Burke said the US media company made a profit of more than \$250m (€224.2m) on its coverage of the 2016 summer Olympic Games. Compared to London 2012, Rio 2016 advertising sales rose more than 20 per cent, to \$1.2bn.
- ◆ North American sports broadcaster One World Sports partnered with digital sports content company Whistle Sports to stream live coverage of American football games from the Ivy League US collegiate sports conference. The agreement will cover 10 games during the 2016-17 season. One World Sports will stream coverage via the official Whistle Sports page on social media platform Facebook.
- ◆ LiveLike raised \$5m (€4.5m) in investment from partners including David Stern, former commissioner of the NBA. Investors also included a group of venture firms led by Evolution Media Partners, a joint investment from entertainment and sports agency CAA and investment firm TPG, as well as Elysian Park Ventures, Courtside Ventures, Dentsu Ventures and Techstars Ventures.
- ◆ ESPN's sport OTT service is set to launch in 2017 and could include an à la carte model allowing users to buy individual events or sports, according to Bob Iger, chief executive of Walt Disney media company, the broadcaster's owner.
- ◆ Streaming service FilmOn TV agreed a deal with One World Sports to host the North American sports broadcaster's content portfolio online. One World Sports will be available for subscription through FilmOn.com.
- ◆ UK pay-television broadcaster Sky and commercial broadcaster ITV each invested £1.55m (€1.8m/\$2m) in Ginx TV, which owns 24-hour esports channel Ginx eSports TV. Sky and ITV will both have the option to increase their stakes.
- ◆ UK pay-television broadcaster BT Sport trialled a virtual-reality broadcast during the English Premier League match between Arsenal

NEWS IN BRIEF

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and Chelsea on September 24. BT filmed the game with virtual-reality cameras and worked with LiveLike to offer fans four different angles.

◆ Sky said it would broadcast the entire 2017 Formula One season in ultra-high-definition following a successful test during the Singapore grand prix on September 18.

◆ German pay-television broadcaster Sky Deutschland will launch a new free digital sports platform in 2017, Skysport.de. The platform will live stream content not shown on television, content from Sky Sport News HD and highlights from Sky's sports portfolio.

◆ The German Football League hit back at claims from the Monopolkommission, Germany's independent competition advisor, that it should reform its model for selling media rights to the Bundesliga, the top-tier football league. The Monopolkommission said that in future the rights-selling process should be conducted following extensive investigation. The DFL insisted the assignment of rights had taken place through a "transparent" procedure since 2005.

◆ French telco SFR launched its new 4K ultra-high-definition channel, SFR Sport 4K, with the Premier League match between Manchester United and Leicester City on September 24.

◆ The Swedish Competition Authority approved cable operator Com Hem's purchase of pay-television platform Boxer. The deal, which reportedly values Boxer at SEK1.3bn (€139m/\$156m), was agreed in June.

◆ Slovakian media company Elements Channel

is to launch a new sports channel in the country in October. The channel, 213, will commit 80 per cent of its programming to coverage of domestic sport including club football in Slovakia.

◆ The Mediapro agency reached an agreement with Argentinian cable operator Supercanal for carriage of its Canal F1 Latin America channel.

◆ Mediapro struck a deal with Red Intercable, an association of local cable operators in Argentina, for carriage of Canal F1 Latin America.

◆ The NFL said Twitter attracted an average of 243,000 viewers to its live stream of the Thursday Night Football game between the New York Jets and the Buffalo Bills on September 15, the first time the social media company broadcast an NFL encounter. Twitter reached 2.3m combined worldwide viewers for the pre-game show, and 2.1m viewers for the game alone.

◆ Social media platform Facebook began streaming live coverage of the Revolution Series elite track cycling league on September 17. Facebook used its Facebook Live feature to stream coverage on the official Revolution Series and Cycling Weekly pages.

◆ Esports organisation ESL will work with virtual-reality entertainment platform Silver.tv and virtual-reality production studio WonderWorld VR to produce coverage of its ESL One New York event, which will be held at the Barclays Center in Brooklyn on October 1-2.

◆ The national basketball federations of Austria, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Hungary, the Netherlands, Poland, Russia, Sweden and

NEWS IN BRIEF

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Ukraine partnered with the International Basketball Federation (Fiba) to live stream qualifying matches for the men's EuroBasket 2017 national team tournament online. Eleven games involving the 10 countries were streamed online through Fiba's official channels on Facebook and video-sharing platform YouTube.

- ◆ SuperSport, the pay-television broadcaster that operates in sub-Saharan Africa, used its football Facebook page to live stream South Africa's Varsity Football Final between Tshwane University of Technology and University of Johannesburg on September 22.
- ◆ Digital sports media company Whistle Sports agreed a partnership with the NFL to create and distribute original NFL-themed video content throughout the 2016 season. Content will include short-form workout and training videos, fan documentaries, skills competitions, trick shots and esports matches.
- ◆ Consultancy Henry Birtles Associates agreed a deal with horse racing company the Stronach Group to distribute international media rights to the inaugural Pegasus World Cup Invitational event, which takes place at the Stronach-owned Gulfstream Park racecourse in the US state of Florida on January 28 next year.

INDUSTRY MOVES

◆ Mark Lazarus, chairman of the NBC Sports Group division of NBCUniversal, is to step up his remit at the US media company following the departure of Ted Harbert, the chairman of NBC Broadcasting. Lazarus is to add chairman of NBC Broadcasting to his title and will share

responsibility of NBC Broadcasting with other executives. In a note to colleagues obtained by US magazine the *Hollywood Reporter*, Harbert said he would leave NBCU as of October 14.

- ◆ Turkish pay-television operator Digiturk appointed Yousef Al-Obaidly as its new chief executive following its recent takeover by beIN Media Group. Al-Obaidly will retain his current role as beIN's deputy chief executive and will oversee Digiturk's integration.
- ◆ Horacio Gennari stepped down as director of the Argentinian government's soon-to-be-scraped Football for All initiative, which ensured coverage of domestic football competitions on free-to-air television.
- ◆ Marco Auletta resigned from his position as chief executive of the MP & Silva agency. Auletta said it was the "right moment" to step down following the takeover of the agency by Shanghai Jin Xin, an investment fund created by Chinese financial services company Everbright and internet and entertainment technology provider Baofeng, in May.
- ◆ French public-service broadcaster France Télévisions named Laurent-Éric Le Lay, the former chairman and chief executive of international sports broadcaster Eurosport, as its new sports director. Le Lay will begin his new role on October 1 and will replace Daniel Bilalian, who will remain with the broadcaster for a short period to oversee the transition.



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