

TVSportsMarkets

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FOOTBALL

FA international sales strategy vindicated by big agency deals

By Frank Dunne

England's Football Association told *TV Sports Markets* this week that its strategy of opening up FA Cup international rights by running a single tender, rather than selling market by market, was vindicated by its deals with the IMG and Pitch International agencies.

The FA did not confirm the value of the deals for the six-season international rights cycle, from 2018-19 to 2023-24, but the total revenue from the two deals is understood to be about \$1.01bn (€918m), or just over \$168m per season. Of this, IMG is thought to be paying about \$730m and Pitch about \$280m.

In the current six-season cycle, from 2012-13 to 2017-18, the FA earns just over \$425m for its international rights in a series of regional and single-market deals with agencies and broadcasters. England national team friendly matches were included in the first two seasons of the cycle before their centralisation by Uefa, European football's governing body.

FA international rights, 2012-18 compared to 2018-24

Region	2012-13 to 2017-18 ¹		2018-19 to 2023-24	
	Buyer	Total fee (\$m)	Buyer	Total fee (\$m)
Western Europe	Pitch International	87	Pitch International	280
Middle East & North Africa	BeIN Media Group	51		
Sub-Saharan Africa	SuperSport	75	IMG	730
Asia (excluding Thailand)	MP & Silva	120		
Thailand	BBTV	28		
Eastern Europe	AMI	16.5		
Latin America	Pitch International	10		
North America	Fox Sports	32		
Oceania	Pitch International	6		
Total		425.5		1010

Source: *TV Sports Markets Rights Tracker*

¹ England friendly matches were included in the first two seasons of this cycle

Tom Gracey, senior broadcast manager at the FA, said the association's approach had been vindicated. He told *TV Sports Markets*: "While we entered into the process with no pre-conceived ideas as to who we would partner with, conducting a single global ITT helped us create competitive tension, particularly among agencies."

The value of the deals took industry experts by surprise, even allowing for the competitive nature of the agency market at present. Among football rights experts canvassed by *TV Sports Markets* prior to the bidding, the most bullish prediction was a total of \$650m. The final value exceeded even the FA's expectations.

"We were ambitious with our targets and were delighted with the level of support showed by Pitch International and IMG," Gracey said. "Martin Glenn, our chief executive, has already described it as having a 'transformational' impact on what we are able to achieve as an organisation across the country."

He added that the deals underlined the "enduring global popularity" of the competition due to its "history and prestige" and its "relevance in today's football calendar".

Negotiations

The FA issued its tender on September 12. After receiving bids by the October 11 deadline, it decided not to award international rights to a single bidder.

It entered into direct negotiations with several parties and quickly agreed a deal with Pitch covering two regions – Western Europe and the Middle East and North Africa. In further direct talks over rights in the remaining territories, IMG's bid is said to have been about \$200m higher than that of the Infront Sports & Media agency.

IMG's fee is also understood to include global betting rights, which experts value at about \$5m per season.

The association had originally carved out near-live clips rights (*TV Sports Markets* 20:17). However, as expected, most bidders argued it would be hard to maximise the value of these rights if such premium content could end up with a rival to their broadcast partner in each region.

In response, the FA is thought to have included some non-exclusive near-live clips in both agency deals. The association will also use near-live clips on FA-branded digital and social media outlets, and will provide similar content to sponsors in its next cycle of sponsorship deals.

Neither IMG nor Pitch is thought to have paid the additional one per cent for access to the FA's archive content. Broadcasters will have to acquire these rights directly from the FA. It is more likely the FA will sell these to an agency, possibly renewing its existing archive deal with Pitch.

The FA was advised on the sale of its international rights by consultant Phil Lines.

Perfect timing

Independent rights experts say the FA timed and structured its process perfectly to make the most of an agency market in which consolidation, and investments from new-entry Chinese owners, has left a small number of very well-resourced and ambitious companies. The tender was drawn up after the FA

received several, large unsolicited offers from agencies during the summer.

The four bidders for its international rights were: Pitch, IMG, Infront and the Perform Group. No broadcasters made global offers.

Some observers pointed to the similarity with this year's tender for German Bundesliga rights across Europe, for which there were strong pan-regional bids from MP & Silva and Infront, but none from broadcasters.

As a senior executive at one broadcaster put it: "The agencies are trying to hold onto space but are making risky bets on an old model that is being disrupted. They are taking risks for valuation reasons."

He said properties like the Bundesliga and the FA Cup provided "second-tier football content, which doesn't drive subscription income or advertising sales".

Among the other major agencies, Lagardère Sports and Mediapro both decided the values the FA was seeking were unrealistic and did not bid.

There were strong bids for rights in some regions and individual territories.

MP & Silva bid for FA rights in Asia and selected markets in Europe and Latin America. It is understood to have offered \$42m per season for rights across Asia. In the current cycle, the agency pays \$20m per season for rights across Asia, excluding Thailand, where commercial broadcaster BBTv pays \$4.7m per season (*TV Sports Markets* 20:15).

For sub-Saharan Africa, including South Africa, there were two strong bidders. Telco Econet, which is set to launch its pay-television Kwesé Sports channels, offered about \$25m per season.

South Africa-based pay-television broadcaster SuperSport offered just under \$20m per season. In the current cycle, SuperSport holds rights across the region, paying about \$12.5m per season.

Pay-television broadcaster Azam TV is understood to have bid about \$600,000 per season for rights in Tanzania alone.

Surprisingly, there are not thought to have been strong bids for rights in China from streaming companies, although at least one is thought to have bid. Neither incumbent Fox, nor NBCUniversal – the current broadcaster of English Premier League football – bid for the rights in the US.

IMG gamble

The consensus among industry executives at last month's Sportel trade fair was that, of the two winning bidders, IMG is taking by far the bigger gamble.

The widespread assumption is that the Pitch bid will have been backed by a pre-deal or a verbal agreement with the beIN Media Group.

BeIN has been trying to broaden its agency relationships beyond those with which it has traditionally been close – Pitch, Mediapro and MP & Silva – but it will be a major surprise if the FA Cup does not end up on the beIN Sports pay-television channels in France and Mena.

IMG is paying \$730m for rights which in the current cycle are worth \$287.5m. Rival agency bosses believe it is gambling on three things: massive growth in China, massive growth in the US and launching an IPO before the new cycle kicks in.

However, even allowing for the rampant inflation in the value of football rights in China and the US, the investment looks to carry considerable risk on a pure brokerage basis.

IMG's owners, talent agency WME, are widely expected to take the merged WME/IMG public at some point. If this were to happen before the FA contract begins, in 2018-19, investors would have no profit and loss reports on the property – the FA Cup would merely be another blue-chip property in the IMG portfolio.

The company is currently valued at \$5.5bn. A successful IPO could push this up considerably, making any losses on its investment of just under \$122m per season in the FA Cup a drop in the ocean.

In March, WME joint chief executive Patrick Whitesell told the *Hollywood Reporter* the company would “not be forced to go public” but added that being a publicly traded company “may be a great thing”.

Neither IMG nor Pitch commented on their new deals when contacted by *TV Sports Markets* this week.

Doubling up

The new FA Cup deals will almost double the association's annual media-rights income in the next cycle, although comparisons are complicated by the fact it has deals in sterling, euros and US dollars. Using current exchange rates for all deals, annual income will leap to almost \$319m per season from about \$162m per season.

FA annual media-rights income

Source of revenue	2014-15 to 2017-18	2018-19 to 2021-22 ¹
FA Cup domestic rights	£50m	£67m
FA Cup international rights	\$70.9m ²	\$168.3m
England matches	€27.5m	€62.5m
Total³	\$162.1m	\$318.7m

Source: TV Sports Markets Rights Tracker

¹ International FA Cup rights sold until 2023-24

² England friendly matches included for first two seasons

³ Current exchange rates used for all deals

The association earns media-rights income from three sources: domestic FA Cup rights, international FA Cup rights, and income for England national team matches guaranteed by Uefa.

In deals with public-service broadcaster the BBC and pay-television broadcaster BT Sport, the value of domestic FA Cup rights will rise from £50m (€55m/\$61m) per season to £67m per season in the next cycle, split £31m per season from the BBC and £36m per season from BT (*TV Sports Markets* 20:7).

Income for England matches will rise from €27.5m in the current four-season cycle – from 2014-15 to 2017-18 – to about €62.5m in the next four-season cycle, from 2018-19 to 2021-22.

The large increase is in part due to the inclusion of two cycles of the new Nations League competition and in part reflects rights inflation and the strength of the FA's bargaining position with Uefa. ◆

CYCLING

ASO gets domestic Tour increase despite little competition

By Robin Jellis

Amaury Sport Organisation secured a small increase in the value of its domestic rights, including the Tour de France, in last month's five-year renewal with France Télévisions.

The extension, which will run from 2021 to 2025, is worth an average of about €32m (\$35m) per year. On top of the rights fee, French public-service broadcaster France Télévisions will cover total production costs to ASO events held in France of about €17m per year, of which about €12m per year is for the Tour.

This represents an increase of about seven per cent on the annual value of France Télévisions' current five-year deal, from 2016 to 2020, worth close to €30m per year. The broadcaster also covers production costs in this deal (*TV Sports Markets* 17:8).

ASO launched a tender for free-to-air rights on April 15. Following broadcaster requests, it extended the bid deadline to June 30. Commercial broadcasters M6 and TF1 were interested in the rights but neither bid.

Both M6 and TF1 felt there was little commercial sense in acquiring the rights. Although the Tour delivers high ratings it would be impossible for a broadcaster to recoup the cost of producing the race from advertising or broadcast sponsorship, let alone the rights fee. In 2015, France Télévisions' average audience was just under 3.5m, a share of 32.5 per cent.

France Télévisions is understood to have earned just under €5m per year from advertising and broadcast sponsorship last year. ASO does not place any advertising restrictions on France Télévisions, other than that no adverts can be shown during the final 30 minutes of each stage.

One local rights expert said the investment in the Tour makes more sense for France Télévisions than commercial broadcasters as it is funded by a licence fee as well as advertising.

The public-service broadcaster has committed to showing every stage in full from 2017 for the first time. This will not significantly increase the broadcaster's production costs, one source said.

France Télévisions' rights are not fully exclusive as ASO also has a pay-television deal with Eurosport in France. That deal covers the same five years as France Télévisions' current deal, 2016 to 2020, and is worth about €3m per year (*TV Sports Markets* 18:16).

TV Sports Markets understands that France Télévisions has secured additional rights for mobile devices from 2017 which it did not previously hold. These were held by telco Orange as part of an agreement with ASO which ends this year.

Extension

Local experts say France Télévisions was always likely to extend its contract. It was ASO's preferred broadcast partner as it covers hefty production costs, provides wide free-to-air coverage, can easily switch coverage between its channels and holds many other cycling rights.

Via its membership of the European Broadcasting Union, France Télévisions holds Union Cycliste Internationale rights from 2017 to 2024, Union Européenne de Cyclisme rights from 2016 to 2018, and Amstel Gold Race rights from 2017 to 2020.

The public-service broadcaster also holds French cycling federation rights in a joint five-year deal, from 2016 to 2020, with sports broadcaster Eurosport.

France Télévisions is understood to have been keen to renew its Tour rights early in a market which is increasingly competitive – pay-television broadcasters beIN Sports and Canal Plus are competing for top rights, while telco Altice is bidding for premium sport and Eurosport has been more aggressive since it was acquired by Discovery Communications.

France Télévisions has seen its exclusive grip over several domestic properties slip in recent times. In December 2015, it agreed a joint deal with Canal Plus for Coupe de la Ligue rights worth €23m per season from 2016-17 to 2019-20. France Télévisions had held exclusive rights from 2012-13 to 2015-16 for €10.5m per season (*TV Sports Markets* 20:1).

It also sublicenses more French Open tennis rights to Eurosport in its deal from 2014 to 2018 than it did with other broadcasters in its previous deal, from 2010 to 2013 (*TV Sports Markets* 18:5).

France Télévisions was keen to renew the Tour rights well into the future, while ASO is generally regarded as a low-risk organisation whose strategy is dictated by the Amaury Group, its owner. Amaury Group owns French newspapers *Le Parisien* and *L'Équipe*, among others. It is thought ASO subsidises other parts of the business (*TV Sports Markets* 19:4).

ASO is understood to have been happy to renew with a trusted and long-term partner which will increase the coverage it currently provides from 2017, while also securing a small rights-fee increase.

Other ASO events

The Tour de France is the most valuable component of the France Télévisions deal, representing about two-thirds of the total.

The ASO package also includes seven other cycle races (Paris-Nice, Paris-Roubaix, Paris-Tours, Flèche Wallonne, Liège-Bastogne-Liège, the Critérium International and the Critérium du Dauphiné) as well as

the Dakar Rally motor race and the Paris Marathon.

In total, all ASO events included in the deal amounted to more than 180 hours of coverage this year.

One French broadcast source said the fact all ASO races were included in the same package may have dissuaded some local broadcasters who may have bid for the Tour as a standalone property. ◆

TV ITALY

Uefa and Serie A jostle to be first in difficult Italian market

By Frank Dunne

Lega Serie A and Uefa are in a race to be first to sell their rights in Italy for the period 2018-19 to 2020-21. Each will have an improved television product and each believes that beating the other to sell its rights is critical to securing a good result in a difficult market. But both have obstacles to overcome first.

The Uefa Champions League and the domestic rights to Serie A are the biggest content investments Italy's two main pay-television operators, Rupert Murdoch's Sky Italia and Silvio Berlusconi's Mediaset Premium, will make next year.

Sky currently pays €585m (\$644m) per season for Serie A. Mediaset pays €233m per season for exclusive Champions League rights and a further €360m per season for Serie A – a total of €593m per season. All deals cover the three seasons from 2015-16 to 2017-18.

Both rights-holders fear that whoever sells their rights second will be selling to broadcasters with reduced budgets.

Each will be selling into a market which got tougher last month with the collapse of the merger talks between media groups Vivendi and Mediaset. This has left the loss-making Mediaset Premium a weakened rival to Sky. And things could be about to get much worse for all rights-holders selling into Italy.

Following the collapse of the Vivendi offer, Mediaset has re-entered merger talks with Sky. Such a deal – which would create a monopoly pay-television platform – would struggle to get past regulators and would take at least a year to complete even if it were approved. But if the two parties agreed in principle to merge before either set of rights came to the market, it is unlikely they would compete as aggressively as they have in the past.

Serie A changes

Lega Serie A and its adviser, the Infront Sports & Media agency, have conducted an in-depth analysis of the sales models of Europe's other top football leagues to see which elements can be successfully incorporated into Italy to help increase the value of the rights. Changes which are certain to take place regard kick-off times and the packaging of international rights.

Some club presidents have also pushed for a reduction in the number of live matches available, but this is likely to be strongly resisted by Sky, for whom showing all league matches live is a powerful marketing tool.

New slots: Currently Serie A has eight possible kick-off times but about half of the matches – four to five matches per week – are usually played in the traditional 3pm Sunday slot. The league is thought to favour the Spanish LaLiga model, where each match has a unique kick-off time and broadcast slot.

Several new slots are under consideration from 2018-19 onward. Inter Milan, which is jointly owned by Chinese conglomerate Suning and Indonesian businessman Erick Thohir, has pushed for a Saturday 3pm kick-off to maximise audiences in Asia. The Sunday 3pm slot looks set to be dropped completely.

No single buyer: For international rights the league will no longer sell a single block of rights, as it has since Serie A rights were centralised in 2010. The exact model – whether pure market-by-market or a split by region – has yet to be decided.

The split will bring some competitive tension back to a property for which many agencies had given up bidding. In the first three centralised cycles the rights were won by the MP & Silva agency. The number of rival bidders fell each time the rights were sold, with only two – IMG and B4 Capital – competing against MP & Silva last time (*TV Sports Markets* 18:20).

The agency pays €185.7m per season in the current deal, an increase of almost 60 per cent on what it paid in the last cycle, from 2012-13 to 2014-15. MP & Silva co-founder Riccardo Silva this week told *TV Sports Markets* the agency welcomed the change.

“When it’s all or nothing there are big risks involved. If you are outbid, you lose everything. We have held on to these rights but have had to increase our investment by 50 or 60 per cent each time.

“Being able to target the rights in selected markets enables us to maintain a differentiated portfolio without such a huge outlay. Our business is about margin, not just turnover.”

He said that losing Serie A five or 10 years ago would have been a problem as it was the agency’s flagship property. But the company has grown to such an extent that no single property is critical to its business.

Fewer matches: Serie A clubs are worried about a fall in stadium attendances and a decline in viewing figures for live matches broadcast on Sky and Mediaset. Average stadium attendances have been dropping for over a decade and now stand at just over 22,000, only slightly ahead of France’s Ligue 1.

Several clubs believe reducing the number of matches broadcast live would help resolve both problems. They believe that not making all matches available live has been a factor in the commercial success of the English Premier League.

In the 2016-17 to 2018-19 cycle, the Premier League makes only 168 out of 380 matches available to UK broadcasters. This will increase to at least 190 matches per season in the league’s next domestic cycle,

from 2019-20 to 2021-22.

A reduction in Serie A matches would mean less exposure for club sponsors but, with media rights accounting for between 60 and 70 per cent of turnover for most Serie A clubs, this is not thought to be a major issue.

Limited options

A Sky-Mediaset merger was discussed last year but talks collapsed, so the league and Infront will have already been prepared for such a possibility. But their options look limited.

Other pay-television players, like Discovery Communications-owned Eurosport and Fox are not expected to fill the void, especially as Fox is also owned by Murdoch.

OTT operators like Perform and Amazon will probably be interested but are thought unlikely to be ready to spend the requisite hundreds of millions of euros per season to acquire domestic rights. Serie A believes its strongest card in the event of a merger would be to create its own vehicle to show matches.

Serie A and Infront have had three meetings with the league's internal rights commission, made up of club representatives, about the proposed revamp. A further meeting is due on November 7. The strategy for the next cycle is due to be approved at a league assembly later this month.

The sales guidelines would then need approval from the country's antitrust and communications authorities, which could take a further two months. Scrutiny will be intense.

After the last sales process the antitrust authority, l'Autorità Garante del Mercato e della Concorrenza, handed down fines totalling €66m to the league, Infront, Mediaset and Sky, for anticompetitive behaviour (*TV Sports Markets* 20:7).

It is unlikely a tender for domestic rights will be launched before March. Insiders say April or May is a more realistic target.

Planned changes to the Melandri Law on collective selling, which would require the league to make one match available on free-to-air television each week, are unlikely to get through parliament before the next rights sales process is completed (*TV Sports Markets* 20:13).

Champions League

Team Marketing, Uefa's sales agent for its club competitions, will be coming to market in Italy with a much stronger proposition from 2018-19. Following Uefa's overhaul of the competition's qualification system, four Serie A clubs will have guaranteed places in the group stage. At present, two qualify automatically and one qualifies through the play-offs.

Uefa is also likely to introduce split kick-off times, as it uses for the Europa League on Thursdays, to make the rights more attractive to broadcasters. The governing body will need the increased bargaining power in Italy.

Sky's subscriber base did not suffer the damage expected when it lost Champions League rights to Mediaset in February 2014. In the last quarter of 2015, its first without the rights, it added 12,000 subscribers, taking it to 4.77m. Sky revenues in 2016 were up marginally on 2015.

Mediaset Premium's customer base has not increased rapidly enough to prevent the platform losing money. It added just over 300,000 subscribers in the second half of 2015, rising from 1.7m to just over 2m. For 2015, it posted a loss of €83.5m on net revenues of €560m.

Sky will point to these facts in negotiations to show the Champions League can no longer be considered a 'must-have' for an Italian pay-television broadcaster.

Mediaset's strategy of keeping coverage of Italian clubs in the Champions League exclusively on its pay-television platform has backfired. It has not added enough new subscribers to compensate for the missed advertising income it would have earned around coverage on its free-to-air channels. This strategy will be abandoned.

The scale of Mediaset Premium's losses was a factor in Vivendi pulling out of merger talks, despite having reached a deal in April which valued Mediaset Premium at €800m. Vivendi chief executive Arnaud de Puyfontaine claimed in July that Vivendi had discovered the finances of Mediaset Premium to be worse than those originally communicated, which was strenuously denied by Mediaset.

Berlusconi, owner of Mediaset's parent company Fininvest, has said his family will pump more money into the broadcaster. But few observers believe it will be prepared to match its current rights fee for the Champions League.

Research firm Enders Analysis said in a note earlier this year that Mediaset Premium had "a flawed strategy without a viable business model" and that the company had "massively overbid Sky" for Champions League rights. It predicted Mediaset Premium's losses could rise to €250m in 2016.

The planned changes to the Champions League format, which were agreed with the European Club Association, were bitterly opposed by the European Professional Football Leagues body, which has turned to newly-elected Uefa president Aleksander Čeferin for support.

A final set of changes will be signed off at the next Uefa executive committee in December, meaning Team will not come to market until January.

It is thought that Uefa's first targets are those expected to yield the biggest percentage fee increases, which include selected Asian territories and, in Europe, the UK and Germany. This will probably mean Team coming to Italy in late spring or early summer, and hoping Serie A has not already gone to market. ◆

TV AFRICA

ESPN returns to Africa following wide-ranging Kwesé TV deal

By Callum McCarthy

ESPN's multi-faceted agreement with telco Econet's Kwesé TV pay-television platform brings the sports broadcaster back to sub-Saharan Africa after an absence of more than three years.

The deal will run for eight years from 2017 to 2024. *TV Sports Markets* understands Econet will pay about \$3.5m (€3.2m) in the first year, rising to about \$4m in 2024. Sources close to ESPN say the deal is more valuable.

Between 75 and 80 per cent of the deal's value is for rights ESPN holds, while the remainder of the value is in Kwesé's licensing of the ESPN brand.

The deal with Kwesé excludes South Africa, where the start-up broadcaster does not hold a broadcast licence. ESPN has not been available in sub-Saharan Africa since it closed its wholly-owned channels across Europe, the Middle East and Africa in July 2013.

The agreement covers three facets. First, ESPN Media Distribution will sublicense its portfolio of sports rights and ancillary content in the region to Econet. Second, a new ESPN channel will be created in sub-Saharan Africa, for which ESPN will produce ancillary content. Third, a joint website between the two companies will be created – kweseespn.com.

Econet will receive ESPN's entire catalogue of US NCAA sport, including men's Division 1 basketball and American football; the extreme sport X-Games series; IndyCar motor racing; Major League Lacrosse; plus other third-tier rights and ancillary programming, such as ESPN films and an African version of ESPN's *SportsCenter* news programme.

The new ESPN channel, which will be exclusive to Kwesé TV, will be scheduled by Kwesé and populated with both its existing portfolio of US sports rights and rights from ESPN Media Distribution.

Kwesé holds free-to-air and pay-television rights in sub-Saharan Africa to the National Football League – from 2016 to 2020 – and the National Basketball Association, from 2016-17 to 2020-21 (*TV Sports Markets* 20:7; 20:15).

Sources close to Econet say its market research showed there was still an appetite for the ESPN brand, and that its channel had been missed by consumers.

However, local experts are sceptical the deal – and Kwesé's strategy of pushing US sport – will be a

success. Appetite for US sport in the region is currently limited.

Informed sources believe Kwesé will have to spend considerable amounts on marketing basketball and American football to an African audience.

Multichoice passes

ESPN is understood to have offered South African media group Multichoice – which owns pay-television platform DStv and pay-television broadcaster SuperSport – a similar deal to the one agreed with Econet.

ESPN was seeking between \$2m and \$3m per year from Multichoice for its portfolio of rights and the licence for an ESPN channel. Before its closure, ESPN's channel was exclusively carried on DStv across sub-Saharan Africa.

In order to honour the agreement with DStv, ESPN continued to sublicense its portfolio of rights in sub-Saharan Africa to SuperSport, from summer 2013 to summer 2016, after closing its channels. These rights included the NFL and NBA.

The poor performance of these properties on SuperSport's channels was a major factor in the broadcaster's decision to relinquish NBA and NFL rights in April and July respectively, and in Multichoice's decision to turn down ESPN's new offer.

Talks between Econet and ESPN began in the first quarter of 2016, but the deal was only finalised last Monday at the Sportel Monaco trade fair.

Slow going

ESPN will provide Kwesé Sports with thousands of hours of much-needed content as it attempts to establish free-to-air and pay-television channels in 19 English-speaking territories across sub-Saharan Africa.

Econet's rollout of its free-to-air Kwesé Free Sports channel has been slow, but the telco expects the channel to be available in eight markets by the end of the year. The channel is currently available in Kenya, Malawi and Rwanda only.

Econet's slow progress on the roll out of both its free-to-air channel and its pay-television operation is mainly due to difficulties acquiring broadcast licences in several countries across the region. A deal to roll out the Kwesé TV pay-television platform in Uganda is close.

Former Azam TV chief executive Rhys Torrington is thought to be in charge of Kwesé TV's pay-television roll out. Torrington was responsible for a similar task at Azam, where the pay-television operator expanded from its base in Tanzania across East Africa and into selected Central African territories.

CEO role

Multiple sources have told *TV Sports Markets* that ex-MP & Silva vice-president of global acquisitions Jeroen Oerlemans is in advanced talks to become Kwesé Sports chief executive. Econet declined to comment when contacted by *TV Sports Markets*.

Oerlemans was vice-president of ESPN's EMEA channels from March 2009 to October 2012. Oerlemans was not involved in the Kwesé-ESPN deal, but his experience in selling US sport was a big factor in Econet's interest. Oerlemans was the NFL's head of international distribution from 1997 to 2000.

Econet has been seeking a permanent chief executive since at least June. In September the telco hired Pierre Cloete, formerly of Multichoice's pay-television entertainment broadcaster M-Net, as its head of programming and acquisitions.

Veteran sports consultant Rik Dovey has occupied the role of acting chief executive of Kwesé Sports since last summer. ◆

TV CHINA

LeSports's late payments may herald rights-buying slowdown

By Richard Welbirg

Aggressive Chinese OTT operator LeSports has cash-flow problems, resulting in delays to payments for many of its deals, *TV Sports Markets* understands.

Executives at several agencies and rights-holders told *TV Sports Markets* the company had payments outstanding on many deals. Notably, it is currently without coverage of ATP World Tour tennis after missing payments.

Late last year, LeSports extended its deal for ATP World Tour Masters 1000 and 500 events for five years, from 2016 to 2020, increasing the value tenfold from about \$2m (€1.8m) per year to close to \$20m per year (*TV Sports Markets* 19:22).

As it did not provide a bank guarantee the deal was structured so LeSports paid the full value of each year in advance.

The relationship between LeSports and the ATP is strained. LeSports missed dates for the 2016 instalment of the deal, though it was eventually paid in full.

After the 2017 instalment was not paid, ATP Media withheld its signal ahead of the Shanghai Masters, which ran from October 9 to 16. The ATP will begin legal action this month if it remains unpaid.

LeSports is also behind on payments to the ATP for its sponsorship agreement as the World Tour's Official Online Video Partner, from 2016 to 2020.

Not all rights-holders have experienced delayed payments from LeSports. At the least its deals in China for the English Premier League, National Football League and Asian Football Confederation rights have not been affected.

But the number of properties which have been affected has raised concerns among rights-holders. LeSports had not responded to requests for comment as *TV Sports Markets* went to press.

LeEco

The LeSports division was spun off from parent company LeEco – then LeTV – in December 2014. LeEco's exact shareholding in LeSports is unclear after a series B financing round in February. LeSports was reported to have raised \$1.2bn, valuing the company at about \$3.3bn.

But it is believed that some or all of the capital was diverted to other LeEco divisions, including its electric-car manufacture project, announced in April. LeEco is a broad conglomerate which also has divisions in music, smartphone production, smart television production and finance.

TV Sports Markets understands that at some point in Q3 2016, ultimate responsibility for financial decisions was moved from LeSports to LeEco. This may have contributed to delays in signing off deals and making payments.

A proposed investment deal between LeEco and Chinese Super League club Beijing Guoan fell apart last month. The agreement between the two covered both the club's naming rights at CNY50m (€6.7m/\$7.4m) per year for 2016 and 2017, plus a 50-per-cent stake at a price of CNY2bn.

LeEco paid the first year's fee for the naming rights but the two parties were unable to complete the investment.

Impact

Until now, LeSports has been the most aggressive player during the rapid growth of the Chinese digital sector, and showed similar zeal in entering the Hong Kong market. But according to sources close to the company it is likely to reduce the aggression with which it bids for sports rights, at least below the premium tier.

Nonetheless it is thought to be a serious bidder in the tender for Premier League rights from 2019-20 to 2021-22 (*TV Sports Markets* 20:18). *TV Sports Markets* understands the company made a direct bid to the league before it officially tendered its rights in the country.

The Premier League is one of China's most-watched sports properties. It is widely expected that the new rights deal will be among the largest in the country.

LeSports's portfolio is already the most expensive in the country, largely due to its CNY2.7bn investment in CSL digital rights in 2016 and 2017 (*TV Sports Markets* 20:4).

In September, its Hong Kong arm acquired National Basketball Association rights in the country from 2016-17 to 2020-21 for \$21.5m per season, a six-fold increase. It also paid just under \$130m per season for Premier League rights from 2016-17 to 2018-19 in September 2015, doubling the previous value in the country (*TV Sports Markets* 19:17; 20:16).

The consensus among industry experts is that the impact of LeSports cutting back on sports-rights acquisitions would not be overly harmful for the market. It would lead to some calming, but experts believe the market is fundamentally strong.

They also pointed to the presence of new players like Baofeng Sports and Ali Sports, which have big ambitions but have yet to make serious investments in sport media-rights. ◆

FOOTBALL

GolTV accuses Fox Sports LatAm over Conmebol club rights deals

By Richard Welbirg

GolTV's accusation of bribery against Fox Sports Latin America – made in a Florida court late last month – has cast light on one of the most secretive deals in world football.

In the suit, pan-American pay-television broadcaster GolTV and its partner agency Global Sports claim they were the victim of one of the bribery schemes outlined in *United States of America v Alfredo Hawit et al* – the second indictment in 2015's Fifa bribery scandal.

USA v Hawit et al alleged that executives at Conmebol – South American football's governing body – had solicited bribes in exchange for supporting the sale to the T&T Sports Marketing company of global media rights to pan-regional club competitions the Copa Libertadores and Copa Sudamericana.

T&T was a shell company 75-per-cent owned by pay-television broadcaster Fox Sports Latin America but predominantly operated by its 25-per-cent owner, the Torneos agency.

The US Department of Justice indictment claimed T&T paid “tens of millions of dollars in bribes to corrupt Conmebol directors between 2000 and 2015”. During this period T&T sold on the rights to Fox Sports Latin America.

GolTV's lawsuit alleges that executives at Fox participated in T&T's payment of bribes to Conmebol such as to “directly harm” its business.

When contacted by *TV Sports Markets*, Fox Sports Latin America said: “This is an entirely meritless claim. Fox had no operational control over any of the entities named in the Fifa indictment, and no Fox employees were implicated.

“As for GolTV, it has been attempting without success to challenge the award of rights to Fox that were negotiated after the Fifa indictment, with full transparency to Conmebol. This lawsuit will fail just as GolTV's previous efforts have failed.”

GolTV was known to have made several offers to Conmebol for Libertadores and Sudamericana rights from 2010 onward. GolTV & Global Sports claim bribes allegedly paid to Conmebol officials prevented the fair and transparent sale of these rights.

The bids

From 2010 onward, Conmebol repeatedly rejected offers from GolTV for rights to its club competitions that were more valuable than the fees paid by T&T.

GolTV made a first unsolicited bid in 2010, offering Conmebol \$270m (€245m) for its club rights from 2011 to 2014, or an average of \$67.5m per year. T&T's then-existing deal is thought to have been for six years, from 2009 to 2014, and was worth \$41m per year.

The claim alleges that Conmebol was “legally obligated to revoke its wrongful sale” of rights to T&T in light of the larger offer and that T&T “with Fox’s knowledge and consent” asked Conmebol to reject the offer, which it did.

In October 2012, GolTV renewed its attempts, this time placing an offer of \$805m for Conmebol rights in a new cycle, from 2015 to 2020, or just over \$134m per year. The claim alleges that T&T and Conmebol again agreed the latter would reject GolTV’s offer, and instead accept a new deal with T&T.

In December 2012, Conmebol agreed a new deal with T&T to run from 2015 to 2018, starting at \$65m in the first year and rising to \$71m in the last. It also agreed to award the rights from 2019 to 2022 to TyC International, another Torneos affiliate, for about \$72m per year.

GolTV made yet another unsolicited offer in November 2013, for rights from 2015 to 2024. The offer valued the rights at \$170m per year from 2015 to 2018, and \$360m per year from 2019 to 2024.

GolTV’s final offer was made in May 2015. The broadcaster again offered \$360m per year, this time for the rights from 2019 to 2022.

Post-scandal

The DoJ unsealed its original indictment in the Fifa case – *USA v Webb et al* – later in May 2015. By July, Conmebol issued a circular stating it would “re-evaluate its commercial relationships with entities implicated in the wrongdoing and refuse to enter into any contract with an entity charged by a competent governmental entity”.

The suit claims Conmebol held several meetings with GolTV about a new deal for rights to its club competitions. In October 2015, GolTV formally renewed the offer it had made the previous May, and it also made a new offer of \$170m per year for the rights from 2016 to 2018.

Conmebol did not accept the offers and instead agreed a new deal directly with Fox covering rights from 2016 to 2018. The suit values this deal at between \$135m and \$155m per year. *TV Sports Markets* sources in the region put the value at close to \$150m per year.

The suit claims the deal with Fox was: “negotiated in secret and violated Conmebol’s procedures. Prior to its signing, the agreement was neither disclosed to the presidents of the 10 national member organisations that constitute Conmebol nor voted on by Conmebol’s executive committee.”

It also claims: “GolTV was not informed of the negotiations or invited to submit a competing bid.

“Nevertheless, even with the dramatic increase in the price paid for the rights from \$50m to \$150m per year, FIC’s [Fox’s] contract price was still significantly below the \$170m per year that GolTV had offered Conmebol only a month before.”

The claim argues that the financial impact on GolTV and Global Sports amounts to “at least hundreds of millions of dollars” and demands compensation “for the harm they suffered from the loss of the rights that plaintiffs otherwise would have been able to obtain in a fair and competitive market”. ◆

AQUATICS

EBU adds Fina content in renewal but fee stays steady

By Robin Jellis

Despite the addition of new events to its recent deal for Fédération Internationale de Natation (Fina) rights, the European Broadcasting Union will pay a similar fee as in its existing agreement.

The deal between the EBU – the consortium of public-service broadcasters – and Fina will run for four years, from 2018 to 2021, and is the federation’s most valuable media-rights deal. The fee will be similar to the €2.5m (\$2.8m) per year the EBU pays in its current four-year deal, from 2014 to 2017 (*TV Sports Markets* 18:10).

The EBU will not cover production costs of Fina events: these will continue to be paid by local event organisers.

Fina strongly values wide free-to-air coverage of its events, meaning the EBU was its preferred broadcast partner. The increased exposure the EBU will give Fina in the new deal is understood to explain why the federation was willing to accept a steady rights fee.

The deal was agreed in direct talks between Fina and the EBU – there was no tender process. Sources close to the federation said there were several other parties interested in the rights, which triggered the EBU renewal.

Stefan Kürten, the EBU’s director of sports and business, told *TV Sports Markets* this week: “We were keen to renew these rights because we believe this is a free-to-air sport, a key Olympic sport, and agreeing an extension now means our members can plan ahead.”

Under the deal, the EBU will hold rights to Fina events across Europe. This includes the flagship World Aquatics Championships in 2019 and 2021 as well as the World Swimming Championships (25m) in 2018 and 2020.

The EBU has also added Fina’s Diving World Cups, High Diving World Cups, the Synchronised Swimming World Cup and the World Junior Swimming Championships. These events are not currently broadcast in Europe.

As in its current agreement with Fina, the EBU is able to sell on rights not used by its members to non-EBU broadcasters. To assist it in this task the EBU has appointed ESPN Media Distribution to sell on rights its members don’t want.

The EBU is understood to have chosen to work with ESPN as it has good relationships with broadcasters outside the consortium. Fina was made aware the EBU was planning to work with ESPN.

Kürten added: “The Fina deal shows again that we are active in positioning rights on free-to-air even in a changing world. And the agreement with ESPN shows we are adapting, it shows how we can come up with flexible solutions. We are wider than pure free-to-air.”

In April, the EBU agreed a similar deal when it teamed up with the IMG agency to acquire Union Cycliste Internationale rights over eight years from 2017 to 2024, replacing the Infront Sports & Media agency (*TV Sports Markets* 20:8).

Despite these distribution agreements with IMG and ESPN, the EBU has not ruled out distributing rights to other properties by itself. It has, for example, sold on Euro 2012 rights in territories where its members would not pay what was deemed market value (*TV Sports Markets* 19:13).

Other Fina rights

The IEC in Sports agency – now part of the Lagardère Sports agency – has a separate deal with Fina for rights to other federation events: the Swimming World Cup, the Diving World Series, the Synchronised Swimming World Trophy and the finals of the men’s and women’s Water Polo World League.

That deal also covers the four years from 2014 to 2017. Lagardère pays a guarantee plus a revenue share for the swimming and diving events, and a revenue share only for the water polo and synchronised swimming events. Fina distributes all revenue from the deal to the hosts of the events (*TV Sports Markets* 17:19).

Lagardère also had these rights from 2010 to 2013 in the same revenue structure. It guaranteed Fina an average of €525,000 per year, starting at €450,000 in the first year and ending at €600,000.

The value of the deal is thought to have increased in the 2014 to 2017 cycle, to an average of about €675,000 per year, starting at about €600,000 and ending at about €750,000. The federation is understood to earn in the tens of thousands of euros each year from the agency on top of the guarantee.

Fina is expected to agree a new deal for these rights in early 2017. It is understood to be discussing the possibility of a renewal with Lagardère later this month. ◆

BASKETBALL

Sky Italia grip on NBA rights extended at no extra cost

By Frank Dunne

Sky Italia has strengthened its grip on the NBA in Italy by becoming the league's sole media partner in its new two-season deal, and has done so without paying an increased rights fee, TV Sports Markets understands.

In its previous three-season deal, from 2013-14 to 2015-16, pay-television broadcaster Sky paid about €3.8m (\$4.2m) per season for rights to up to four live matches per week from the regular season, plus the Playoffs and NBA All-Star game.

Its new deal, for 2016-17 and 2017-18, includes the same live content. The main difference is that, in the new cycle, nba.com/italia will become part of the wider Sky Sports website.

Sky is thought to have pushed hard to become the league's official destination in Italy to enhance its level of exclusivity. The site carries extensive NBA highlights plus news, statistics and scores.

Previously, access to the site was available exclusively via the website of the *Gazzetta dello Sport* newspaper, where it generated about 1m unique views per month. One basketball expert said that dropping *Gazzetta* was a questionable choice as it is arguably the strongest sports media brand in Italy.

Sky will sell advertising on the site and share revenue with the NBA. Overall, this will provide some uplift for the NBA but local experts say the advertising income could be modest, depending on which monetisation model Sky uses.

For video content, the *Gazzetta* publishers – RCS – mostly sold unskippable pre-roll adverts of 20 or 30 seconds, even on clips lasting just two to three minutes. Drop-off rates in such cases are usually extremely high.

As with all rights-holders, the NBA tries to balance income with visibility but tends to privilege the latter outside the US.

Sky is considered by some independent basketball experts to be one of the best broadcasters of basketball in Europe and provides the league with huge levels of promotion. No other broadcaster in Italy could match Sky's overall commitment.

However, one rights adviser said the lack of a credible rival to Sky was probably also a factor in the fee staying flat.

Sky's main pay-television rival, Mediaset Premium, did not bid for the rights. The latter has kept a low profile in the market in recent months as merger talks between media groups Mediaset and Vivendi have dragged on (see separate story, page 11).

Mediaset has made only modest acquisitions of late, acquiring rights to the Argentinian football league, the Primera División, for the 2016-17 season only for about €120,000, and access to Barça TV – the in-house channel of Spanish LaLiga club Barcelona – for a nominal fee. Both deals were agreed with the IMG agency. ◆

FOOTBALL

New MP & Silva agreement for FKF following regime change

By Callum McCarthy

The MP & Silva agency has gone back into business with the Football Kenya Federation, a year after a deal between the two fell apart amid allegations of forgery, fraud and embezzlement against then-FKF president Sam Nyamweya.

The new four-year advisory deal – which will run from 2017 to 2020 and will cover global FKF commercial rights – is based solely on a revenue share. It marks a significant step forward for both the FKF and MP & Silva's ambitions in sub-Saharan Africa.

The deal includes the second-tier Kenyan National Super League, the GOtv Shield domestic cup competition, and home friendly matches of the Kenyan men's and women's national team.

The share of revenue each party will earn is dependent on the property. For the National Super League, the split in 2017 will be 60:40 in favour of the federation. For the final three years of the deal, from 2018 to 2020, the split will be 70:30 in favour of the federation.

GOtv Shield revenues will be split 75:25 in favour of the federation throughout the contract. For national team matches, the split will be 70:30 in favour of the federation throughout.

In the federation's previous deal with MP & Silva, from 2015 to 2019, it was paid a guarantee of \$2.5m per year and was set to share revenues above this (*TV Sports Markets* 19:10).

MP & Silva cancelled the deal last October due to three main allegations against Nyamweya.

First, he was alleged to have forged a signed document from top-tier Kenyan Premier League clubs pledging their allegiance to the new FKF-Premier League, which Nyamweya unsuccessfully attempted to position as the domestic top tier, in place of the KPL.

The FKF Premier League was confirmed as the second tier last year and was rebranded as the National Super League.

Second, he is accused of selling rights to properties the FKF did not own, such as Kenyan national team matches. Third, Kenya's Criminal Investigation Department believed Nyamweya had siphoned off money from the agency's initial payment of \$833,000.

Potential deals

The federation and MP & Silva have already begun talks over potential deals with Kenyan digital-terrestrial broadcaster Bamba TV. The broadcaster is the favourite to acquire rights to all three FKF competitions.

Rights to the league were held by pay-television broadcaster Azam TV, from 2015 to 2016, in a deal thought to be worth \$745,000 (€677,000) per year. The deal covered seven East African territories: Burundi, Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia.

This price was inflated because the league was being presented as the top tier.

Local experts believe NSL rights in East Africa to be worth about half the fee Azam paid for the FKF-Premier League, or between \$300,000 and \$400,000 per year.

The most valuable property in the federation's deal with MP & Silva is the GOtv Shield, as KPL clubs take part in the competition. Pay-television broadcaster SuperSport has broadcast the competition across sub-Saharan Africa for four years, from 2013 to 2016.

Friends again

The election of new FKF president Nick Mwendwa in February was key to the relationship with MP & Silva being repaired. Mwendwa defeated Nyamweya, who had presided over Kenya's national football governing body since 2011. Nyamweya's exit brought the agency back to the table.

Local experts say MP & Silva's contract was overvalued for two reasons. First, it was based on the FKF Premier League becoming the country's top tier. Second, it included rights to the Kenya national team's qualifiers for the Africa Cup of Nations and the second-tier African Nations Championship – rights which are owned by the Confédération Africaine de Football, not by national federations.

The new deal will end MP & Silva's legal action against the federation. The agency was seeking approximately KES380m (€3.4m/\$3.7m) in damages. The revenue-share model was adopted in the new deal to reduce the risk taken on by the agency after its experience with the previous deal. ◆

RUGBY UNION

Scottish Rugby renews Pitch distribution deal without tender

By Robin Jellis

Scottish Rugby earned an increase of more than 70 per cent by selling international rights to its autumn Test matches directly to the Pitch International agency, without offering them to the market.

The four-year deal, from 2018 to 2021, is understood to be worth about \$1.2m (€1.1m) per year. The fee is a minimum guarantee, with revenue above it shared between Pitch and Scottish Rugby.

The deal was agreed directly between Scottish Rugby, the governing body for rugby union in the country, and Pitch.

It represents a vast increase on the value of Scottish Rugby's current international rights deal with Pitch, worth about \$700,000 per year from 2014 to 2017. The rights were previously held by the Sportfive agency from 2010 to 2013 (*TV Sports Markets* 18:20).

Pitch also shares revenue above the guarantee in its current deal. It is not clear how much Scottish Rugby earns from this mechanism but the union is understood to be happy with its returns.

Scottish Rugby held a tender process for its international rights the last time they were sold, in October 2014. It chose not to this time as it is happy with Pitch's distribution.

Pitch is thought to have been willing to increase its fee in return for renewing the contract directly, without a tender. The renewal was agreed following informal discussions between the agency and the union, with more active talks held during this year's Six Nations tournament.

Plans to grow interest in Scottish Rugby matches outside rugby union's heartlands were key to the renewal, specifically in territories which the union has identified as growth markets, such as Japan and the US and Canada.

Pay-television broadcaster ESPN holds rights in North America while the Perform Group's OTT platform DAZN has a deal covering Japan. Scotland's autumn Test matches are currently shown in about 150 territories.

The Scottish national team plays either three or four autumn Test matches each year. In Rugby World Cup years, when autumn Tests don't take place, the deal will include tournament warm-up matches. This month Scotland will play autumn Test matches against Australia, Argentina and Georgia. The next

Rugby World Cup will be in 2019.

UK public-service broadcaster the BBC holds domestic rights to Scotland autumn internationals in 2014 and 2016, in a deal worth about £1.5m (€1.7m/\$1.8m) per year. *TV Sports Markets* understands a new deal from 2017 onward has been agreed and will be announced in late November following this year's autumn Tests.

Other Pitch deals

Pitch holds autumn Test rights to a host of other northern hemisphere rugby unions. The agency also has international rights deals for autumn Test matches of the Welsh Rugby Union, Irish Rugby Football Union and England's Rugby Football Union.

Its WRU deal runs from 2015 to 2018 and is worth between \$850,000 and \$1m per year. Its IRFU deal, also from 2015 to 2018, is worth about \$1m per year. Both were agreed directly with the unions.

Last August, Pitch renewed RFU international rights in a sublicensing deal with pay-television broadcaster Sky, which had acquired global RFU rights. Pitch's deal with Sky, from 2015-16 to 2019-20, is worth about \$2.4m per season (*TV Sports Markets* 19:15). ◆

FOOTBALL

Lagardère meets same old problems with Afcon rights

By Callum McCarthy

Lagardère Sports is distributing free-to-air rights to the 2017 Africa Cup of Nations itself in a marked change from its previous strategy of sublicensing rights in sub-Saharan Africa to another agency.

But much like the LC2 Médias-Afnex agency it previously employed to sell the rights, Lagardère is finding it difficult to strike deals at the values it expects.

TV Sports Markets understands only one deal for English-language rights across the region has been completed thus far. South African public-service broadcaster SABC will pay about \$4m (€3.6m) for rights to the 2017 Afcon. SABC and Lagardère are also in discussions over a deal for rights to the 2019 Afcon and its associated qualifiers.

Outside South Africa, Lagardère offered telco Econet rights to the 2017 Afcon and qualifiers for the 2019 edition. Lagardère sought between \$1m and \$2m per market for English-language rights across sub-Saharan Africa. No deal was agreed.

Nor was a deal agreed in Tanzania, where Lagardère offered pay-television broadcaster Azam TV free-to-air rights to the 2017 Afcon for \$1m.

As in the previous Afcon sales cycle, local broadcasters are dismayed at the prices they are being asked to pay. In many of the markets in which Lagardère is selling the rights, broadcasters paid a fraction of the Afcon asking price for rights to the 2016 Olympic Games, a comparably high-profile property.

Previous Afcon tournaments – including those in 2011 and 2013 – have gone unaired in several territories, including Nigeria. In other markets, governments and local businesses have been forced to at least part-fund the cost of the rights for local broadcasters. Afcon matches involving the ‘home’ country are often listed events in that territory, limiting Lagardère’s options.

Lagardère pays the Confédération Africaine de Football a total of \$1bn for its rights from 2017 to 2028. The deal covers rights to each Afcon tournament and the relevant qualifiers, the Caf Champions League as well as the second-tier African Nations Championship and its relevant qualifiers (*TV Sports Markets* 19:12).

Lagardère was also Caf’s sales agent in the 2009 to 2016 cycle. Over this period Lagardère employed LC2 Médias-Afnex to distribute Afcon rights.

One source told *TV Sports Markets* that Lagardère elected not to continue the arrangement due to a dispute between the two parties. Neither Lagardère nor LC2 Médias-Afnex responded to requests for comment as *TV Sports Markets* went to press.

The 2017 Afcon tournament will run from January 14 to February 5.

Pre-deals

Deals for pay-television rights in sub-Saharan Africa and all rights in the Middle East and North Africa are thought to have been secured from 2017 to at least 2024.

Several sources told *TV Sports Markets* that pay-television broadcasters beIN Sports and SuperSport agreed pre-deals with Lagardère in return for rights in Mena and sub-Saharan Africa respectively. ◆

FOOTBALL

Value of Greek national team matches declines for Uefa

By Robin Jellis

Difficulties in the Greek media market meant Uefa suffered a decrease of about 23 per cent in the value of national team qualifying matches last month.

Uefa – European football's governing body – agreed a two-season deal, from 2016-17 to 2017-18, with commercial broadcaster Skai worth a total of about €1m (\$1.1m).

The deal began on October 7 with Greece's European qualifier match against Cyprus. In total, it covers nine qualification matches for the 2018 Fifa World Cup as Greece's first match – against Gibraltar – was not broadcast on free-to-air television. It was, however, streamed live for free on the Greek football federation website.

Uefa previously had a two-season deal, from 2014-15 to 2015-16, for European Qualifiers with public-service broadcaster Nerit – now ERT. That agreement was worth €1.3m. Nerit was unable to commit to a longer term due to its difficult financial position.

The fee has decreased in the new deal for two main reasons. First, attempts by ERT to force down its current rights fee. Second, there was a climate of uncertainty as it was unclear which commercial broadcasters would be awarded new broadcast licences.

The Greek government is reducing the number of commercial broadcasters from eight to four. Skai renewed its licence for €43.6m while Antenna TV also extended its licence for €75.9m. Two new entrants – businessmen Ioannis Kalogritsas and Vangelis Marinakis – acquired licences, meaning leading broadcasters Alpha, Mega and Star will likely close.

Skai's rights will be exclusive on free-to-air television only. Pay-television broadcaster OTE has a four-season deal, from 2014-15 to 2017-18, for all European Qualifiers. The deal is worth €3m, or €750,000 per season. OTE can co-broadcast matches of the Greek team and has exclusive rights to all other European Qualifier matches. ♦

FOOTBALL

Nine buys free-to-air rights as Fox closes in on AFC renewal

By Richard Welbirg

Commercial broadcaster Nine will pay between A\$3.5m (€2.4m/\$2.7m) and A\$4m for free-to-air rights to the Australian national team's remaining 2018 World Cup qualifiers.

Nine sublicensed the rights from pay-television broadcaster Fox Sports last month, even though Fox is technically yet to finalise its own deal for Asian Football Confederation rights.

In August, Fox agreed a deal in principle for AFC rights from 2016-17 to 2019-20 worth close to \$23m (€21m), or \$5.75m per season. But Fox is still waiting for the AFC to sign off the contract.

Fox's deal was struck with the Lagardère Sports agency, the AFC's global media and marketing rights partner. Lagardère pays a minimum guarantee of \$600m, or \$75m per year, for global AFC rights over the eight years from 2012-13 to 2019-20 (*TV Sports Markets* 19:7).

Alongside the third round of Asian qualifying for the 2018 Fifa World Cup, the most important of the 12 properties in the AFC package are the AFC Champions League and the 2019 Asian Cup national team tournament.

Fox was not granted sublicensing rights until after the Australian national team's first two qualifiers against Iraq on September 1 and the United Arab Emirates on September 6. Nine's sublicensing deal covers rights to the remaining eight matches, starting with an away fixture against Thailand on November 15 and ending with the reverse fixture on September 5, 2017.

Australia's 'anti-siphoning' law mandates that national team football matches must be shown free-to-air. Nine will show matches live on its digital-terrestrial channel Go. Fox will show non-exclusive coverage on its pay-television channels.

In the previous cycle, Australian national team rights were acquired by Football Federation Australia, which sold the rights alongside those of the domestic top-tier A-League.

The federation signed a joint deal with Fox and public-service broadcaster SBS covering four A-League seasons, from 2013-14 to 2016-17, and AFC rights for four seasons from 2012-13 to 2015-16.

The broadcasters paid a total of A\$148m cash and \$A12m in marketing spend. Fox paid A\$128m and SBS A\$32m (*TV Sports Markets* 16:21). SBS showed Australia national team matches on its main free-to-air channel with a two-hour delay. ◆

TENNIS

SRG close to Wimbledon rights extension in Swiss market

By Robin Jellis

Swiss public-service broadcaster SRG is in advanced discussions to renew its deal for Wimbledon tennis media rights, *TV Sports Markets* understands.

SRG's previous three-year deal, from 2014 to 2016, was worth about €250,000 (\$275,000) per year. The broadcaster's new deal will be for either three, four or five years and SRG is expected to pay just over €300,000 per year.

A deal has been agreed in principle but is awaiting sign off, which is expected by the end of November.

The deal has been agreed by the All England Lawn Tennis Club, Wimbledon's commercial rights-holder. The AELTC is advised on the global sale of its media rights by the IMG agency.

SRG is regarded as a good partner for the AELTC as it provides wide free-to-air coverage which is helpful when the club is agreeing sponsorship deals, and it broadcasts in each of the three widely-spoken languages in Switzerland: French, German and Italian.

The broadcaster was keen to renew its rights as there is strong interest in the performances of Swiss stars: Roger Federer is a seven-time Wimbledon champion while Stan Wawrinka is currently third in the ATP rankings. ♦

TVSportsMarkets RIGHTSTRACKER

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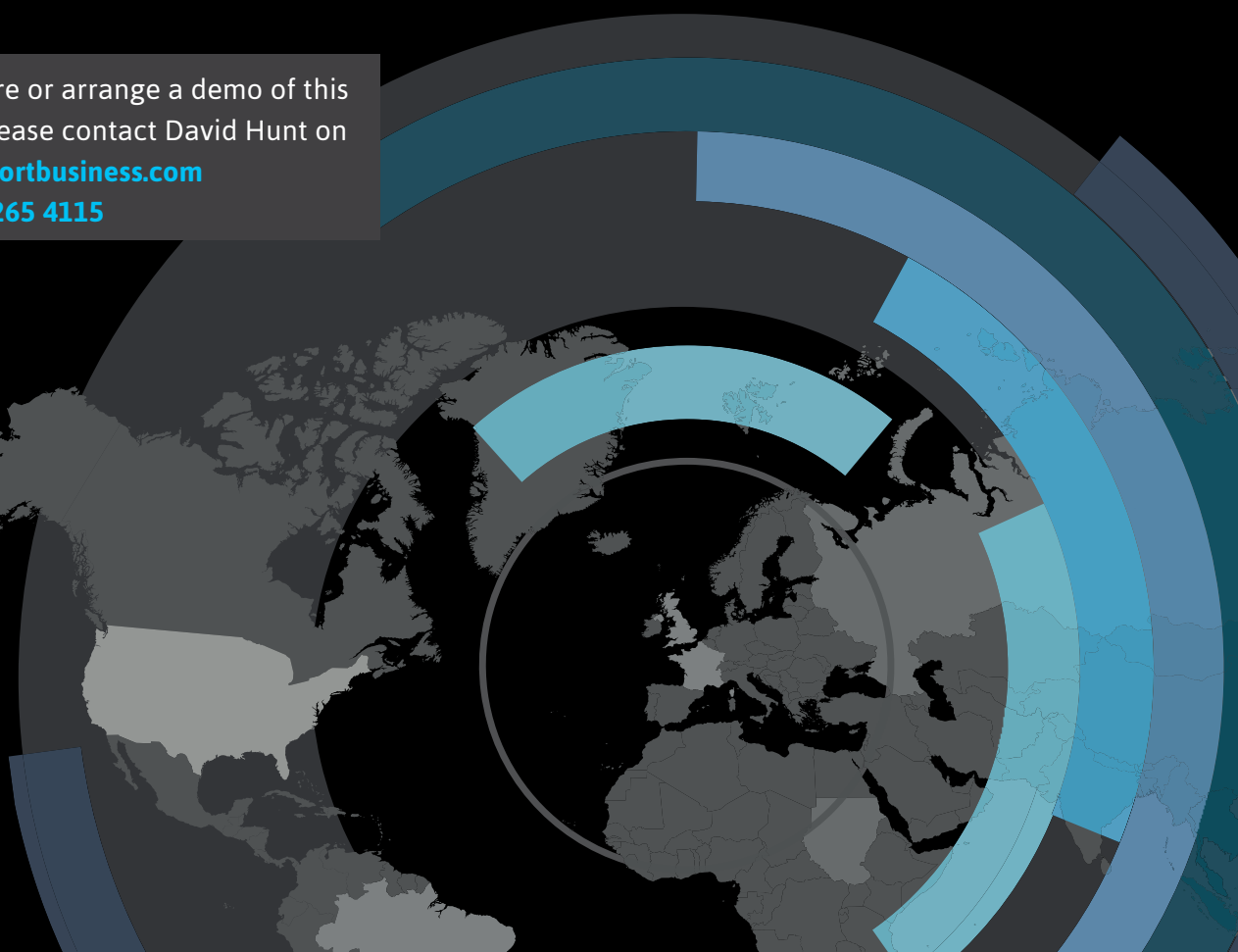
Since 1997, *TV Sports Markets* has brought its clients unrivalled accuracy and insight into the trading of sports media rights through the pages of its fortnightly newsletter. Now Rights Tracker provides the most sophisticated service yet to help you with your media rights strategy.

Rights Tracker enables you to find out:

- when media rights are available with our unique renewal timeline
- where properties are distributed around the world by different rights-holders and agencies, and which territories generate the most revenue
- what broadcasters and agencies have in their rights portfolios, what they paid for them and the relative importance of the rights to their strategies
- how historic trends might affect the value of rights in a particular market
- and much, much more

Constantly updated by our new research analyst team, the platform also features analysis by the renowned *TV Sports Markets* team as well as up-to-date company financial and key market data.

To find out more or arrange a demo of this new service, please contact David Hunt on david.hunt@sportbusiness.com or +44 (0) 20 7265 4115



MEDIA RIGHTS DEALS

OCTOBER 13 TO NOVEMBER 2

FOOTBALL

- ◆ International sports broadcaster Eleven Sports Network acquired rights in Taiwan to the European qualifying campaign for the 2018 Fifa World Cup.
- ◆ Egyptian sports broadcaster ON Sport agreed a deal to show programming from English Premier League club Chelsea's in-house television channel. The three-season deal will run from 2016-17 to 2018-19.
- ◆ Online service provider StreamAMG secured OTT rights in Europe to Serie B, the second-tier Italian club competition, for the remainder of the 2016-17 season. Coverage will be available in selected European territories.
- ◆ International sports broadcaster Eurosport acquired rights in Malaysia and Brunei for the English Football League Cup knockout competition. The deal will cover the remainder of the 2016-17 season.
- ◆ England's Football Association confirmed deals with the IMG and Pitch International agencies for its international media rights for six seasons, from 2018-19 to 2023-24 (page 3).
- ◆ Pay-television broadcaster beIN Sports acquired rights in the US to the 2016-17 edition of Dutch club cup competition the KNVB Beker.
- ◆ Spanish public-service broadcaster TVE agreed a two-season rights deal for the FA Cup. The agreement covers the 2016-17 and 2017-18 editions of the tournament, with TVE reportedly paying €2.4m (\$2.6m) for the rights.

- ◆ German sports broadcaster Sport1 acquired rights to two futsal matches between Germany and England, on October 29 and November 1.
- ◆ US sports broadcaster ESPN acquired rights to the Australian W-League women's club football competition. The deal will at least cover the 2016-17 season.

OTHER SPORTS

- ◆ **American Football:** Multi-territory commercial and pay-television broadcaster Modern Times Group extended a rights deal with the NFL in the Nordics. The five-year agreement runs through to the NFL's end-of-season Super Bowl in 2022. Coverage will be available in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden.
- ◆ **Aquatics:** Fina, the global governing body of aquatics, extended its deal with the European Broadcasting Union consortium of public-service broadcasters. The new four-year agreement will run from 2018 to 2021 (page 23).
- ◆ **Athletics:** Fédération Française d'Athlétisme, the governing body of athletics in France, awarded exclusive rights to telco Altice and its SFR subsidiary. SFR will show coverage of the federation's events in a deal that will run until the 2020 summer Olympic Games.
- ◆ **Badminton:** UK pay-television broadcaster BT Sport acquired rights to the English National Badminton League. The deal with the Badminton England governing body covers 2016-17.
- ◆ **Baseball:** Major League Baseball team the Cincinnati Reds extended its rights deal with

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regional broadcaster Fox Sports Ohio. The new 15-year agreement comes into effect from the 2018 MLB season and runs until the end of the 2032 campaign. The Reds acquired an equity stake in Fox Sports Ohio as part of the deal.

◆ **Baseball:** The Rushmans consultancy and the Pitch International agency struck a deal to market the global rights to the National Baseball Series, the top domestic competition in Cuba. It covers the four seasons from 2016-17 to 2019-20.

◆ **Basketball:** UK pay-television broadcaster Sky acquired rights to the Euroleague club competition. Sky will show regular weekly games, some via the free Sky Sports Mix channel.

◆ **Basketball:** Greek pay-television broadcaster Nova acquired exclusive rights to the Basketball Champions League club tournament. The three-season deal runs from 2016-17 to 2018-19.

◆ **Basketball:** International sports broadcaster Eleven Sports Network acquired NBA rights in Singapore. The deal runs for four seasons from 2016-17 to 2019-20.

◆ **Basketball:** Pacific Corporation Broadcasting Limited, a body which delivers content to 23 free-to-air broadcasters in 11 countries in the Pacific Islands, agreed a rights deal with the Australian National Basketball League club competition. PCBL will broadcast the games through its Pasifika TV contribution feed.

◆ **Basketball:** The Memphis Grizzlies NBA team extended an exclusive local rights deal with regional broadcaster Fox Sports Southeast. The long-term deal will begin in 2017-18.

◆ **Basketball:** Pan-regional pay-television operator DirecTV extended its NBA rights deal in Latin America. DirecTV will broadcast 120 games on an exclusive basis during the 2016-17 season.

◆ **Basketball:** French pay-television broadcaster beIN Sports extended a rights deal with the NBA. BeIN Sports will host the NBA's official website in France as part of the deal.

◆ **Basketball:** The Ali Sports division of Chinese e-commerce giant Alibaba Group agreed a rights partnership with the Chinese Basketball Association. Ali Sports will serve as the league's official video broadcast partner in 2016-17.

◆ **Basketball:** Eleven acquired exclusive Chinese Basketball Association rights in Taiwan. It will broadcast between three and six regular-season games per week during the 2016-17 campaign.

◆ **Basketball:** Brazilian commercial broadcaster Band agreed a one-season deal with the Brazilian Basketball League (LNB) for rights to its top-tier club competition, the NBB.

◆ **Boxing:** French telco SFR acquired rights in France to Manny Pacquiao's fight with WBO welterweight champion Jessie Vargas on November 5.

◆ **Cricket:** UK commercial broadcaster ITV acquired highlights rights for England's two-Test series against Bangladesh. Daily highlights were shown on the ITV4 channel.

◆ **Cricket:** Europe-wide Pakistani channel Prime TV acquired rights in the UK to the 2016 Bangladesh Premier League Twenty20 club competition.

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- ◆ **Cricket:** The Impress Matra Consortium acquired global broadcast rights for the Bangladesh Premier League. The deal will reportedly run for three years, from 2017 to 2019.
- ◆ **Cricket:** Pay-television broadcaster Sky New Zealand agreed a three-year deal with Cricket Australia, from 2017 to 2019. The deal includes Australia's men's and women's international games, as well as the men's and women's Big Bash League Twenty20 competitions.
- ◆ **Cycling:** Public-service broadcaster France Télévisions agreed a five-year extension to its Tour de France rights deal with event promoter Amaury Sport Organisation (page 8).
- ◆ **Cycling:** Sports content company Aurora Media Worldwide was named as host broadcaster of the 2016-17 Six Day Series track competition. Aurora will produce daily live coverage for Eurosport. The coverage will be shown across Europe and Asia-Pacific.
- ◆ **Cycling:** UK pay-television broadcaster Sky acquired next-day highlights for Six Day London, the first event of the Six Day Series, which took place from October 25-30.
- ◆ **Drone Racing:** Eurosport agreed an exclusive deal to distribute DR1 Racing series content in 70 countries across Europe and Asia-Pacific.
- ◆ **Ice Hockey:** Pay-television broadcaster Fox Sports agreed a three-season extension to its deal for National Hockey League rights in the Netherlands, from 2016-17 to 2018-19.
- ◆ **Ice Hockey:** Swiss public-service broadcaster SRG extended its deal for the Spengler Cup competition for five years, from 2017 to 2021.
- ◆ **Mixed Martial Arts:** The International Mixed Martial Arts Federation renewed its distribution deal with the Broadreach Media agency.
- ◆ **Mixed Martial Arts:** Hispanic MMA promotion Combate Americas signed an exclusive, year-long Spanish-language deal covering the US and Mexico with commercial broadcaster TV Azteca.
- ◆ **Motor Racing:** Eurosport agreed a four-year extension to its deal with the World Endurance Championship for its flagship race, the 24 Hours of Le Mans. The new deal runs from 2017 to 2020.
- ◆ **Rugby Union:** Telco SFR acquired rights to England's autumn internationals. The deal will run for four years from 2016 to 2019.
- ◆ **Rugby Union:** French digital-terrestrial channel L'Équipe acquired rights to the Barbarians v South Africa invitational match on November 5, the Japan v Argentina international friendly on the same day and the Barbarians' game against Fiji on November 11.
- ◆ **Sailing:** UK media company 1080 Media TV extended its host broadcast agreement with the Clipper Round the World Yacht Race to cover the 2017-18 edition of the race.
- ◆ **Skiing:** The Infront Sports & Media agency extended a deal with the Ski Association of Slovenia. The 10-season renewal covers domestic and international media rights to International Ski Federation (Fis) World Cup events held in Slovenia from 2016-17 to 2025-26.
- ◆ **Skiing:** Infront sealed a new rights contract

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with Slovenian public-service broadcaster RTV Slovenija for events organised by Fis. The deal covers five seasons, from 2016-17 to 2020-21, and covers all Fis disciplines.

◆ **Skiing:** Infront extended a rights agreement with German public-service broadcasters ARD and ZDF for Fis World Cup events. The five-season deal runs from 2016-17 to 2020-21.

◆ **Squash:** DAZN, the OTT service operated by the Perform Group, agreed a five-season deal to stream Professional Squash Association events in Japan. DAZN will stream live coverage of PSA events including the World Championships, Tournament of Champions and British Open. The deal runs from 2016-17 to 2020-21.

◆ **Squash:** The PSA signed long-term extensions to its deals with pay-television broadcaster Fox Sports in Australia, pay-television broadcaster Sky New Zealand and UK pay-television broadcaster BT Sport.

◆ **Surfing:** Eurosport agreed a deal with the International Surfing Association for highlights in Asia-Pacific to four leading events. The deal covers each of the four ISA World Championship events held during the 2016 season; the World Surfing Games in Costa Rica; the World Junior Surfing Championship in the Azores; the Stand-Up Paddle and Paddleboard World Championships in Fiji; and the Stance World Adaptive Surfing Championships in the US.

◆ **Table Tennis:** The German Table Tennis Association (DTTB) agreed a four-year extension to its rights deal with public-service broadcasters ARD and ZDF. The deal covers the International

Table Tennis Federation's 2017 World Championships, as well as other DTTB events.

◆ **Table Tennis:** The Ali Sports division of Chinese e-commerce giant Alibaba Group agreed to become the global rights and business development partner of the China Table Tennis Super League. Under the deal, which covers the 2016 edition of the competition, Ali Sports will provide live streaming and on-demand coverage.

◆ **Tennis:** ARD and ZDF agreed a sublicensing deal with 7sports, the sports business division of the ProSiebenSat.1 Group, for rights to the WTA Finals, the season-ending showpiece of the Women's Tennis Association calendar.

◆ **Tennis:** The Lagardère Sports agency renewed a series of deals for distribution of international rights to ATP 250 men's events, including: the BMW Open until 2019; the Brasil Open until 2022; the Ecuador Open; the Shenzhen Open; and the Ricoh Open in the Netherlands.

◆ **Tennis:** Tennis Australia agreed a new, five-year deal with Japanese pay-television broadcaster Wowow from 2017 to 2021. It also covers rights to the tournaments that make up the Australian Open Series.

◆ **US College Sport:** Telco Econet acquired rights for its Kwesé Sports service to American football and basketball competitions from the NCAA through an agreement with international sports broadcaster ESPN (page 15).

MEDIA RIGHTS NEGOTIATIONS

◆ The Board of Control for Cricket in India confirmed 18 companies purchased the tender

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document to the Indian Premier League Twenty20 competition: Star India, Amazon, Followon Interactive Media, Taj TV, Sony Pictures Networks, Times Internet, SuperSport International, Reliance Jio Digital Services, Gulf DTH, GroupM Media India, belN, Econet, Sky UK, ESPN Digital Media (India), BTG Legal Services, BT Sport, Twitter and Facebook.

◆ An order from India's Supreme Court directed the BCCI to direct all tenders and contracts for IPL rights through the Lodha Committee, the body overseeing the reform process sparked by the spot-fixing scandal during the 2013 edition of the IPL. The BCCI reportedly needs to wait for approval from the Lodha Committee before proceeding with the bidding process or be in contempt of court. The BCCI apologised to bidders after electing to postpone the auction, which was scheduled for October 25.

◆ The CAA Eleven agency launched tenders in sub-Saharan Africa for rights to Uefa national team properties. The first tender includes European Qualifiers from 2018-19 to 2021-22, the 2018-19 and 2020-21 Nations League competitions and other international matches. The second tender is for rights to the Euro 2020 championship. The deadline for bids for both packages is midday CET on November 22.

◆ Fifa, football's global governing body, launched an invitation to tender in Finland for media rights to its events between 2017 and 2022. The document covers rights to the 2017 Confederations Cup, 2018 and 2022 World Cups, and the 2019 Women's World Cup.

◆ Fifa opened a tender process in Russia for the

2017 Confederations Cup and 2018 World Cup. Bidders may also indicate an interest in the media rights for the 2022 World Cup.

◆ Fifa also opened a tender process in sub-Saharan Africa for media rights to all Fifa events in 2017 and 2018. The bid deadline is November 18 at 17.00 CET.

◆ José Luis Higuera, chief executive of Mexican Liga MX football team Club Deportivo Guadalajara, said the club does not intend to renew its deal with US Spanish-language broadcaster Univision beyond 2018.

◆ The *Irish Independent* newspaper reported that Ireland's Gaelic Athletic Association is set to sign a five-year extension to its deals with public-service broadcaster RTÉ, and pay-television broadcaster Sky, until 2021. The deals will reportedly be worth about €55m (\$60.5m).

◆ The ESPN.com.br website reported that Brazilian media company Globo was set to agree a rights deal covering the next three editions of domestic football competition the Primeira Liga. The deal will run from 2017 to 2019. The contract requires the formal consent of only one club, Atlético Paranaense. The deal will reportedly cost R\$60m (€17m/\$18.8m).

◆ US organisation TNA Wrestling said it hopes to reveal a new UK rights partner after digital-terrestrial channel Challenge said it would end its long-running deal.

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- ◆ The Argentinian government confirmed that its Football for All scheme, which ensures free-to-air coverage of domestic football competitions, would be scrapped at the end of this year.
- ◆ Aaron Davidson, the former president of the US division of Brazilian sports marketing agency Traffic Sports, will attend a sentencing hearing on April 24 after pleading guilty to corruption charges in a case involving Fifa, football's global governing body. Davidson entered his plea in federal court in Brooklyn, New York, on October 20, to charges of racketeering conspiracy and wire fraud conspiracy. He also agreed to forfeit \$507,900 (€466,300).
- ◆ Telco AT&T agreed a deal to acquire media company Time Warner for \$85.4bn (€78.5bn). The deal is pending the approval of the US Department of Justice and Federal Communications Commission.
- ◆ Social media website Twitter announced its video-sharing application, Vine, would be discontinued in the coming months.
- ◆ US media company Discovery Communications agreed a long-term partnership with streaming technology provider BAMTech that will result in the creation of BAMTech Europe. The Eurosport Digital arm of Discovery's sports broadcasting subsidiary Eurosport will become the new entity's first client. It will gain access to select European rights to global sports properties, including current and future rights acquired by BAMTech and jointly by Eurosport and BAMTech.
- ◆ Chinese e-commerce giant Alibaba formed a new digital media group and unveiled plans for a CNY10bn (€1.35bn/\$1.48bn) fund for new projects. The Reuters news agency said the move marks a total consolidation of Alibaba's media businesses, including video-sharing platform Youku Tudou, mobile internet company UCWeb and film company Alibaba Pictures Group, as well as the firm's sports, games, literature, music and digital entertainment divisions. Yu Yongfu, former chief executive of UCWeb, will become the chairman and chief executive of the newly formed Alibaba Digital Media and Entertainment Group, reporting directly to Alibaba chief executive Daniel Zhang.
- ◆ NFL commissioner Roger Goodell shrugged off concerns over falling television ratings. Statistics from audience measurement company Nielsen suggested each of the American football league's live Sunday night games so far this season earned lower ratings than the equivalent encounter last year. Goodell said televised presidential debates played a part in the fall.
- ◆ The NBA agreed a partnership with virtual-reality broadcast technology company NextVR. The deal named NextVR as the official VR partner of the NBA's League Pass service. NBA Digital and NextVR will show at least one League Pass game per week in virtual reality during 2016-17.
- ◆ The NBA said its international fans would be able to watch near-live highlights as part of a new feature, NBA Rapid Replay, in the League Pass International service for the 2016-17 season. A new monthly service, NBA Game Choice, will also allow fans to watch any two live games per week for around \$10 (€9) per month.

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The service also introduced the NBA Mobile View offering, which provides a zoomed-in shot of the action optimised for small screen devices.

◆ US pay-television operator Dish Network unbundled the NBA Team Pass service in a move that allowed subscribers to follow a single team. The team-specific product is available for \$119 (€109) per month.

◆ US subscription video-on-demand service Hulu agreed carriage deals with media companies 21st Century Fox and Walt Disney.

◆ More than 50 per cent of UK pay-television broadcaster Sky's independent shareholders voted against James Murdoch's reappointment as chairman. The broadcaster said that although it noted the "significant vote" against Murdoch, Sky's board had unanimously approved his appointment.

◆ Premiership Rugby, which operates the top tier of English rugby union, extended and expanded its partnership with the Perform Group. Under the new five-year deal, Perform will continue to manage Premiership Rugby Productions. Every Premiership Rugby and Premiership Rugby 7s game will be globally broadcast live through the Perform Sports Cloud service. Many Anglo-Welsh Cup games will also be transmitted via the service.

◆ UK pay-television broadcaster Sky introduced a free service to make highlights clips of English Premier League football more widely accessible on its mobile application. Video clips on the Sky Sports Football Score Centre app will now be freely accessible in any pub fitted with Sky

Sports WiFi. Previously, only Sky Sports residential subscribers could access the goals and key highlights clips before 10pm on a match day.

◆ French pay-television broadcaster Canal Plus unveiled a revamped business model, with six new subscription packages ranging from €19.90 (\$22) to €99 per month. The Canalsat brand will be scrapped as the broadcaster's premium pay-television channels will be integrated with the former service under the Canal brand.

◆ Altice will appeal against a decision by the French stock market regulator to block its deal to secure full control of its SFR subsidiary.

◆ Red Bull Media House reversed its decision to stop operating commercial broadcaster Servus TV in Germany and Switzerland. Red Bull had previously said it would withdraw Servus TV from the two countries at the end of 2016 to focus on its home market of Austria.

◆ TVP president Jacek Kurski said the Polish public-service broadcaster had abandoned plans to launch a second sports channel.

◆ Cricket Australia is hoping to persuade the country's government to take some short-form national team matches off the 'anti-siphoning' list, which reserves events and competitions for free-to-air television.

◆ Mixed martial arts promotion UFC agreed a long-term partnership with Village Cinemas and Event Cinemas, which will showcase UFC's largest events in 63 theatres across Australia and New Zealand.

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- ◆ New Zealand's competition regulator, the Commerce Commission, requested further information regarding the proposed merger between telco Vodafone NZ and pay-television broadcaster Sky New Zealand. The Commerce Commission said it was deferring its decision on the deal, which had been due in November, to an unspecified date. In a statement, it said it was "currently not satisfied that the proposed merger will not have, or would not be likely to have, the effect of substantially lessening competition in the telecommunications and pay-TV services markets".
- ◆ Private equity groups FW Sports Investment Fund and ASK Pravi Capital Advisors Private Limited acquired Indian sports content and technology company Sportz Interactive.
- ◆ The Indian government issued a ruling ordering privately-held broadcasters to share rights to key matches played by the national cricket team with public-service broadcaster Doordarshan.
- ◆ World Rugby, the global governing body of rugby union, appointed International Games Broadcast Services as host broadcaster for Japan's 2019 World Cup.
- ◆ The International Judo Federation agreed a four-year extension to its partnership with Japanese agency Hakuodo DY Media Partners. The new contract covers broadcast rights and specific marketing rights to IJF events and runs from 2017 to 2020.
- ◆ Eleven Sports Network agreed a carriage deal with South Korean electronics company Samsung. The broadcaster's three channels – Eleven, Eleven Sports and Eleven Plus – are now available through a dedicated Samsung Smart TV app, which has been built by internet video technology provider NeuLion.
- ◆ The MP & Silva agency relaunched BallBall, a digital football service it operates in the Southeast Asian markets of Indonesia and Vietnam in partnership with media conglomerate News Corporation.
- ◆ Telco Econet, which operates in sub-Saharan Africa, signed a long-term partnership with international sports broadcaster ESPN for its Kwesé TV platform (page 15).
- ◆ Richard Burnley, the legal director of the European Broadcasting Union consortium of public-service broadcasters, called on all countries to establish lists of major events that should be reserved for free-to-air television.
- ◆ The first head-to-head between Spanish football clubs Barcelona and Real Madrid will be broadcast at almost the same time as Saturday afternoon games in the English Premier League. The kick-off slot is an attempt by Spain's LaLiga to secure larger audiences in Asia and North America. The match will not be available to viewers in the UK, where there is a ban on live football matches being shown between 3pm and 5.15pm in order to protect attendances.
- ◆ Social media platform Twitter agreed a deal to stream live coverage of the 2016 Melbourne Cup horse racing event on November 1.
- ◆ In a response to the NFL's new restrictions on

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videos its teams can post to social media, the Cleveland Browns and Philadelphia Eagles recreated key plays using toy figurines and posted them on their channels.

◆ Broadcast hire and rental specialist Presteigne TV agreed a deal to provide outside broadcast facilities for the Six Day Series track cycling competition.

◆ The Sunset+Vine TV News division of UK sports production and media company Sunset+Vine secured a television news production and distribution contract with organisers of the America's Cup sailing event. The agreement includes the 35th America's Cup, along with the final event of the America's Cup World Series.

◆ The EBU appointed global sports media company ESPN Media Distribution as its agent for the joint distribution of a wide range of events organised by Fina, the global governing body for aquatic sports (page 23).

◆ The International Olympic Committee's Olympic Channel reached agreements with the global governing bodies for cycling, skating, luge, baseball/softball, karate and sport climbing to collaborate on content for the service.

◆ The Women's Tennis Association launched a new digital media and marketing division, WTA Networks. The division will revamp the WTA's owned and controlled channels, wtatennis.com and branded social channels. The venture will serve as a hub for tennis news and on- and off-court content. It will launch at wtatennis.com and on Apple and Android services on January 1.

◆ The Rugby Football Union said it would provide free live streaming of the second-tier Championship game between London Irish and Yorkshire Carnegie on November 5. The game will be streamed on EnglandRugby.com and England Rugby's page on social media platform Facebook.

◆ English Premier League football club Manchester City made its in-house media platform CityTV available through Fire TV, the streaming service of internet company Amazon. The club launched an app for Fire TV which will allow fans to access CityTV content via connected televisions.

◆ Olympic Broadcasting Services, the host broadcast organisation for all Olympic Games, said equipment seized from it by Brazilian authorities had been returned. Authorities had seized the equipment on September 18 following the conclusion of the Rio 2016 Paralympic Games, after a court ruling accused OBS of breaching labour laws during the Olympic and Paralympic Games. In a joint statement reported by the Associated Press news agency, OBS and the Brazilian Public Ministry of Labour said the organisation had "committed to keep an account open in Brazil as guarantee for any future payment due to the workers".

◆ The Atlantic 10 US college sports conference will stream between 10 and 15 live men's regular-season basketball games on Facebook during the 2016-17 campaign.

◆ The Infront Sports & Media agency extended its media and marketing deal with the International Ski Mountaineering Federation. The

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five-year deal, from 2017 to 2021, covers the ISMF Individual, Sprint and Vertical World Cup and the ISMF World and Continental Championships.

INDUSTRY MOVES

◆ Niclas Ericson, director of TV at Fifa, will leave his role at football's global governing body at the end of the year.

◆ The MP & Silva agency appointed Jochen Lösch as its new chief executive.

◆ MP & Silva's chief commercial officer Roberto Dalmiglio is to leave at the end of the year. The news was first reported by *TV Sports Markets*. When contacted, MP & Silva said Dalmiglio decided to step down in order to spend more time with his family.

◆ The Bonnier media group appointed Rickard Segeborn as the new chief operating officer for sport across two of its channels. His responsibilities will cover sports coverage across Swedish free-to-air broadcaster TV4 and pay-television broadcaster C More.