

# TVSportsMarkets

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## SKIING

# Infront signs off host of skiing deals as it looks longer-term

By Robin Jellis

**Infront Sports & Media's extension with the Finnish Ski Association, which goes well into the next decade, is part of a trend of long-term deals between the agency and other ski associations.**

Infront and the Finnish Ski Association this week extended their deal for eight seasons, from 2018-19 to 2025-26. It is thought the move to secure the rights was driven by Infront's loss of Swiss skiing rights to the European Broadcasting Union, the consortium of public-service broadcasters.

From 2011-12 to 2015-16, Infront held the international rights to Fédération Internationale de Ski (Fis) events hosted in Switzerland and organised by the Swiss skiing association, Swiss-Ski. But it was displaced this year by the EBU in a six-season deal from 2016-17 to 2021-22 (*TV Sports Markets* 20:8).

Infront claimed it should have been able to renew its Swiss-Ski rights ahead of the EBU as it had a matching-rights clause. But the clause was in a contract with Swiss public-service broadcaster SRG, which had acquired domestic and international rights from Swiss-Ski and sublicensed international rights to Infront. As such, the clause was unenforceable.

*TV Sports Markets* understands the dispute was resolved when Infront recognised the EBU as the holder of Swiss-Ski international rights. In return, the EBU guaranteed it would not bid for the domestic and international rights of the Slovenian skiing association.

In mid-October, Infront agreed a 10-season deal with the Ski Association of Slovenia for all media rights, from 2016-17 to 2025-25.

Most of Infront's other ski association deals run until the end of the 2020-21 season, and the agency is expected to try to extend these until the end of 2025-26 – as it has in Finland and Slovenia.

Once the ownership of the Slovenian and Swiss rights was decided, Infront finalised late deals with public-service broadcasters ARD and ZDF in Germany, RTV Slovenija in Slovenia, and YLE in Finland.

In both Finland and Slovenia, the delay in the sale of the Fis World Cup rights also deferred deals for rights to the 2019 and 2021 Alpine and Nordic World Ski Championships. Infront holds these under a deal with Fis worth about €110m (\$121m) (*TV Sports Markets* 17:11).

## Germany

In Germany, Infront extended a deal with ARD and ZDF for rights to Fis World Cup events held outside the country for five seasons, from 2016-17 to 2020-21. Neither ARD nor ZDF wanted to strike a new deal with Infront until the agency had acquired the rights of the Slovenian association from 2016-17.

The deal covers all rights and is understood to be worth close to €8m per season. This is roughly the same fee ARD/ZDF paid Infront in a four-season deal, from 2011-12 to 2014-15, later extended to cover the 2015-16 season.

ARD/ZDF's fee has stayed flat despite changes to the content included in the deal. The previous deal included international rights to Swiss-Ski events, now with the EBU. But it excluded Finnish Skiing Association rights which are included in the new deal.

This latest deal is the second consecutive time international Fis World Cup rights have not increased in value in the country. In October 2011, ARD/ZDF used a lack of competition to force down their rights fee and remove certain broadcast commitments (*TV Sports Markets* 15:20).

ARD/ZDF also hold international rights to Fis World Cup events held in Austria via their membership of the EBU. The EBU has a four-season deal with the skiing association, the Österreichischer Skiverband, from 2014-15 to 2017-18 (*TV Sports Markets* 18:3).

It is understood that ARD/ZDF are the biggest guarantors in the EBU's deals for Austrian and Swiss association international rights, contributing close to €4.5m per season in total.

ARD/ZDF also hold rights to Fis World Cup events held in Germany under a four-season deal, from 2016-17 to 2019-20, with the German skiing association, the Deutscher Skiverband. That deal is worth €9m per season, split €6m per season in rights fee and €3m per season in production costs. There is an option to extend the deal to cover the 2020-21 season (*TV Sports Markets* 20:2).

ARD and ZDF in March 2015 acquired rights to the 2019 and 2021 Alpine and Nordic World Ski Championships from Infront. That deal is understood to be worth between €14m and €15m (*TV Sports Markets* 19:6).

## Slovenia

In Slovenia, Infront's 10-season deal with the Ski Association of Slovenia for domestic and international media rights is thought to be worth about €3m per season.

This is up by about 50 per cent on the €2m per season Infront paid the association in its previous five-season deal, from 2011-12 to 2015-16. It is thought the association has an option to end the new deal after five seasons dependent on certain conditions.

Following that deal, Infront sold on all Fis World Cup rights – those hosted in Slovenia and outside – to public-service broadcaster RTV Slovenija for five seasons, from 2016-17 to 2020-21.

It is understood RTV Slovenija will pay about €750,000 per season for rights to all Fis World Cup events. It will also cover production costs of about €500,000 per season for events held in Slovenia.

The deal is thought to represent only a small increase in value on RTV Slovenija's previous agreement with Infront for all Fis World Cup rights, which ran for five seasons from 2011-12 to 2015-16.

RTV Slovenija has also acquired rights to the 2019 and 2021 Alpine and Nordic Ski World Championships from Infront for a total fee thought to be close to €700,000. The broadcaster contributed about €400,000 to the EBU deal for rights to the 2015 and 2017 Championships.

The broadcaster also acquired rights to the 2017 Snowboard and Freestyle World Championships, which are understood to be of low value.

## FSA/Infront

Infront's eight-season deal with the Finnish Ski Association, from 2018-19 to 2025-26, is understood to be worth an average of about €4m per season. The deal was agreed in direct talks with the Finnish Ski Association.

The fee Infront will pay is likely to fluctuate between €3m and €5m per season as it is dependent on the number and type of World Cup events which take place in the country each year. Due to the hosting of the 2017 Nordic World Ski Championships in Lahti, Finland, there will be fewer World Cup events held in the country in 2016-17.

The new deal is for domestic and international rights to Fis World Cup events held in Finland – the same as in the agency's current five-season deal, from 2013-14 to 2017-18. That deal is worth about €11.5m over the five seasons, or about €2.3m per season on average (*TV Sports Markets* 17:1).

Infront is thought to have been prepared to pay a premium in the new deal in order to secure the rights in the long term.

Infront's deal with the Finnish Ski Association covers all Fis World Cup Nordic events. Rights to alpine and freestyle skiing events are sold by another body – Ski Sport Finland. Ski Sport Finland sells domestic rights to these races directly to YLE in a deal worth about €20,000 per season. The body has a separate deal with Infront for its international rights until the end of the 2020-21 season.

## Finnish sales

Following its deal with the Finnish Ski Association, Infront agreed a package deal with YLE for rights to all Fis World Cup events (domestic and international), plus the 2019 and 2021 Alpine and Nordic World Ski Championships. The deal is thought to be worth close to €12m in total. There is not thought to have been a specific breakdown in value for each of the properties.

It is understood the federation was heavily involved in the negotiation of the deal for domestic Fis World Cup events between Infront and YLE.

YLE acquired all Fis World Cup rights from Infront for five seasons, from 2016-17 to 2020-21. These rights are thought to be worth between €1.5m and €2m per season.

On top of the rights fee, YLE will also cover production costs of Fis World Cup events held in Finland – these are thought to cost an average of at least €1.5m per season. In the previous cycle, YLE broadcast Fis World Cup events held in Finland in a three-season deal, from 2013-14 to 2015-16. YLE covered production costs.

YLE has sublicensed rights to Fis World Cup events held outside Finland to commercial and pay-television broadcaster MTV3 for the first two seasons of its deal, 2016-17 and 2017-18. It is understood YLE will thereafter exploit the rights itself.

One insider explained YLE had sold on the rights for two seasons because it was keen to recoup a chunk of its rights fee from MTV3, and as it has many other winter sports events in the coming months, such as the Nordic World Championships in 2017. YLE will have to pay production costs for this event.

MTV3 – owned by media group Bonnier – held rights to Fis World Cup events outside Finland in a previous five-season deal with Infront, from 2011-12 to 2015-16, worth close to €2m per season.

MTV3 did not make an offer to Infront this time as the agency asked it to bid for all Fis World Cup events. MTV3 did not want to cover hefty production costs for World Cup events held in Finland.

In its wider deal with Infront, YLE's valuation of the 2019 and 2021 Alpine and Nordic World Ski Championships is understood to be just over €3.5m. YLE contributed about €3m to the EBU deal for the 2015 and 2017 Alpine and Nordic Championships for rights in Finland.

YLE's deals with Infront provide it with a vast amount of skiing content. The broadcaster also has two deals with the W Sportsmedia agency for the Ski Classics long-distance championship. Both run for three seasons, from 2016-17 to 2018-19.

One is for rights to events held in Finland. YLE is thought to pay about €150,000 per season for these. This goes towards total production costs for the event of about €250,000 per season. The second is for rights to events held outside Finland, for which YLE is thought to pay about €200,000 per season. The broadcaster has an option to extend both deals.

## Other Infront rights

Infront will be looking to sell additional winter sports rights in Finland in the near future – its deals with local broadcasters for International Ice Hockey Federation World Championship and Champions Hockey League rights end in the next year.

IIHF World Championship rights are held by MTV3 as part of a package deal which included Fis World

Cup events outside Finland. The deal for IIHF rights runs for six years, from 2012 to 2017. The broadcaster currently pays about €8.5m per year for these – €7.5m per year as a rights fee with the remaining €1m per year in marketing and promotion costs.

Most winter sports rights experts believe the property is currently overpriced and expect the fee in a new deal from 2018 onward to stay steady or decline. Commercial and pay-television broadcaster Nelonen is reducing its investment in sport, meaning there may be fewer competitors when Infront comes to the market (*TV Sports Markets* 19:20).

MTV3 must show all matches of the Finnish national team, as well as the gold and bronze medal matches free-to-air as these are listed events in Finland. This requirement for free-to-air coverage makes the rights less attractive to pay-television broadcasters.

Infront is also likely to sell CHL rights in the coming months. The agency's current deal with MTV3, from 2014-15 to 2016-17, is worth about €500,000 per season. Infront is said to be seeking to double this fee in a new deal (*TV Sports Markets* 18:3).

The Finnish ice hockey league, the SM Liiga, is also likely to sell its rights by next summer. Nelonen currently holds the rights in a five-season deal, from 2013-14 to 2017-18, worth between €16m and €17m per season – the biggest media-rights deal in Finland. The SM Liiga fee is also expected to fall. ◆

## FOOTBALL

# Süper Lig tender switch clears path for Digiturk as gatekeeper

By Callum McCarthy

**The Turkish Süper Lig's tender structure has been drastically changed shortly before bids are due on November 21, making incumbent broadcaster Digiturk the clear favourite to renew its rights.**

The new tender is structured almost identically to the last time Süper Lig rights were tendered. Any new deal – or deals – will run for five seasons, from 2017-18 to 2021-22.

The original tender, devised by the Opto Advisers consultancy, split live domestic Süper Lig rights into three separate packages containing first-, second- and third-choice match picks (see below).

This model was designed to encourage fierce bidding for the live rights between Digiturk, pay-television operator D-Smart, the Saran Media agency, as well as telcos Türk Telekom, Turkcell and Vodafone. This tender was shelved at the last minute.

The change has massively reduced the likelihood of a market shake-up in Turkey, where Digiturk and its pay-television Lig TV sports channels have been the dominant force in Turkish sports broadcasting since its creation in 2000.

Local rights experts surveyed by *TV Sports Markets* this week unanimously expect Digiturk to win at least Package A, which contains global live Süper Lig rights.

The new tender makes aggressive bids from telcos unlikely as they could secure at least some coverage of Süper Lig matches from 2017-18 via carriage agreements with Digiturk.

There is one difference between this tender and the one used to sell Süper Lig rights in 2009. Bidders now have the opportunity to acquire all rights in a single package – Package D. This contains platform-neutral global live rights, domestic free-to-air highlights rights and domestic clips rights.

Turkey's competition authority, Rekabet Kurumu, investigated Digiturk's exclusive acquisition of Süper Lig rights in 2012, ruling that Süper Lig matches would have to be shared from the 2017-18 season.

The sales process is being conducted by a joint commission comprised of board members from the Turkish Union of Clubs – the collective representative of the 18 Süper Lig clubs – and the Turkish football federation, Türkiye Futbol Federasyonu.



The clubs' union hopes the sale of all rights will generate about \$600m (€544m) per season, which will include a 12-per-cent fee to be split between the federation and the clubs' union. Local experts believe the rights could sell for anywhere between \$550m and \$650m per season.

One potential bidder, however, said the depreciation of the Turkish lira against the dollar in recent weeks could harm the league's chances of a big rights-fee increase.

All Süper Lig rights are currently held by Digiturk in a two-season deal covering 2015-16 and 2016-17. It paid a total rights fee of \$425.7m for rights in 2015-16, and this rose in line with inflation to cover the 2016-17 season (*TV Sports Markets* 19:1).

## Tender switch

Digiturk's dissatisfaction with the original tender format is thought to be the main reason for the last-minute change: the broadcaster is understood to have lobbied the union and federation to revert to a more traditional tender.

The broadcaster was formally acquired by the beIN Media Group in August for \$1.3bn. The splitting of live Süper Lig rights into various packages would have put at risk their control of league rights – one of the main reasons for beIN's acquisition of the company. BeIN also felt there was room for growth in pay-television subscriptions in the country.

The possibility of Digiturk not participating in the tender – however remote – was enough to convince the joint commission that their income target of \$600m per season might not be reached.

The Opto Advisers tender was designed so several other parties would bid for individual packages of Süper Lig rights. In theory, this would have created the necessary competition to meet the commission's revenue targets with or without Digiturk's participation.

Turkcell was thought to be very interested in acquiring at least one package of live rights, but doesn't have the same level of desire for exclusive live rights as Digiturk. Turkcell's business is more diverse than Digiturk's: it has a successful mobile phone business with about 50m subscribers in Turkey, making live sports rights less crucial to its overall success.

Türk Telekom, whose majority shareholder Oger Telecom is currently servicing large debts and struggling to pay down a \$4.75bn loan, was expected to be much less aggressive than Turkcell.

Vodafone's interest would likely have been restricted to acquiring clips rights.

D-Smart is thought to be happy with its position in the market, while Saran Media's interest was in acquiring international, rather than domestic, rights.

One informed source said local broadcasters and telcos were concerned about the complexity of the Opto Advisers tender.

It was thought the match-pick system could lead to disputes between winning bidders and the joint commission, the latter of which would decide which matches constituted first, second and third picks.

As a result, the commission opted to switch to the old-style tender. The decision to change the tender late on was made after meetings between the TFF, the clubs' union and interested bidders in the first week of November.

## International rights

The continued amalgamation of domestic and international rights has disappointed several agencies hoping to acquire Süper Lig international rights, which have never been sold separately like other top-tier European football leagues.

Saran was interested in acquiring international rights only. Mild interest in the rights is also thought to be have been shown by the IMG and Infront Sports & Media agencies.

Digiturk has held Süper Lig international rights since the 2000-01 season and has used them either to support its pay-television business in Europe – where it sells boxes and cards in countries with large Turkish expatriate populations – or to sell carriage of its Lig TV channels to pay-television operators in other countries.

However, many Turkish industry insiders say bundling international rights with the domestic rights is the main reason for the Süper Lig's lack of international popularity compared with Europe's other top domestic leagues. It is thought unlikely that Digiturk will sublicense international rights in Europe, but it may sell on rights in other regions.

## Current deals

Digiturk currently holds all Süper Lig rights in a two-season deal covering 2015-16 and 2016-17. It paid \$361.25m in 2015-16 for live rights – this increased in line with inflation for 2016-17. The fee excludes a 12-per-cent fee paid to the federation and VAT of 18 per cent.

Digiturk also holds domestic free-to-air highlights rights for which it paid \$48.25m in 2015-16, increasingly slightly in 2016-17. The broadcaster sublicensed these rights to state broadcaster TRT in 2015-16, and both TRT and commercial broadcaster NTV in 2016-17.

Finally, Digiturk also holds clips rights, paying \$16.2m per season in 2015-16 and slightly more in 2016-17. It sublicensed these rights to Turkcell for two seasons. Inflation between the 2015-16 and 2016-17 seasons was between eight and nine per cent.

## Auction process

Interested parties must register for the tender by 17:00 local time on Friday, November 18, and are required to pay 50,000 Turkish lira in order to receive the tender document. The rights will be sold in a

live auction on Monday, November 21, which will be shown live on television. Sealed bids must be submitted by 10:00 local time on Monday, and will be followed by round-robin bidding until there is a clear winner. ♦

## New Süper Lig packages

**Package A:** Platform-neutral global live rights to Süper Lig and second-tier 1. Lig matches

**Reserve price:** \$425m per season

**Package B:** Domestic free-to-air Süper Lig highlights rights

Reserve price: \$45m per season

**Package C:** Domestic Süper Lig clips rights

**Reserve price:** \$15m per season

**Package D:** All of the above, to be sold if reserve price is met

**Reserve price:** \$495m per season

All reserve prices include a 12-per-cent fee to be split between the Turkish Union of Clubs and the Turkish football federation. The clubs' union will receive eight per cent of this fee, while the TFF will receive four per cent. VAT of 18 per cent is to be paid separately.

## Original Opto Advisers packages

**Package A:** Exclusive live pay-television rights to: 12 first-pick matches; 17 second-pick matches; 5 third-pick matches

**Package B:** Exclusive live pay-television rights to: 11 first-pick matches; 17 second-pick matches; 6 third-pick matches

**Package C:** Exclusive live pay-television rights to: 11 first-pick matches; 227 third-pick matches

**Package D:** All rights in packages A-C – activated should one bidder win all packages. Exclusive pay-television highlights rights included

**Package E:** Platform-neutral international rights to Süper Lig, Turkish Cup, Süper Cup and 1. Lig

**Package F:** Domestic free-to-air highlights to Süper Lig and 1. Lig

**Package G:** Domestic clips rights to Süper Lig, Turkish Cup, Süper Cup and 1. Lig

**Package H:** Global betting rights to Süper Lig, Turkish Cup, Süper Cup and 1. Lig

**Package I:** Domestic broadcast rights to the Turkish Cup, Süper Cup and 1. Lig

**Package J:** Domestic radio rights to Süper Lig, Turkish Cup, Süper Cup and 1. Lig

## PAY-TELEVISION

# Bamtech: stop-gap for Eurosport or Disney's second go at Europe?

By Frank Dunne

**This month's creation of the Bamtech Europe streaming operation by US technology company Bamtech and Discovery Communications provides immediate benefits for its owners. It also leaves them well placed to adapt to longer-term changes in the media market, especially the inevitable shift from broadcast to streaming.**

But the joint venture is not expected to have a profound impact on the European rights market in the short to medium term.

For Discovery – which holds a 30-per-cent stake in the joint venture – the deal provides Eurosport, its international broadcaster, with immediate access to a best-in-class streaming platform without having to spend the \$30m (€27m) to \$50m that would be required to build something similar. Committing that level of expenditure to build an in-house solution would not have helped Discovery's share price.

Bamtech's technology will allow the Eurosport Player, the broadcaster's subscription-streaming service, to run a far higher number of concurrent high-quality streams without concerns its system will crash. The service costs £4.99 (€5.60/\$6.20) per month for a 12-month subscription or £6.99 per month on a cancel-any-time contract.

The joint venture also opens up the possibility of creating multi-service relationships with sports federations. The recent long-term deals agreed by the Perform Group with the International Basketball Federation (Fiba) and the Women's Tennis Association suggest some federations want a trusted technological, streaming and commercial partner in a long-term deal.

For Bamtech, it provides immediate growth to justify the Walt Disney Company's \$1bn acquisition of a 33-per-cent stake in the platform in August. Disney has an option to acquire the rest of the company and is expected to do so.

Disney will use the Bamtech platform to roll out streaming services of its sports network ESPN and general entertainment network ABC. Initially the platform will show Major League Baseball and National Hockey League content, as well as college sports, tennis, rugby and cricket.

It will not take content away from ESPN's normal linear output to avoid undermining the channel's value to distributors. ESPN holds rights to far more sports content than it has the capacity to schedule.

It also gives Disney/Bamtech a relationship with the only media group that currently has a pan-European footprint. For many experts, the longer-term significance of the deal will depend on whether this leads to a sustained push at the European rights market by Disney.

The company's first attempt at European expansion, through ESPN, ended ignominiously in 2013 when it was forced to sell off its US sports channel ESPN America, archive channel ESPN Classic and its premium sports channels in the UK (*TV Sports Markets* 17:5).

It is understood that both sides will review the performance of the joint venture after five years before deciding whether to continue. Discovery has still not ruled out the possibility of creating its own streaming infrastructure in the future.

## 'Netflix of sport'

Unveiling the Bamtech Europe deal, Discovery chief executive David Zaslav said it was part of the company's plan to build "the Netflix of sport".

William Field, founder of the Prospero consultancy, said the deal should be read as part of the "race to provide the proof of commercial concept that sport on OTT can work in the way that we know entertainment on OTT can work".

He said that by enabling Eurosport to push OTT harder than they have before, the service could be a threat to nascent OTT platforms like Perform's DAZN but "also to the big European pay-television operators like Sky and Canal Plus".

He argued that Disney would not have taken a stake in the company if it had intended Bamtech to be just a technical services player. "Disney is building media businesses, so there's no doubt in my mind that Bamtech is intended to be a principal rather than a service provider."

In the US, Bamtech has been able to build scale quickly by doing deals with clients like the MLB, the NHL, the PGA Tour and the WWE Network. Europe represents a different challenge.

"Europe is fragmented and very competitive," Field said. "It is hard to scale quickly. There are few sports clients that operate at the scale of the big US sports bodies. So Bamtech have gone for the broadcast market. In Eurosport, in one fell swoop they have an innovative business that delivers across Europe."

Consultant Phil Lines was sceptical about the impact of the joint venture on the rights market. "There are only three ways to earn revenues: pay-per-view, pay-TV, and ad-funded models. Having a better technical platform is not going to change that," he said.

"It always comes down to what rights you have. The question is not whether they will be delivering content OTT but whether they will outbid other broadcasters."

He added that outside the US, American companies “don’t have a track record of spending huge amounts” on rights. “Disney failed with ESPN in Europe. What can they do that will work in OTT that didn’t work in linear TV?”

He said “everyone wants to be the Netflix of sport, except Netflix”, because the entertainment streaming company was deterred by the high price of sports rights.

## Priorities

One platform distribution expert said there were potential pitfalls for Eurosport in not developing its own streaming infrastructure.

Eurosport Player, Eurosport’s current streaming service, will be just one of many Bamtech clients, and a lower priority than the MLB, ESPN, the Disney studio output etc.

Eurosport will have to open up its client relationships to Bamtech in what might prove to be “a short-lived marriage of convenience” after which Disney/Bamtech could become its competitors.

And the decision-making process will be more complicated. “Buying into an off-the-shelf platform provides speed-to-market for the product,” he said, “but if they have to run all major decisions through the boards of Bamtech and Disney, it will slow down operations.”

## Bamtech evolves

In 2000, the MLB set up a new division, MLB Advanced Media, to create websites for its 30 teams and to manage their digital rights. It was used to stream hundreds of games per year direct to consumers.

MLBAM gradually expanded to offer streaming services for other sports bodies, such as the NHL and WWE. In August 2015, the NHL took a 10-per-cent stake in the platform.

As part of the deal by which Disney took its one third stake in Bamtech, the streaming platform was spun off from the rest of MLBAM as a standalone business unit valued at \$3bn. ◆

## RUGBY UNION

# ITV signs up for two World Cups as new deals start to roll in

By Robin Jellis

**UK commercial broadcaster ITV has bought rights to the 2019 and 2023 Rugby World Cups, while deals have also been struck in Japan and sub-Saharan Africa, TV Sports Markets understands.**

ITV's deal is expected to be worth close to £100m (€112m/\$124m) in total, split about £40m for 2019 and £60m for 2023. The 2019 World Cup will be held in Japan and while the 2023 tournament host is yet to be decided, it will be held in a better time zone for a UK audience.

The deal represents an uplift of about 25 per cent on the value of ITV's deal for the 2011 and 2015 World Cups, worth £80m in total. That was split £32.5m for 2011 (held in New Zealand) and £47.5m for 2015 (held in the UK). ITV invested another £25m in production for 2015 (*TV Sports Markets* 19:21).

Global Rugby World Cup media rights are sold by Rugby World Cup Limited, the tournament organisers. RWCL is a wholly-owned subsidiary of World Rugby, rugby union's governing body.

World Rugby is understood to have been keen to remain with ITV. The broadcaster has shown every World Cup in the UK since the inaugural event in 1987 and offers wide free-to-air exposure.

A tender for the rights was launched in January: ITV faced rival bids from pay-television broadcasters BT Sport and Sky. The interest of both BT and Sky is thought to have been driven by the 2023 World Cup, but World Rugby did not want to sell rights to the tournament on a standalone basis.

Talks with BT and Sky did not reach an advanced stage due to the governing body's preference to renew with ITV. The two pay-television broadcasters are thought to have indicated they would have liked more time to consider serious bids.

ITV was keen to renew as the Rugby World Cup is one of its tent-pole sports properties. As such, it offered a decent rights-fee increase.

Although the deal is yet to be formally announced, it is understood to have been agreed early this year.

As part of the deal, ITV will be obliged to broadcast coverage of the women's World Cup in 2017 and the annual U20s Championship. This bundling of ancillary rights into a package including the World Cup is part of a new strategy from World Rugby to make the wider offering more attractive to broadcasters.

To help it in this regard, the governing body has appointed International Games Broadcast Services to provide consistent production across all World Rugby events. IGBS is a joint venture between HBS (a subsidiary of the Infront Sports & Media agency) and the IMG agency.

IMG advises World Rugby on the sale of all media rights in a deal running until the end of the 2019 World Cup. The agency will not earn commission on any deals which cover the 2023 edition unless its advisory deal is extended. World Rugby is expected to decide whether or not to extend the deal within the next year.

## Africa and Japan

The traditional rugby union markets are France, Ireland, Italy and the UK in the northern hemisphere; and Australia, New Zealand and South Africa in the southern hemisphere. Latin America, Japan and the US are emerging rugby union markets.

Rights to the 2015 World Cup in Japan were sold to the Dentsu agency for \$2m. Dentsu then sold on the rights to three broadcasters: pay-television broadcaster J Sports, commercial broadcaster Nippon TV and public-service broadcaster NHK.

World Rugby is understood to have renewed its agreement with Dentsu for the 2019 World Cup. The deal is thought to have increased 10-fold in value to about \$20m, driven up by Japan's hosting of the tournament and the growing interest in rugby union in the country.

It is likely Dentsu will sell on rights to the same three broadcasters for 2019. World Rugby chooses to work with Dentsu as the agency has very good relationships with local broadcasters.

Rugby union is a strategic focus for Dentsu: it is also selling World Rugby's second- and third-tier sponsorship rights for 2019, and is the commercial agent of the Japan Rugby Football Union.

In territories bidding to host the 2023 World Cup, World Rugby is only selling rights to the 2019 edition. If a country is awarded hosting rights this would increase the value of the media rights in that country. The countries currently bidding for hosting rights are France, Ireland and South Africa.

As such, World Rugby's extension with pay-television broadcaster SuperSport across sub-Saharan Africa covers only 2019. The broadcaster's previous deal, covering the 2011 and 2015 tournaments, was worth about \$40m. This was split about \$17m for 2011 and \$23m for 2015.

## Upcoming deals

World Rugby is expecting to conclude deals in France, the US, Australia and New Zealand in the coming six months or so.

The governing body is in talks over a deal in France for 2019 only. Commercial broadcaster TF1, which held rights to the 2015 edition in a deal worth about €50m, is in an exclusive negotiating window which will run until the end of the year.



Talks over a new deal began in the summer, with TF1 having six weeks to respond to World Rugby's first proposal. This has since been extended after the broadcaster requested more definitive information about kick-off slots to help with scheduling.

TF1 also held rights to the 2007 and 2011 tournaments in a deal worth €75m. Of this, €45m is thought to have been for the 2007 edition in France, and €30m for the 2011 edition in New Zealand – the most meaningful benchmark for a 2019 World Cup deal (*TV Sports Markets* 17:21).

Rights in the US will be sold in Q1 next year. It is understood World Rugby has been speaking with broadcasters for many months and expects strong interest once it formally tenders its rights.

Bids are expected from major networks NBC, ESPN and Fox. Rights to the 2015 tournament were held by NBC in a deal worth about \$1m. A new deal is likely to cover 2019 and 2023 due to the US broadcaster trend to acquire rights as far into the future as possible.

Rights in Australia and New Zealand will likely be sold from summer next year.

## Other deals

World Rugby has three other significant deals in place for the 2019 World Cup: one in Ireland, one in China, and one covering Latin America.

In April 2015, World Rugby agreed deals with pay-television broadcaster ESPN Brasil in Brazil and ESPN Latin America across the rest of the continent. The agreement covered the 2015 and 2019 World Cups and was worth just over \$4m, split 45:55 between the two tournaments (*TV Sports Markets* 19:8).

In April this year, World Rugby agreed a 10-year deal – from 2016 to 2025 – in China with Alisports, the sports division of e-commerce giant Alibaba. Alisports will exclusively show World Rugby content on its internet platform for no rights fee, in return for heavy investment into grassroots rugby union in China. The deal will cover the 2019 and 2023 World Cups. The agreement is seen as a strategic one from World Rugby, which is seeking to develop demand for its rights in future.

In July, World Rugby agreed a deal with pay-television broadcaster Eir Sport (formerly Setanta Sports) worth just over £5.5m for 2019. This was almost double the £3m paid by commercial broadcaster TV3 for rights to the 2015 edition, which was held in a far more helpful time zone (*TV Sports Markets* 20:12).

## Total revenue

It is understood World Rugby is aiming for total media-rights revenues of £140m for the 2019 World Cup – the same as it generated from media-rights sales for 2015, the most for any World Cup.

This would represent a significant uplift from the 2011 World Cup, the last edition held in a comparable time zone. Then, World Rugby earned about £95m. ◆

## BASKETBALL

# Bumper deal in Greece helps Euroleague break €30m barrier

By Callum McCarthy and Robin Jellis

**Euroleague Basketball has increased its media-rights income in the 2016-17 season by 36 per cent compared to 2015-16, and this will rise further in 2017-18 thanks mainly to a blockbuster deal in Greece.**

European basketball's top-tier club competition will earn about €30m (\$33m) in 2016-17, up from about €22m in 2015-16. This will rise to about €34m in 2017-18. Securing large increases in the Euroleague's core markets is key to the success of its €630m joint venture with the IMG agency (*TV Sports Markets* 19:19; 19:23).

The new deal struck in Greece last month with pay-television broadcaster Nova will be worth €8.5m per season over the three seasons from 2017-18 to 2019-20. This is an increase of 98 per cent on the value of the Euroleague's previous deal in the country, with the Asset Ogilvy agency, which paid €4.3m per season from 2010-11 to 2015-16 (*TV Sports Markets* 17:14).

This deal was later extended to cover the 2016-17 and 2017-18 seasons for the same fee. But Asset Ogilvy handed the rights for the 2017-18 season back to the IMG-Euroleague joint venture, as it was yet to sell these on. Asset Ogilvy advised on the new deal, earning commission on the sale.

Pay-television broadcaster Cosmote TV (formerly OTE TV) is understood to have offered between €5m and €5.5m per season for the rights.

Nova has paid such a large increase as it was determined to hang on to the rights: it has lost its grip on many properties to an aggressive Cosmote TV in recent years. Nova's only other premium property is the domestic top-tier football league, the Superleague (*TV Sports Markets* 19:9).

Greek broadcasters have struggled in recent years due to the weak economy, but pay-television broadcasters were hit with an additional tax from July 1, with a further 10 per cent from each pay-television subscription having to be paid to the government. Cosmote TV has about 470,000 subscribers; Nova has between 450,000 and 460,000.

In the current cycle, Asset Ogilvy agreed three-season deals with Nova and public-service broadcaster ERT, from 2014-15 to 2016-17. Their combined value is about €4.6m per season: ERT pays about €1.8m per season and Nova about €2.8m per season (*TV Sports Markets* 20:17).

Nova is expected to sublicense a package of free-to-air rights, but to whom is not yet decided. A sublicensing deal with a free-to-air broadcaster will take time due to the delay over the award of licences to commercial broadcasters by the Greek government.

Sources close to the Euroleague-Nova deal believe public-service broadcaster ERT is unlikely to acquire these rights. One local rights expert said any free-to-air deal would probably be worth no more than €500,000 per season.

The new deal means the Euroleague is vastly more valuable than the National Basketball Association. These rights are held by Cosmote TV in a three-season deal, from 2015-16 to 2017-18, worth about \$1.5m per season – up from about \$1m per season in the previous deal, from 2011-12 to 2014-15.

The Euroleague deal in Greece follows per-season increases of just over 100 per cent in Israel and almost 170 per cent in Spain (*TV Sports Markets* 20:15; 20:18).

## Other deals

Deals have also been completed in Germany, Poland and Russia, the latter of which is an important market for the Euroleague.

In Germany, telco Deutsche Telekom activated a two-season extension option on its previous deal for 2015-16 only, worth €200,000. The new deal, covering 2016-17 and 2017-18, is thought to have increased in value by no more than 10 per cent. This increase was built into the optional extension on its previous deal.

Deutsche Telekom is expected to show only the games of German club Brose Bamberg during the regular-season, as well as the season-ending Final Four.

In Poland, commercial and pay-television broadcaster Polsat will pay just over €200,000 per season in a three-season deal from 2016-17 to 2018-19. Polsat is broadcasting either one or two games per week during the regular season. Polsat will also show the season-ending Final Four.

This is a very small increase on the value of the previous deal in the country with pay-television broadcaster NC Plus, covering the 2014-15 and 2015-16 seasons. NC Plus paid no rights fee in 2014-15 as the fee was covered by pay-television broadcaster Fox Sports after it handed its rights back to the Euroleague. In 2015-16, NC Plus paid about €200,000 (*TV Sports Markets* 18:20).

In Russia, free-to-air and pay-television broadcaster Match TV has signed a three-season deal, from 2016-17 to 2018-19. Match TV is expected to pay a rights fee of no more than \$500,000 per season. It will broadcast a maximum of six games per week in 2016-17.

Match's previous deal, covering 2015-16 only, was graded depending on the performance of Russian Euroleague teams. It paid an initial fee of about \$200,000, which rose to just under \$500,000 per season as both CSKA Moscow and Lokomotiv-Kuban reached the Final Four. ◆

## FOOTBALL

# Globo likely buyer but Primeira sale waits on clubs and calendar

By Richard Welbirg

**Uncertainties over the Brazilian football calendar and a dispute over revenue sharing is delaying a new rights agreement for the Primeira Liga – Brazil’s newest football competition.**

The league has an offer on the table from media group Globo worth close to R60m (€17m/\$18.8m) for three years from 2017 to 2019, or R20m per year. Globo would also cover production costs.

Globo believes the league has accepted its offer, but the deal will not be finalised until two issues are settled.

First, the Primeira’s 15 clubs have not agreed how revenue will be shared under a new deal. Atlético Paranaense, which finished runner-up in this year’s competition, is yet to agree to a proposed sharing model.

Second, it is unclear whether the Liga’s proposed schedule of January 22 to March 29 will be achievable given the reformed calendar of international club competitions run by Conmebol, South American football’s governing body.

Globo’s offer, made in late October, is thought to have been the only formal bid, despite the Primeira Liga holding talks with all Brazilian sport broadcasters.

But one local source told *TV Sports Markets* it was not a done deal and the league was still in contact with pay-television broadcaster Esporte Interativo.

Esporte Interativo has in the last year made a concerted effort to break Globo’s monopoly on top Brazilian football rights (*TV Sports Markets* 20:8).

## Primeira Liga

The Primeira was set up primarily by clubs from Brazil’s top-tier Campeonato Brasileiro Série A that were unhappy with the income they were earning from their respective state championships.

These competitions, operated by state-level football associations, take place across Brazil from January to early May. Série A runs from May to December.

Rights to the state championships – sold by the state associations – are all held by Globo. But only the Campeonato Paulista – the São Paulo state championship – is popular enough for nationwide coverage, via Globo-owned pay-television broadcaster Globosat.

The remainder are shown on a pay-per-view basis. Nationwide interest is limited because most state leagues only include one or two strong teams. Many of these leagues operate at a loss. In forming the Primeira Liga, the clubs sought a revenue stream during the first quarter of the Brazilian football year.

The league was officially sanctioned by the Confederação Brasileira de Futebol, the Brazilian football federation, in October 2015.

Twelve teams participated in the inaugural 2016 edition, which ran from January 27 to April 20 this year. They also played in their respective state championships, but fielded reserve and youth teams.

Globo paid about R5.2m for rights to the competition, plus production costs. The fourfold increase in its new offer reflects the fact the Primeira Liga has proven its viability and accounts for the proposed expansion of the competition from 12 to 15 teams. The ratings are understood to have been acceptable for a first competition.

The broadcaster intends to spend considerably more in promoting the Primeira than the minimal investment it made around the 2016 edition.

## Copa calendar

Conmebol is expected to announce the calendar for the new-format Copa Libertadores and Copa Sudamericana, the region's international club competitions, by the end of the month.

In previous years, the top-tier Libertadores has been played from February until July, and the second-tier Sudamericana from August to December.

From 2017, both competitions will be played across the calendar year: the Libertadores from January to December; the Sudamericana from March to early December.

This will require the CBF to adjust the Brazilian football calendar, which may close or shorten the window in which the Primeira Liga intends to run. ◆

## FOOTBALL

# Federation still awaiting deal for Coupe de Tunisie rights

By Callum McCarthy

**The Fédération Tunisienne de Football bypassed its own tender when selling rights to the top-tier Ligue Professionnelle 1, while Coupe de Tunisie rights remain to be sold ahead of this weekend's second-round matches.**

The federation decided to continue its long-term relationship with state broadcaster Télévision Tunisienne, which will pay TND4.5m (€1.83m/\$1.97m) per season for rights to four Ligue 1 matches per week, from 2016-17 to 2018-19.

The deal was completed despite a row between Télévision Tunisienne and the federation after the broadcaster showed six 2016-17 Ligue 1 matches during a match week in September before a deal had been formally completed.

A direct comparison between the new and previous deals is difficult as the contents of each are different.

The federation's previous deal – with Télévision Tunisienne and commercial broadcaster Hannibal TV – incorporated rights to both Ligue 1 and the Coupe de Tunisie, the league's domestic club competition. That deal is believed to have been worth just over TND5m per season, from 2013-14 to 2015-16.

Before the 2015-16 season, Hannibal TV had to return its rights to the league due to financial problems. The rights were passed on to commercial broadcaster Attesia TV, which showed two matches per weekend and covered Hannibal's remaining fee for the 2015-16 season.

Domestic rights to the Coupe de Tunisie are yet to be sold from 2016-17 to 2018-19, but Télévision Tunisienne is highly likely to acquire the rights.

The federation was previously looking for TND1.6m per season for all Coupe de Tunisie rights, but these could sell for as little as TND1m per season.

## Tender

On September 6, the FTF released the details of a tender for rights to Ligue 1; the second-tier Ligue 2; the Coupe de Tunisie; national team friendlies; youth football; futsal; and international rights to all of these properties, from 2016-17 to 2018-19.

Local sources believe there were two main reasons why the federation did not go through with its tender process.

First, a lack of competition for the rights. Second, the reluctance of Télévision Tunisienne to buy the rights as packaged.

The FTF wanted to sell Ligue 1 rights in two separate packages, with rights to each club's home matches having their own separate valuation within the package.

Package A-1 had a reserve price of TND2.4m per season and contained the home matches of Tunisia's top four clubs: Club Africain, CS Sfaxien, Espérance Sportive de Tunis and Étoile Sportive du Sahel. Each club would have received an equal share of the rights fee – a minimum of TND600,000 per season.

Package A-2 contained the home matches of the 12 remaining Ligue 1 clubs in 2016-17, and the remaining 10 clubs for the 2017-18 and 2018-19 seasons. Each club would have earned a minimum of TND300,000 per season for its rights – a total of TND3.6m in 2016-17, and a total of TND3m in 2017-18 and 2018-19.

It is thought this method of selling the rights would have created greater parity in the league's revenue distribution model. Télévision Tunisienne's new deal is worth TND1.5m per season less than the federation's original minimum expectation for the 2016-17 season.

## International rights

Ligue 1's international rights are sold on an ad hoc basis by the federation and the B4 Capital agency, with all deals requiring the permission of the federation and Télévision Tunisienne.

B4, which previously had a formal deal to sell international rights to all federation properties, from 2015-16 to 2017-18, now has a limited remit to sell these rights (*TV Sports Markets* 19:18).

The original terms of its deal – a \$1.25m per season minimum guarantee, with a 75:25 split of revenues above this in favour of the federation – are thought to have been amended in accordance with B4's reduced role.

B4's deal with pay-television broadcaster Abu Dhabi Sports, completed in September 2015, was cancelled shortly after it was signed due to a breakdown of diplomatic relations between Tunisia and the United Arab Emirates.

The ruling family of Abu Dhabi, which owns Abu Dhabi Sports, stepped in to annul the deal, which was meant to be worth at least \$1m per season, from 2015-16 to 2017-18.

The federation renewed a deal with pay-television broadcaster Al-Kass, from 2016-17 to 2018-19, covering the Middle East and North Africa.

For the 2015-16 season only, Al-Kass held rights to 12 Ligue 1 matches, as well as the two semi-finals

and final of the Coupe de Tunisie, for \$350,000. The new deal is thought to represent a slight per-season increase in value.

Al-Kass will show a total of 14 Ligue 1 matches in 2016-17: four from the regular season and 10 from the league's post season. Al-Kass will also show two quarter-finals, one semi-final and the final from the Coupe de Tunisie. Further deals in the Mena region are unlikely.

## Temporary format

As Ligue 1 is contracting from 16 to 14 teams from 2017-18, the league is adopting a different format in 2016-17.

The league has been split into a regular season and post-season. The regular season is formed of two round-robin groups of eight teams, with each club playing one home match and one away match against the other seven clubs.

The top three clubs in each regular-season group will advance to a championship group, while teams placed fourth to seventh will advance to the relegation group. The bottom club in each regular-season group will be automatically relegated to Ligue 2.

The post-season will also be formed of two round-robin groups: the six-team championship group and the eight-team relegation group. Each club will again play one home match and one away match in these respective groups.

In the championship group, the top two clubs will be granted places in the Caf Champions League club competition. The third-placed club will advance to the second-tier Caf Confederation Cup. The other three clubs will retain their place in next season's Ligue 1.

In the relegation group, the bottom two clubs will be relegated to Ligue 2, while the sixth-placed club will play a relegation playoff against the third-placed club in Ligue 2. The remaining five clubs will retain their place in next season's Ligue 1.

Up to five clubs will be relegated from this season's Ligue 1. Ligue 2 will expand from 14 clubs to 16 from 2017-18. ◆



## FOOTBALL

# Ghana Premier League rights unsold ahead of new season

By Callum McCarthy

**The Ghana Premier League remains without a broadcast partner with just over four weeks until the start of the 2016-17 season, despite bids from two of sub-Saharan Africa's biggest broadcasters.**

The Ghana Football Association, the league's commercial rights-holder, is considering bids from digital-terrestrial and pay-television operator StarTimes – which recently established a pay-television business in Ghana – and pay-television broadcaster SuperSport, which had previously declared itself uninterested in continuing its relationship with the GFA.

SuperSport, the league's incumbent broadcaster, is thought to have paid about \$3m (€2.7m) per season in a three-season deal, from 2013-14 to 2016 (the 2015 and 2016 seasons took place during a calendar year). About \$900,000 of the per-season fee was paid as a rights fee, with the remainder going toward production costs.

Both StarTimes and SuperSport are reluctant to invest more than the previous \$3m-per-season total. The GFA are expecting an increase in price for their rights, and investment in production could be decreased considerably in order to meet the association's fee expectation.

SuperSport initially declined to renew its deal with the GFA as it did not believe the Premier League represented value for money, especially considering the amount it invested in production. Had SuperSport renewed its deal, it had planned to reduce the number of production vehicles it stationed in Ghana by about half.

One industry insider said SuperSport had initially intended to force down the price of the rights by agreeing a last-minute deal with the GFA, but has been surprised by the strong interest from StarTimes.

The association is also selling its Ghana FA Cup rights for the next three seasons. These were also held by SuperSport from 2013-14 to 2016.

StarTimes and SuperSport are thought to have made bids for exclusive rights to all GFA properties on all platforms.

Telco Econet's free-to-air and pay-television broadcaster Kwesé Sports is also thought to be interested in GFA rights, and is preparing to bid shortly before the season begins on December 18.

While this would give Kwesé less time to arrange production and market the property should it win the rights, the broadcaster is thought to be comfortable about bidding late for two reasons.

First, in sub-Saharan Africa, federations and associations have been known to agree deals with broadcasters while still courting larger bids from rivals.

In September, StarTimes believed it had secured rights to the top-tier Côte d'Ivoire Ligue 1 after having a bid accepted by the Fédération Ivoirienne de Football. Days later, the federation went to rival pay-television broadcaster Canal Plus, which improved on StarTimes's offer to win the rights. Kwesé is looking to avoid a similar situation (*TV Sports Markets* 20:17).

Second, the association is aware of Kwesé's interest in the rights, as well as its vast budget and free-to-air capabilities. The broadcaster is confident no contract will be signed until it has made a bid.

Local experts believe the GFA is relaxed about the slow roll out of Kwesé's channels, and would be happy to accept a bid should its fee expectations be met.

If it wins the rights, Kwesé would likely sublicense them in Ghana to free-to-air channel Viasat 1 on an interim basis, as it has done with its free-to-air English Premier League and National Basketball Association rights.

Each of Kwesé, StarTimes and SuperSport are hoping to acquire Ghana Premier League rights to encourage subscriptions to their pay-television services in Ghana, but also to prevent rivals from having that opportunity.

Ghana is a strategically important market in sub-Saharan Africa and is regarded to have good potential for the growth of pay-television penetration. Although its current pay-television penetration is low at around 10 per cent, digital migration and a growing middle class provides fertile ground for progress.

Local football is key to expanding an operator's customer base to incorporate lower- to middle-class consumers. StarTimes and Kwesé are both looking to attract this demographic, and media group Multichoice – which owns pay-television operator DStv and SuperSport – has slashed subscription prices in Ghana in order to compete. ◆

## FOOTBALL

# TVE surprises market with FA Cup and Club World Cup deals

By Richard Welbirg

**Spanish public-service broadcaster TVE surprised the market with deals for English FA Cup and Club World Cup rights this month.**

The Club World Cup will feature Spanish giant and Uefa Champions League winner Real Madrid. But the deal for the FA Cup, which has been unsold in Spain since the 2012-13 season, is hard to square with a public-service remit.

FA Cup rights across Western Europe are held by the Pitch International agency in a six-season deal, from 2012-13 to 2017-18. The agency pays a minimum guarantee of about \$87m (€79m) over the course of the deal, or \$14.5m per season (*TV Sports Markets* 16:1).

Pitch's deal with TVE, covering the 2016-17 and 2017-18 seasons, is worth €1.2m per season.

Local experts this week expressed surprise that TVE had met Pitch's asking price for a competition which only produces clashes between top English Premier League sides of most interest to Spanish football fans in its later stages.

Pitch had refused to shift from its asking price for the property despite several seasons without a deal. It is thought the agency believed that to compromise on value could embolden Spanish broadcasters in future negotiations.

Both TVE's deals are thought to be down to a new focus on football under María José Malía, who was appointed director of TVE's digital-terrestrial sport channel Teledeporte in May.

Football rights – of any kind – are seen as important to boost the channel's ratings. TVE's only other football property is its deal for Spain's European Qualifiers between 2014-15 to 2017-18, a deal worth €38m, or €9.5m per season (*TV Sports Markets* 19:2). The FA Cup was one of few football properties on the market.

TVE is reported to have paid €1m for Club World Cup rights, about the same as commercial broadcaster Mediaset paid for the 2015 edition. Rights are sold globally by the Dentsu agency. Commercial broadcaster Atresmedia is thought to have made a much smaller offer.

Mediaset is not thought to have bid for rights to this edition due to losses incurred from its coverage of the European Championships this summer (*TV Sports Markets* 20:9).

But Mediaset did make the one-off purchase of rights to the Brazil v Argentina Conmebol World Cup Qualifier match on November 11, for close to €100,000.

Conmebol World Cup Qualifiers are sold outside the Americas by Pitch, which used another agency, Enjoy Television, as a broker in Spain.

The match – which pitted Barcelona teammates Neymar and Lionel Messi against one another – earned an 18-per-cent share on Mediaset’s Cuatro channel. ◆

## CRICKET

# Sony nabs Bangladesh Premier League rights as Neo steps away

By Richard Welbirg

**Sony Pictures Networks India last month picked up rights to the Bangladesh Premier League Twenty20 tournament after pay-television broadcaster Neo Sports refused an option to extend its deal.**

Neo last November struck a deal for the 2015 tournament worth close to \$200,000 (€181,000). The deal included an option to extend for the 2016 and 2017 editions (*TV Sports Markets* 19:22).

Last year's tournament was the first since the BPL was halted in 2013 due to allegations of match fixing. Neo struggled to refinance even half its investment in the property.

Cricket is the most popular sport in India, but the BPL is not a strong property and, like other international Twenty20 competitions, does not feature any Indian players.

This year's tournament is running from November 4 to December 4, overlapping with both India's high-profile home Test series against England and the South African tour of Australia – the latter being one of the most-watched non-India cricket series in the country. Advertising revenue flows to these events ahead of the BPL.

The BPL offered its rights to other Indian pay-television broadcasters, but Star was not interested, while Ten Sports is not buying any sports rights while its sale to Sony is finalised (*TV Sports Markets* 20:16).

Neo turned down a deal at a reduced price, and a deal for the 2016 tournament was eventually agreed with Sony for about \$130,000.

Sony had not bid for BPL rights in 2015 because the late sale of the rights created scheduling problems. Sony – which has a much greater acquisition budget than Neo – felt the BPL would be a useful low-cost addition to its cricket portfolio. ◆

## FOOTBALL

# PPTV comes up trumps in huge Chinese Premier League deal

By Richard Welbirg

**The English Premier League's new media-rights deal in China is one of the most valuable ever signed in the country.**

Streaming company PPTV has acquired the rights over three seasons from 2019-20 to 2021-22, in a deal worth close to \$700m (€634m), or about \$233m per season.

In value the deal ranks alongside the China Sports Media agency's deal for Chinese Super League rights, and its subsequent sublicensing to sport streaming company LeSports, as one of the most valuable in China's media-rights industry (*TV Sports Markets* 19:19; 20:4).

PPTV is thought to have beaten bids from rival streaming companies LeSports, Baofeng Sports and Tencent, and incumbent Super Sport Media Group.

As *TV Sports Markets* went to press, few other details about the deal were available. Chinese experts said it was likely PPTV would look to sublicense some rights in order to recoup its expenditure.

PPTV is backed by Chinese electronic retail giant Suning, which spent about \$250m to acquire a 44-per-cent stake in the streaming video provider in 2013.

Its other major sports-rights investment is in Spain's LaLiga. It holds exclusive streaming rights in China in a five-season deal, from 2015-16 to 2019-20, worth about €50m per season (*TV Sports Markets* 19:15).

Its deal is a vast increase in income for the Premier League. Super Sports Media Group pays \$18m per season over six seasons, from 2013-14 to 2018-19 (*TV Sports Markets* 18:4).

Super Sports Media Group's deal was agreed several years before competition for rights among Chinese digital players made it one of the fastest-growing markets in the world.

In 2016-17, Super Sports Media Group will earn at least \$76m per season from selling on rights, and it also retained just over a third of matches for sale exclusively via pay-per-view (*TV Sports Markets* 20:18). ◆

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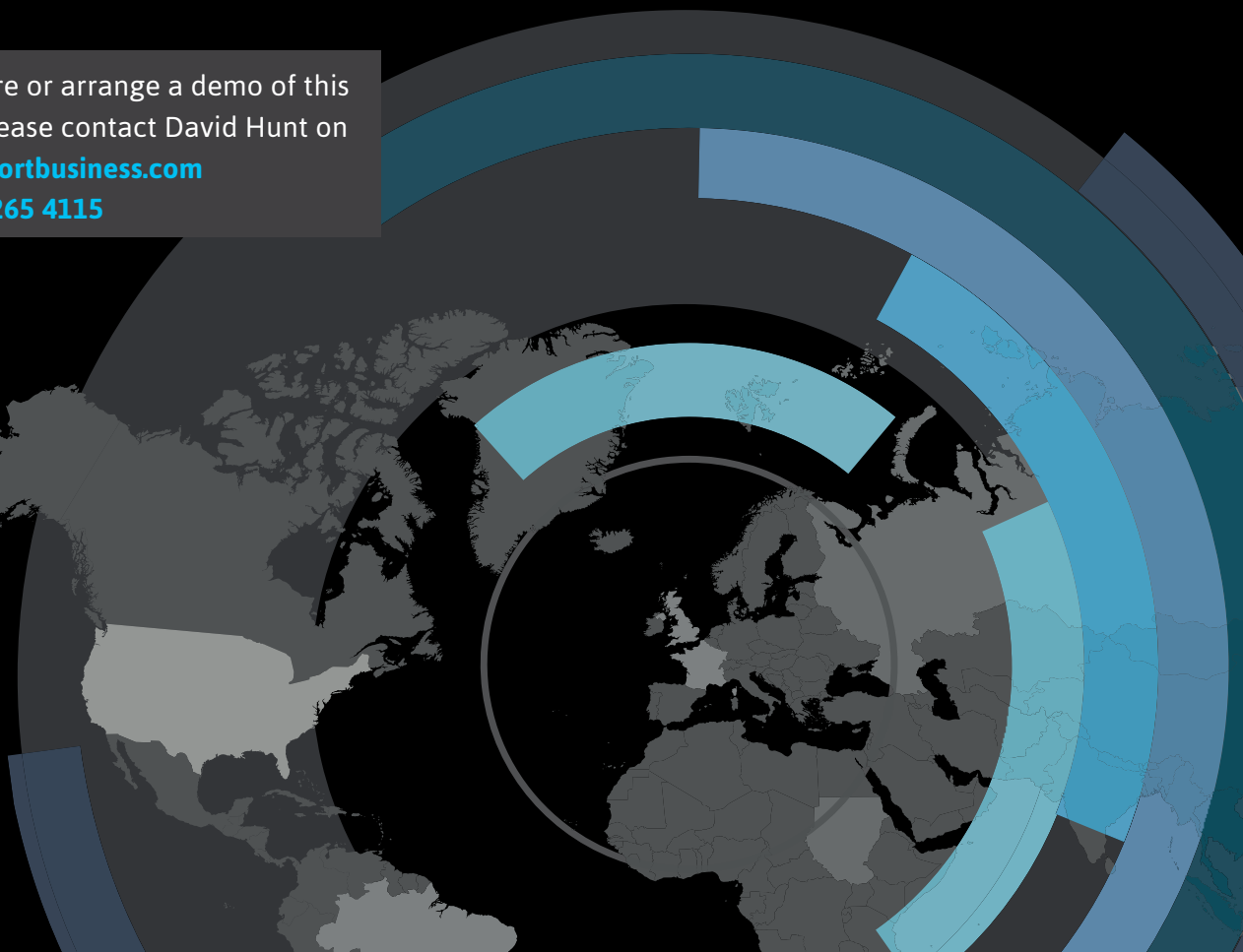
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# MEDIA RIGHTS DEALS

## NOVEMBER 3 TO 16

### FOOTBALL

- ◆ Public-service broadcaster Swazi-TV agreed a deal for rights to Swaziland's Premier League competition. The deal also includes the Cup and the Charity Cup tournaments.
- ◆ Pay-television sports broadcaster ESPN Brasil partnered with media company Cinelive to provide coverage of selected English Premier League games in cinemas. The partnership covers the remainder of the 2016-17 season.
- ◆ UK pay-television broadcaster Premier Sports acquired exclusive rights to home friendly matches played by Northern Ireland's national team. The two-year deal with the Irish Football Association runs until summer 2018.
- ◆ The Fox Sports division of US network Fox extended a rights deal with Concacaf – football's governing body in the Caribbean, North America and Central America – for its Gold Cup national team tournament. The new four-year deal will cover the 2017 and 2019 editions. Fox Sports will hold exclusive English-language rights in the US.
- ◆ The CAA Eleven agency launched two separate tenders for rights to Uefa national team properties in the Netherlands. One includes European Qualifiers for the Uefa Euro 2020 and 2022 Fifa World Cup tournaments, the 2018-19 and 2020-21 Nations League competitions and other international matches. The other includes rights to the Euro 2020 championship. Replies to both tenders are due by December 6.
- ◆ CAA Eleven launched two separate tenders for rights to Uefa national team properties in the

Indian subcontinent in the same format. Replies to both tenders are due by December 12.

- ◆ UK commercial broadcaster Channel 4 acquired exclusive free-to-air rights to all England and Scotland games during the Uefa Women's Euro 2017 national team tournament. Channel 4 will also show live coverage of the final and at least one semi-final.
- ◆ The Turkish football federation unveiled plans for a new tender for rights to the Süper Lig and 1. Lig, the top two divisions of Turkish football (page 8).

### OTHER SPORTS

- ◆ **Baseball:** The Fox Sports Taiwan broadcast subsidiary of Fox Networks Group acquired exclusive rights to the World Baseball Softball Confederation-sanctioned Asia Winter Baseball League in Taiwan.
- ◆ **Basketball:** French telco SFR acquired rights in France for Bourges' home games in the Euroleague Women European club tournament. The deal covers the 2016-17 season.
- ◆ **Boxing:** The Sauerland boxing promotion renewed a rights deal with German commercial broadcaster ProSiebenSat.1. The agreement covers a minimum of 12 events per year for three years, from 2017 to 2019.
- ◆ **Cricket:** Sony Pictures Networks India acquired rights to this year's Bangladesh Premier League Twenty20 tournament (page 29).
- ◆ **Cycling:** The IMG agency extended a global rights deal with Flanders Classics, the umbrella



# MEDIA RIGHTS DEALS

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organisation for top Flemish road races and the Paris-Brussels event. IMG will represent Flanders Classics until 2019, with the option to extend the agreement.

◆ **Esports:** The Ligue de Football Professionnel, which operates the French football league, awarded rights for e-Ligue 1, a new nationwide competition, to pay-television broadcaster beIN Sports and online media company Webedia. BeIN Sports and Webedia submitted a joint bid for the rights and will show the 2016-17 edition of the competition.

◆ **Kickboxing:** The Glory promotion agreed a deal with Dutch pay-television broadcaster Ziggo which will run until at least the end of 2017. The deal will start with live coverage of the December 10 event, 'Glory: Collision'.

◆ **Motorcycling:** Australian commercial broadcaster Ten and pay-television broadcaster Fox Sports renewed deals for the MotoGP series, covering the 2017 and 2018 seasons.

◆ **Motorcycling:** Fox Sports renewed its deal for the Superbike World Championship series, covering the 2017 and 2018 seasons.

◆ **Motorcycling:** Multi-territory commercial and pay-television broadcaster Modern Times Group extended its deal for MotoGP rights in Scandinavia (Denmark, Norway and Sweden) and the Baltics (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania), from 2017 to 2019.

◆ **Motorcycling:** International sports broadcaster Eurosport acquired MotoGP rights in Romania, from 2017 to 2019.

◆ **Motor Racing:** The IMG agency renewed its international media rights distribution deal with Australian series V8 Supercars, from 2017 to 2019. The deal includes in-flight rights but excludes Australia and New Zealand.

◆ **Rugby Union:** Australian pay-television broadcaster beIN Sports acquired rights for Australia's games against France on November 20 and England on December 4.

◆ **Rugby Union:** Pay-television broadcaster BT Sport acquired exclusive rights in the UK and Ireland to Italy's autumn international Test matches against New Zealand on November 12, South Africa on November 19 and Tonga on November 26.

◆ **Rugby Union:** Australian public-service broadcaster SBS acquired exclusive free-to-air rights to two of Australia's autumn international Test matches against France on November 20 and England on December 4.

◆ **Skiing:** The Infront Sports & Media agency extended its media and marketing partnership with the Finnish Ski Association until the end of the 2025-26 season (page 3).

◆ **Skiing:** Finnish public-service broadcaster YLE signed a five-season extension to its deal covering Nordic skiing events (page 3).

◆ **Tennis:** UK public-service broadcaster the BBC extended a rights deal for the ATP World Tour Finals, the season-ending tournament of the ATP World Tour men's series, from 2016 to 2018.

# MEDIA RIGHTS DEALS

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### MEDIA RIGHTS NEGOTIATIONS

◆ Frédéric Thiriez, the former president of the Ligue de Football Professionnel, claimed French President François Hollande's intervention in the tender for the current cycle of domestic media rights represented a "serious breach of competition law". Hollande revealed in a new book – *A President Should Not Say That: Secrets of Five Years in Office* – that he suggested to the Emir of Qatar that Qatari pay-television broadcaster beIN Sports – which had bid aggressively for sports-rights since entering the French market in 2012 – should take a more passive approach in the auction for top-tier Ligue 1 and second-tier Ligue 2 rights over four seasons, from 2016-17 to 2019-20.

◆ CBS chairman and chief executive Les Moonves said the US network was working on a deal with the NFL American football league to stream games on the CBS All Access OTT platform.

◆ Mediaset said its ongoing impasse with French media company Vivendi – over the proposed sale of its pay-television broadcaster Mediaset Premium – would not hamper its bidding for Italian Serie A and Uefa Champions League rights. Both competitions are expected to sell their rights before summer 2017.

◆ Urbano Cairo, the president of RCS MediaGroup, said commercial broadcaster La7 was interested in acquiring rights in Italy for the Giro d'Italia cycling race.

◆ US media companies Fox and Turner are close to a 15-year deal for rights to club football in

Argentina after making a concrete offer, according to reports in the country. Argentinian newspaper *La Nación* said Fernando Marín, chairman of the Football for All scheme that is set to expire at the end of the year, had received a formal proposal from the two companies. Reportedly, it would take effect from January 1. Games would be shown free-to-air in 2017 before switching to pay-television from 2018. The deal, set to be worth 2.5bn pesos (€150.8m/\$166.5m) per year, would be reviewed every five years.

◆ The Scottish National Party said the country's government would pass a law to ensure Scotland's competitive international football matches are ring-fenced for coverage on free-to-air television if the legal power to do so was devolved. The UK government has refused to ring-fence the matches.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

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- ◆ The US Department of Justice said it was suing telco AT&T and its DirecTV satellite operator for acting as the “ringleader” of a series of unlawful information exchanges between DirecTV and three of its competitors during carriage talks for regional pay-television channel SportsNet LA. The lawsuit alleges that DirecTV unlawfully exchanged competitively-sensitive information with Cox Communications, Charter Communications and AT&T during the companies’ negotiations for the right to carry SportsNet LA. Specifically, the complaint alleges that DirecTV and each of the competitors exchanged non-public information about their ongoing negotiations as well as their companies’ future plans to carry – or not carry – the channel.
- ◆ Liberty Media chief executive Greg Maffei said the US media company might seek to develop an OTT platform for Formula One once its takeover of the motor-racing series is completed. Speaking during a conference call following the release of Liberty Media’s third quarter financials, Maffei said an OTT platform could harness the huge amount of content and data that F1 generates, but admitted that clarifying what rights are available would be a challenge.
- ◆ World Chess US and World Chess Events, the organisers of the World Chess Championship, lost their bid to block three websites from broadcasting moves from the event after US District Judge Victor Marrero ruled they did not make a sufficient case. The organisers had filed a lawsuit accusing the websites of “free-riding on the work and effort of World Chess”.
- ◆ US media conglomerate Viacom agreed a \$345m (€312.5m) deal to acquire Argentinian free-to-air broadcaster Telefe from telco Telefónica. The deal is subject to regulatory clearance and was sealed by the Viacom International Media Networks division of the conglomerate.
- ◆ The Chicago Cubs’s decisive victory over the Cleveland Indians in game seven of this year’s World Series attracted the largest audience for Major League Baseball’s end-of-season series since 1991. According to media measurement company Nielsen, the game attracted a peak of just under 50m viewers to US network Fox between 11.30pm and 11.45pm eastern time.
- ◆ US technology giant Intel agreed a deal to acquire US virtual-reality company Voke, which it will integrate with its new sports division.
- ◆ Nielsen stood by its findings of a significant fall in ESPN’s subscriber numbers, despite being challenged by the US pay-television sports broadcaster. Nielsen’s data to October 28 showed ESPN lost 621,000 subscribers month-on-month. After ESPN labelled the finding an “anomaly”, Nielsen said it had undertaken an “extensive review” and the original estimates were accurate.
- ◆ Glory, a leading kickboxing promoter, confirmed that the December 10 event, ‘Glory: Collison’, would be distributed as a live pay-per-view event in North America and will be carried by pay-television providers, including iN Demand, DirecTV and Dish Network.
- ◆ The NFL American football league is assessing

## NEWS IN BRIEF

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its approach to advertising during broadcasts in a bid to combat a fall in ratings, according to a senior executive. Brian Rolapp, NFL Media executive vice-president and NFL Network president and chief executive, said the league was “looking very hard” at its approach to advertising, admitting that up to 70 ads per game can be a turn-off for viewers.

◆ English Premier League clubs Liverpool and Tottenham Hotspur received more prize money last season from football’s European governing body, Uefa, than any other teams participating in the Europa League tournament. More than €411m (\$457m) was distributed among the 56 clubs that took part in the Europa League group and knockout stages – up from €240m the previous season. Liverpool and Tottenham received €37.8m and €20.8m respectively.

◆ Specialist boxing pay-television channel BoxNation signed a multi-year partnership with UK telco BT. Under the deal, 20 live boxing events per year will be simulcast by pay-television broadcasters BT Sport and BoxNation. BoxNation will be included in BT Sport’s channel pack.

◆ Constantin Medien, owner of sports broadcaster Sport1, will launch a second free-to-air sports channel as part of a strategic shift to concentrate its efforts on the sports sector. The new channel will be called Sport2.

◆ French telco SFR launched an OTT service for its five SFR Sport pay-television channels on November 15. The €9.99 (\$10.70) per month service is available on mobiles, tablets and televisions with Google Chromecast or Apple Airplay internet connections.

◆ French pay-television broadcaster Canal Plus lost over 500,000 subscribers in the past year, according to figures released by its parent company the Vivendi media group. The figures detail that by the end of September 2016, Canal Plus had 5.384m subscribers compared to 5.926m a year earlier. These figures include the CanalSat and Canal Play services. Vivendi noted an increase in subscribers for Canal Plus’s international operations, with figures rising from 5.098m to 5.26m.

◆ The 20 member clubs of Ligue 1, the top division of French football, agreed a new deal for the division of broadcast revenues over the coming seasons. Under the new agreement, the gap between revenues earned by the Ligue 1 champions and the bottom club will drop from 4.1:1 for the 2016-17 season to 3.6:1 in 2017-18. In 2018-19 and 2019-20, the gap will close further to 3.2:1. Should a new rights contract bring in more than €1bn (\$1.072bn) per season, the ratio between first and 20th will drop to 2.5:1, and 2.2:1 if revenues exceed €1.5bn per season.

◆ The Swiss Football League, the operating body of the top two divisions of Swiss football, sealed a revenue-distribution agreement with its 20 member clubs that will take effect from the first season of its new broadcast rights contract. From the 2017-18 season, a total of CHF30.7m (€28.5m/\$31.5m) will go to the clubs. Top-tier Super League clubs will receive CHF24.1m, with CHF6.6m assigned to second-tier Challenge League sides. In the Super League, the revenue split will be based on a two-pillar principle. Each club will receive a basic CHF1.8m, plus a payment based on its ranking in the 10-team

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league of up to CHF1.5m.

- ◆ Greek pay-television broadcaster OTE TV rebranded as Cosmote TV in order to use a common brand name for all of the group's communication and entertainment products.
- ◆ International sports broadcaster Eleven Sports Network secured a carriage deal with Polish IPTV service provider EVIO Polska. The Eleven and Eleven Sports channels will be available to subscribers of EVIO Polska's Telewizja Światłowodowa service from December 1.
- ◆ Eleven agreed a carriage deal with Polish IPTV service provider SGT. Subscribers to the SGT Jambox service will have access to Eleven Sports as part of a promotional period until the end of November. Both channels will later be offered as part of a package and as a standalone option.
- ◆ For the second consecutive weekend, Polish pay-television broadcaster NC Plus did not show any English Premier League matches at 4pm local time on November 5. The broadcaster said this was because matches had been shown illegally in UK bars using NC Plus decoders.
- ◆ Australian A-League football club Adelaide United agreed a partnership with CubeGoal, the mobile application created by pre-match information platform Cubee Technology, for the 2016-17 season only. CubeGoal will serve as the team's Chinese sports and media partner.
- ◆ Cricket Australia will stream all 47 non-televised matches of the 2016-17 Women's Big Bash League Twenty20 franchise competition for free in the country. The WBBL matches will be live-streamed by the governing body on the cricket.com.au website, the Cricket Australia Live App, and via the WBBL page on social media platform Facebook.
- ◆ Eleven Sports Network agreed a deal to show at least six hours per week of coverage from Chelsea TV, the in-house television channel of Premier League club Chelsea, on its channels in Singapore.
- ◆ Eleven also partnered with LFCTV, the in-house channel of Premier League club Liverpool, to show its content in Belgium, Luxembourg, Poland, Singapore and Taiwan.
- ◆ Kenya's competition authority launched an investigation into Multichoice East Africa, the pay-television business of South African media company Naspers. Multichoice East Africa was accused by rivals of monopolising football rights.
- ◆ The NFL expanded a partnership with internet giant Google to allow viewers around the world to watch content from the American football league in virtual reality. As part of the agreement, the league's NFL Films division will produce a nine-part VR series featuring content about the lives of players, coaches and executives.
- ◆ The TechCrunch website reported that social media website Twitter was considering selling Vine rather than shutting down the video-sharing application. TechCrunch said multiple bids had been lodged with Twitter since it announced in October that Vine would be discontinued "in the coming months". A list of 10 offers had reportedly been whittled down to five, with several bids said to have come from Asian companies.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

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◆ Media group Constantin Medien signed a partnership with Indian telco Tata Communications to develop a new media hub in Germany. The service will offer content delivery, management, storage and computing services for businesses in the sports, media, gaming and music industries across German-speaking countries in Europe.

◆ The NFL partnered with virtual-reality company NextVR. The two will collaborate to deliver post-game VR experiences featuring highlights from three regular-season games. The partnership began on November 13 with a game between the San Francisco 49ers and the Arizona Cardinals, and also includes Chicago Bears v New York Giants on November 20 and the Giants against the Cleveland Browns on November 27.

◆ The Basketball Champions League partnered with sports video company WSC Sports Technologies to improve its video content. The company will create customised highlights packages from the European club tournament.

### INDUSTRY MOVES

◆ WME-IMG announced that Mark Shapiro and Ioris Francini would become co-presidents of the company. Shapiro and Francini will oversee WME-IMG's interests in areas such as media, events, licensing, global partnerships and original content, along with the IMG College and Professional Bull Riders entities, in addition to the company's new China subsidiary.

◆ International sports broadcaster ESPN hired Joyee Biswas as its new head of Southeast Asia. Biswas will be based in ESPN's offices in

Singapore and report to Mike Morrison, vice-president and managing director of ESPN APAC.

◆ ESPN expanded Kelly Cooke's role to take on the position of general manager of ESPN North Asia. Based in Hong Kong, Cooke will help manage ESPN's long-term partnership with internet company Tencent, and seek to grow ESPN's presence in China, Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea and Taiwan.

◆ Social media company Twitter said chief operating officer Adam Bain would leave the company, with chief financial officer Anthony Noto set to replace him.

◆ Global media company Turner promoted Aksel Van der Wal to oversee a new division that will seek to lead its digital innovation internationally. Van der Wal, currently senior vice-president and chief financial officer, will become executive vice-president of digital ventures and innovation for Turner's international operations, effective January 1.

◆ Trey Turner, currently senior vice-president of corporate finance, mergers and acquisitions at Turner, will succeed Aksel Van der Wal as chief financial officer of the company.

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LeSports



**Steph McMahon**  
Chief Brand Officer  
& TV Personality  
WWE



**Tenniel Chu**  
Vice Chairman  
Mission Hills



**Peter Kenyon**  
Partner  
Opto Advisers



**Rio Ferdinand**  
Former Professional Footballer  
Manchester United & England



**Jenny Quan**  
Executive Dean  
Cheetah Global Lab



**Andrea Radrizzani**  
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