

TVSportsMarkets

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Inside this issue

Discovery goes it alone in Germany after ARD/ZDF talks break down	3
BBC moves early to renew key Wimbledon deal	7
Sport TV invites bids for Primeira Liga international rights	11
Fifa and Uefa set for vast increases from competitive African market	14
German handball league on target with new domestic deal	17
IMG takes ATP World Tour betting streaming rights	20
Channel 4 outbids BBC for women's Euro 2017 tournament	22
Ghana FA opts for long-term, \$18m deal with StarTimes	24
Eleven snaps up NBA rights in Singapore and Taiwan	26
BeIN to keep grip on grand slams in Mena with French Open renewal	28
Sauerland fee stays steady in renewal with Sat.1	30
Charlton renews German Bundesliga rights in Israel	32
BeIN extends NBA rights in France to add to earlier Mena deal	34
Eurosport faces no competition to pick up UK Afcon rights	36
Lei: LeSports to focus on premium sports	37
Sports clips	40

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OLYMPIC GAMES

Discovery gambles on benefits outweighing cost of no FTA deal

By Frank Dunne

Discovery Communications' decision to end negotiations with Germany's public-service broadcasters over the free-to-air rights for the Olympic Games will be a very expensive one.

But the US media group believes it will have long-term strategic benefits. Being the exclusive Olympic broadcaster will transform the positioning and brand of its Eurosport channel in Europe's biggest television market.

The breakdown of the talks mean ARD and ZDF will miss out on rights to four Olympic Games between 2018 and 2024, a massive blow for Germany's traditional Olympic broadcasters.

Privately, the ARD/ZDF sports departments will hope the shock of not being awarded the rights encourages the broadcasters' boards into authorising a higher offer. Discovery says the decision is irrevocable: senior sources at the company insist this is not brinkmanship. Within ARD/ZDF, however, there is a belief the door remains open, if not for 2018, then for 2020 onward.

The loss does not provide the two broadcasters with a war chest to buy other sports rights, and may make it virtually impossible for them to win Olympics rights beyond 2024. As one executive put it, there is a growing tendency for European public-service broadcasters to "take sport funding not spent as a corporate saving and reduce the overall size of the pot. There is no guarantee the money will be available in the future."

Negotiations

After months of negotiations between the two sides, the difference between the asking price and the ARD/ZDF offer was not excessive.

In initial talks about a deal for two Games, 2018 and 2020, ARD/ZDF offered €100m (\$106m) against Discovery's request of €150m. At the last meeting of the two sides, the difference had narrowed to an offer of just over €120m and a request of about €130m.

Discussions also covered the possibility of a four-Games deal, from 2018 to 2024. It is thought the difference was about €25m, with the broadcasters going up to about €250m and Discovery holding out for about €275m.

It is understood that ARD and ZDF asked for more time but Discovery set them a deadline earlier this month, by which time they had not responded.

One informed source said Germany's two main commercial broadcasters, RTL and ProSiebenSat.1, had estimated the airtime value of a two-Games cycle on their channels to be about €50m to €60m. Neither was prepared to offer much more than that, so ARD and ZDF believed they were facing no competition.

ARD/ZDF's tough stance has surprised some other European public-service broadcasters. One senior executive said: "If the Olympics is not a must-have property for German public-service broadcasters, what is?"

He questioned ARD/ZDF's strategies of spending an increasing proportion of their budgets on top football rights. "With the way the market is developing, they won't end up with top football in the long run. If you look at how the role of public-service broadcasters is evolving generally, the Olympics and Olympic sport is more likely where they will end up."

However, other EBU members pointed out that ARD/ZDF were offering the same fee they paid for the 2014 and 2016 Games for far less – rights which were non-exclusive, with no ability to exploit on digital platforms, which will be increasingly important in coming years.

Discovery has a similar combination of free-to-air and pay-television channels in Italy and Spain, the two of the 'big five' markets where the rights for the 2018 and 2020 Games are yet to be sold. It is likely to first seek a deal with public-service broadcasters Rai (in Italy) and TVE (in Spain), but the outcome of the German talks is a clear signal that going it alone is a real option for Discovery.

It is understood that the International Olympic Committee has been kept informed throughout the process and is supportive of Discovery's strategy.

The priority for the IOC is that the main free-to-air coverage is on channels which have universal reach, regardless of their market share. The IOC is satisfied that, between the free-to-air programming and the offering across Eurosport's other platforms, there will be more coverage of the Games in Germany than ever before. The committee is also understood to be impressed by the broadcaster's plans for tailoring Olympics coverage to the local audience.

In June 2015, Discovery paid the IOC €1.3bn for rights to the 2018, 2020, 2022 and 2024 Games in 50 European territories. The European Broadcasting Union, the consortium of public-service broadcasters, unsuccessfully bid €1.09bn for the same rights (*TV Sports Markets* 19:13; 19:20).

Costs and revenues

German media-rights experts were divided on exactly how much going it alone will cost Discovery, but the common view was that it could run into the tens of millions of euros per Games.

Had they agreed a deal with ARD/ZDF at the amount offered, Discovery would have had guaranteed revenue of an average of €60m per Games. On top of this they would have benefited from improved carriage fees for Eurosport 2, plus pay-per-view and subscription income from OTT service Eurosport Player.

By declining to sublicense any rights, Discovery's main source of income will be advertising revenue from its free-to-air channels Eurosport 1 and Dmax. But this will be far less than €60m per Games.

Eurosport 1 had a total day share of 0.7 per cent in 2015, and a prime-time share of 0.4 per cent. Dmax had a total day share of one per cent and a prime-time share of 0.9 per cent.

One local expert said the Games, both winter and summer, could push the share of Eurosport 1 (the main free-to-air platform for the Games) up to about five per cent for the duration of the events. The Dmax share would also increase. The expert projected that total advertising revenues across both channels would be a maximum of €10m to €15m per Games, at current airtime values.

Sources close to Discovery say it would be much higher. They also point out being in control of all content will enable Discovery to drive greater revenues from Eurosport 2 and Eurosport Player than would be the case if there was wall-to-wall coverage of the Games on ARD and ZDF. Having exclusive rights opens up additional opportunities of cross-promotion between its platforms.

“Having full control, creating the windows and tiers of content, is of massive value when negotiating with pay-TV platforms and trying to reach OTT consumers”, one source said. Expanding its OTT offering is one of Discovery's key long-term strategic objectives (*TV Sports Markets* 20:20).

Increasing a channel's market share from under one per cent to more than five per cent during the Games would help push up the channel's average share across the year, the benchmark against which it negotiates its main advertising contracts.

Being the exclusive Olympic partner in major television markets also helps Discovery's overall position as a channel distributor. It strengthens the bargaining position for the entire portfolio of its channels with platforms and advertisers.

However, Discovery will also have to take on the additional costs of unilateral production of about €10m per Games for the main free-to-air coverage.

Audience drop

ARD and ZDF's primary channels each have an audience share of about 11 to 12 per cent. For the 2016 summer Games in Rio de Janeiro, the two broadcasters had an average audience across the 17 days of 2.595m, a 21.9-per-cent share.

The semi-final victory of the German women's beach volleyball pair, Laura Ludwig and Kira Walkenhorst, attracted the biggest audience, with 8.547m viewers, a 28.7-per-cent share.

There is little question that putting the main free-to-air coverage on Eurosport 1 and Dmax will result in a fall in the free-to-air audience of millions, even though each channel has a technical reach of 97 per cent of German homes.

A senior official at one major sports federation told *TV Sports Markets* that Discovery's broadcasting concept for Germany, which had been outlined at a recent visit by the media group to the federation, was "very impressive".

But there are two concerns for sports federations, the official said. The immediate concern is the likelihood of a big drop in audiences during the two weeks of the Games. The longer-term and deeper concern is that public-service broadcasters in Europe will drop Olympic sports completely if Discovery freezes them out in the sublicensing of rights to the Games.

This could hit federations hard. They would not only lose media-rights revenue but also visibility, negatively affecting the value of sponsorship deals and the take-up of sport at grassroots level.

In the immediate aftermath of Discovery announcing it had ended talks, ZDF said it remained committed to showing Olympic sports. However, one senior broadcasting source questioned whether this commitment would be maintained by broadcasters denied rights to the Games in the long term.

He said Europe remained the most important market for most sports federations because of the decades-long support public-service broadcasters have given Olympic sports.

If these broadcasters were cut out of the Olympics completely, he said, "we might end up with an American situation where, apart from the Olympic Games, the coverage of Olympic sports between the Games hardly exists. This would be very risky for the future of these sports and their mid-term financial model." ◆

TENNIS

BBC renews key Wimbledon rights deal early in direct talks

By Robin Jellis

UK public-service broadcaster the BBC moved early to renew its Wimbledon grand slam media rights last month, ahead of the renewal of its royal charter.

The four-year deal, from 2021 to 2024, is expected to be worth about £65m (€77m/\$81m) per year. That represents a modest increase on the BBC's three-year deal, from 2018 to 2020, worth £61m per year. The broadcaster's current three-year deal, from 2015 to 2017, is worth £42m per year (*TV Sports Markets* 19:18).

The BBC will continue to cover some production costs, although these are likely to be lower from 2018 onward as the All England Lawn Tennis Club will take greater control. Currently the BBC spends at least £3m per year on production.

The BBC agreed the deal directly with the AELTC, the tournament organiser and commercial rights-holder. The club did not tender the rights as it values the wide free-to-air exposure and sizeable fee paid by its long-term domestic broadcast partner.

No approaches from other broadcasters were received by the AELTC. One local rights expert said commercial broadcasters would be unable to recoup the rights fee paid by the BBC via advertising revenue.

The last time the AELTC sold its rights – in September 2015 – it was in a good position to push for an increase from the BBC, as the 2015-2017 deal was only slightly more valuable than the £40m per year the broadcaster paid between 2010 and 2014.

The AELTC could also have pointed to the buoyant pay-television market, with strong competition between BT Sport and Sky, which could have provided it with an even bigger rights-fee increase.

Only the men's and women's finals are listed for free-to-air coverage under British law, meaning a deal could, in theory, have been struck with a pay-television broadcaster. But the AELTC is thought to have been keen to remain with the BBC as it feels its brand is so strong because of the domestic free-to-air exposure it receives.

The BBC is not the AELTC's only UK broadcast partner. US media company Discovery Communications has a non-exclusive deal – agreed with both the AELTC and the BBC – to show a daily highlights

programme during the two-week tournament, as well as simulcast coverage of the men's and women's finals, via sports broadcaster Eurosport.

That deal runs from 2016 to 2020, having been approved by UK media regulator Ofcom in June. It is unclear whether it will be extended beyond 2020, but the BBC would be involved in any negotiations (*TV Sports Markets* 20:10).

There is also some coverage of the championships on the Live @ Wimbledon streaming channel on the club's website. Coverage is limited to one game per set from each match and is generally used to promote Wimbledon's media-rights coverage around the world.

The AELTC is advised on the global sale of its media rights by the IMG agency. The club's general preference is to agree long-term deals with its existing broadcast partners (*TV Sports Markets* 19:13).

Early renewal

The early renewal was for two reasons. First, the BBC wanted to lock in its financial commitment to Wimbledon well into the future. Second, the AELTC wanted to take control of the international broadcast feed currently handled by the BBC.

In April, the BBC agreed a similarly early renewal when extending its joint deal with pay-television broadcaster BT for domestic FA Cup rights (*TV Sports Markets* 20:7; 20:19).

The BBC's current royal charter – which sets out its purpose and guarantees its independence – began on January 1, 2007 and runs until December 31, 2016.

A government white paper outlining an amended royal charter was revealed in May but has yet to be voted on. The BBC is understood to have been keen to renew its Wimbledon rights and lock in the commitment before any changes take place.

The BBC currently produces all Wimbledon coverage for its own channels and for the club's international broadcast partners.

From 2018, the AELTC will provide the international feed. The club has chosen to do this so it can have a direct relationship with broadcasters and provide its partners with more tailored coverage.

This includes providing coverage of national stars, but also focusing on certain aspects unique to the tournament, such as the views from around the site and its proximity to central London.

The switch will also help the club televise more matches and means more courts will have the ability to use ball-tracking software Hawk-Eye.

The BBC and the AELTC will discuss in the coming months how exactly to split production responsibilities from 2018.

The AELTC hired former BBC production executive Paul Davies as head of broadcast and production at the start of this year to lead the project. Davies worked on Wimbledon for the BBC, and on golf's Open Championship and rugby union's Six Nations.

Having in-house expertise will allow the AELTC to better use its archive, creating footage for the lead-in to the annual championship that goes beyond a two-week period.

Key BBC deals

Wimbledon is one of the BBC's core sports properties alongside its live FA Cup and English Premier League highlights rights, plus its coverage of the Olympic Games, the Fifa World Cup and the Uefa European Championship. In recent months, the BBC has moved to extend rights to each of these well into the future.

The BBC's joint three-season FA Cup deal with BT, from 2018-19 to 2020-21, is worth £67m per season. The public-service broadcaster will pay £31m per season while BT will pay £36m per season.

In February, the BBC agreed a deal with Discovery in which the public-service broadcaster received rights to the 2022 and 2024 Games in return for pay-television rights to the 2018 and 2020 Games, plus £115m (*TV Sports Markets 20:2*).

In October 2015, the BBC – together with commercial broadcaster ITV – acquired rights to Euro 2016 and Euro 2020 for a combined £150m, split evenly between the two tournaments and the two broadcasters (*TV Sports Markets 19:19*).

In June 2014, the BBC, jointly with ITV, bought rights to the Fifa World Cups in 2018 and 2022 for just over £200m (*TV Sports Markets 18:12*).

The BBC's other key sports property is Premier League highlights, which form the basis of its *Match of the Day* programme. The rights cost £68m per season over three seasons, from 2016-17 to 2018-19 (*TV Sports Markets 19:3*).

Cost-cutting

The broadcaster has, however, had its sports-rights budget cut by £35m per year. The BBC was outbid by commercial broadcaster Channel 4 last month for rights to the women's Euro 2017 tournament (see separate story, page 22).

In January, it extricated itself from its deal for non-exclusive Formula One rights – due to run until the end of 2018 – for which it paid a fee of about £15m per year and another £10m per year for production (*TV Sports Markets 20:1*).

In July 2015, the BBC agreed a sharing deal for Six Nations rugby union rights with ITV. The BBC had paid £41m per year in a deal from 2014 to 2017, but from 2016 to 2021 will pay about £22.5m per year (*TV Sports Markets 19:14*).

In February 2015, it lost its Open Championship rights to Sky. The BBC's deal from 2012 to 2016 was worth £7.5m per year, while it also covered production costs of up to £2.5m per year. It sublicensed exclusive coverage of the 2016 event, one year early, to Sky (*TV Sports Markets* 19:3).

ATP Tour Finals

Despite its tricky financial situation, the BBC last month agreed a three-year renewal of non-exclusive rights to the ATP World Tour Finals, from 2016 to 2018.

The deal is understood to be worth about £100,000 per year – close to the value of the BBC's previous two-year deal, covering the 2014 and 2015 editions (*TV Sports Markets* 17:22).

The BBC is not thought to have faced any competition for the rights, which it acquired in direct talks with the ATP. Chris Kermode, the ATP's executive chairman and president, is understood to be keen on the BBC's coverage.

The BBC has broadcast the World Tour Finals since the event was first held at the O2 Arena in London in 2009. The O2's deal to host the event runs until 2018. One local rights expert said the BBC would be unlikely to extend its broadcast coverage if the event moved from the UK.

Under the deal, the BBC shows eight matches per year including one semi-final and the final. This year's edition took place from November 13 to 20.

The BBC's coverage is non-exclusive as Sky has a separate deal for all ATP World Tour Masters 1000 and World Tour 500 series events, including the World Tour Finals. The deal runs for five years, from 2014 to 2018, and is worth about £8m per year.

The ATP carves out a package of World Tour Finals rights for free-to-air coverage to ensure greater exposure for its sponsors. ◆

FOOTBALL

Sport TV expects big uplift in Primeira Liga international rights

By Callum McCarthy

The Portuguese Primeira Liga's international rights have been tendered for the first time, attracting interest from multiple global sports-rights agencies. But the value of the rights could be severely diminished by carve-outs and technical costs, denting enthusiasm in the market.

The tender, which is being run by pay-television broadcaster and commercial rights-holder Sport TV, invites parties to bid for three seasons, from 2017-18 to 2019-20. The IMG, MP & Silva and Pitch International agencies are thought to be the most interested parties. One informed source also expects the Mediapro agency to make a bid.

The Infront Sports & Media agency has also expressed interest, but is reluctant to enter a bidding war. The Lagardère Sports agency is also considering a bid.

Portuguese clubs sell domestic and international rights to their home matches on an individual basis, and have historically sold their domestic and international rights to either the Olivedesportos or PPTV agencies, which then sold on to Sport TV. All three are at least part-owned by Portuguese businessman Joaquim Oliveira.

Portuguese club Benfica exploited rights on its own club channel – Benfica TV, later rebranded as BTV – from 2013-14 to 2015-16, preventing a collective sale.

But despite the longer duration available and the formal tender, the value of the rights could fall well below Sport TV's expectation of between €12m and €13m per season.

Carve-outs

Rights are unavailable in Spain – a valuable territory for the rights. A deal with Mediapro, from 2017-18 to 2019-20, is thought to have been completed prior to the launch of the tender.

The availability of Portuguese-language rights in sub-Saharan Africa is also in question. The tender allows bids for a package of English-, French- and Portuguese-language rights – and a package of English- and French-language rights – but not for Portuguese-language rights on their own.

Industry insiders believe the rights will be acquired by Zap TV, a Portuguese-language pay-television broadcaster operating in Angola and Mozambique. Sport TV and Zap share a parent company: Portuguese telco Nos.

International betting rights have been carved out, while Portuguese free-to-air broadcasters which hold domestic rights will be awarded non-exclusive rights in other territories in which they operate.

With these packages carved out and technical costs factored in, experts believe a total of about €6m per season is the maximum an agency could pay and still break even.

Despite this, Sport TV is hoping for an offer of between €12m and €13m per season – on a par with the Dutch Eredivisie's income from its international rights deal with IMG, from 2014-15 to 2017-18 (*TV Sports Markets* 18:6).

Many agencies view the two leagues as being very similar properties as most of the value lies in the six or eight matches per season played between the top three or four clubs. The remainder of the matches provides a volume of content for broadcasters seeking to fill schedules.

Should rights in every territory have been available in all languages, experts believe the market value of the league's international rights would have been about €10m per season.

Options

Informed sources believe the rights would best suit either IMG, MP & Silva or Pitch. All three have a portfolio of global football rights that would enable them to package Primeira Liga rights with other properties. Agencies believe this will be the most efficient method of securing deals for the league, especially if competition inflates the cost of the rights.

MP & Silva holds international rights to the top-tier leagues in Belgium, France (excluding the Americas), Italy, Poland and Scotland. It also has a host of international Brazilian football rights, German Bundesliga rights in Central and Eastern Europe, and Spanish LaLiga rights in selected territories.

Pitch holds global rights to the Argentine Primera División and Brazilian men's national team friendlies. It also has: global rights to English Football League competitions; French league rights in the Americas; and FA Cup rights in Western Europe and the Middle East and North Africa region from 2018-19 to 2023-24.

IMG holds: FA Cup rights outside Western Europe and Mena, from 2018-19 to 2023-24; English Premier League rights in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia from 2016-17 to 2018-19; international Major League Soccer rights from 2015 to 2022; international Russian Premier League rights from 2015-16 to 2017-18; and Eredivisie international rights until 2017-18.

The Primeira Liga rights will be most valuable in Brazil and the rest of Latin America, while there will be some value in North America. Many Portuguese expatriates in Europe already invest in Portuguese decoders and subscribe to Sport TV, reducing the value of the rights to local broadcasters.

Current season

Sport TV has held the domestic and international rights of all Primeira Liga clubs since the start of 2016-17, but chose not to make rights available via a formal tender process until 2017-18.

The league's international rights in 2016-17 were distributed in one-season deals with agencies and broadcasters agreed in a small window before the start of the season. One informed source believes these sales took place before telcos Altice and Vodafone bought their 25-per-cent stakes in Sport TV (*TV Sports Markets* 20:16).

The total value of the league's international rights this season is thought to be over €2m. The relatively small value is because of the short duration offered and the haste with which Sport TV's small sales team struck the deals.

It is thought a deal with telco Altice in France, for 2016-17 only, is worth about €600,000. The rights also have significant value in Brazil, where pay-television broadcaster Band TV is paying about €500,000 for rights in 2016-17.

IMG bought rights in North America for this season. The agency sold these on to pay-television broadcaster Univision Deportes and online streaming service the Next Generation Sports Network. NGSN folded shortly after the deal was completed, and handed its rights back to IMG. Another deal was then agreed with online streaming service fuboTV.

Rights in Russia were bought by pay-television broadcaster Football TV for about €50,000 (*TV Sports Markets* 20:15). ◆

FOOTBALL

Uefa and Fifa set for vast fee increases in sub-Saharan Africa

By Callum McCarthy

Fifa and Uefa are set for huge increases in the value of their media rights in sub-Saharan Africa. TV Sports Markets understands bidding in both governing bodies' tender processes has progressed beyond a first round.

Fifa, football's global governing body, is selling rights to the 2017 Confederations Cup and the 2018 World Cup. The World Cup rights are far more valuable. Bids were due by November 18. It is thought Fifa will enter private negotiations with selected bidders next week.

CAA Eleven, the national team sales agent of football's European governing body Uefa, is selling rights to the Euro 2020 tournament, European Qualifiers from 2018-19 to 2021-22, and the Nations League national team tournaments in 2018-19 and 2020-21 in two separate tenders – Euro 2020 in one; European Qualifiers and the Nations League in the other.

First-round bids were due by November 22. It is understood Uefa received second-round bids on November 25. A winner is likely to be selected before the end of next week.

Competition for Fifa and Uefa rights is fierce. Pan-regional broadcasters Kwesé Sports, StarTimes and SuperSport are all thought to have submitted aggressive bids in all tenders. The only one of these not to reach the second round of bidding in all three tenders was StarTimes, which was knocked out of the running for Euro 2020.

Fifa

Pay-television broadcaster SuperSport, digital-terrestrial and pay-television operator StarTimes, and free-to-air and pay-television broadcaster Kwesé Sports all submitted pan-regional, platform-neutral bids for Fifa rights.

One insider believes pay-television operator Canal Plus Afrique will also be involved in discussions after bidding for French-language pay-television rights in Francophone territories.

South African public-service broadcaster SABC has bid for free-to-air rights in South Africa. Pay-television broadcaster Azam TV bid for free-to-air and pay-television rights in Tanzania.

TV Sports Markets also understands at least one major agency has made a pan-regional bid in an attempt to act as a gatekeeper of the rights.

Sources close to the situation are confident the winning bid will be worth between \$45m and \$50m, an increase of between 90 and 110 per cent on the total value of rights to the 2014 tournament – about \$23.5m.

In 2006, SuperSport paid a total of \$22m for pan-regional pay-television rights and free-to-air rights in South Africa only to the 2010 and 2014 World Cups. This fee is thought to have been split evenly between the two tournaments. SuperSport's deal also included rights to Confederations Cups in 2009 and 2013.

Media-rights experts believe this total was well below market value given that the 2010 World Cup was hosted in South Africa. However, SuperSport faced little to no competition for the rights at the time.

Free-to-air rights outside Nigeria and South Africa to the 2014 World Cup were acquired by the African Union of Broadcasters, which paid about \$6m. The Optima Sports Management Agency paid about \$6.5m for free-to-air rights in Nigeria (*TV Sports Markets* 17:7).

SABC sublicensed exclusive free-to-air rights to the 2014 edition from SuperSport for about \$10m.

Uefa

Sources close to the bidding for Uefa rights believe first-round bids totalling between \$65m and \$70m were submitted by Kwesé Sports and SuperSport for rights in both Uefa tenders.

Informed insiders believe Kwesé Sports and SuperSport to be favourites to win rights to either package as StarTimes is thought to have prioritised its offer for Fifa World Cup rights.

However, StarTimes is still in with a chance to acquire the package of European Qualifier and Nations League rights. It currently holds rights to Uefa's European Qualifier rights, from 2014-15 to 2017-18, in a deal worth a total of \$20m, or \$5m per season (*TV Sports Markets* 18:15).

It is thought competition between the three broadcasters could lead to an eventual total of between \$75m and \$80m across the two tenders.

The introduction of the Nations League makes a direct comparison to the current cycle impossible. However, in pure dollar terms this would be a total increase of up to 100 per cent on the \$40m earned by Uefa in the previous cycle.

Along with StarTimes's \$20m deal for European Qualifier rights, SuperSport paid \$20m for pay-television rights to Euro 2016.

Euro 2016 free-to-air rights were retained by CAA Eleven, who sold these on in major markets. CAA Eleven used free-to-air specialist agency TV Media Sport to sell in the remaining markets (*TV Sports Markets* 20:10).

Free-to-air rights

It is thought the bids of Kwešé Sports, StarTimes and SuperSport included free-to-air rights in all three tenders. However, the winning bidder would have to sublicense some free-to-air rights for both the World Cup and the European Championship.

The Kwešé Sports Free channel currently being rolled out across English-language territories in the region may not have sufficient reach to cover Fifa or Uefa's reach requirements – thought to be about 80 per cent of television households. Both StarTimes and SuperSport also lack the necessary free-to-air capabilities to satisfy these requirements.

This may open the door for rights and advertising agencies to strike deals and partnerships with the winning bidder. TV Media Sport have a strong history of securing deals with state broadcasters in most sub-Saharan territories.

WPP-owned agency ESP Properties – which secured sponsorship for TV Media Sport and the Infront Sports & Media agency's sales of the 2016 Olympic Games in the region – is also likely to be interested in performing a similar role for the 2018 World Cup and Euro 2020. ◆

HANDBALL

German handball league hits targets with new domestic deal

By Robin Jellis

Germany's Handball-Bundesliga has increased the value of its media rights by at least 67 per cent with international rights still to be sold, TV Sports Markets understands.

Last week, the German handball league sold domestic media rights to public-service broadcasters ARD/ZDF and pay-television broadcaster Sky Deutschland.

The ARD/ZDF deal is understood to be for four seasons, from 2017-18 to 2020-21, with an option to extend the deal for two more seasons, 2021-22 and 2022-23.

The Sky deal is for six seasons, from 2017-18 to 2022-23. ARD/ZDF's deal is shorter to avoid potential complications with the German competition authority.

ARD/ZDF and Sky will pay a combined rights fee of about €5m (\$5.3m) per season. Sky is understood to be paying a much larger share of the total. The three broadcasters will also cover production costs on top of the rights fee.

Sports broadcaster Sport1 currently holds Handball-Bundesliga rights in a five-season deal, from 2012-13 to 2016-17, worth €3m per season. Sport1 also covers production costs of about €1m per season. These are expected to increase in the new deal as production will be of a higher standard (*TV Sports Markets* 20:16).

One key difference between the current and new deal is that Sport1 was also granted international rights – these have now been carved out by the league. These rights will be tendered next week with bids due in the first week of 2017.

In the current cycle, Sport1 has a sublicensing deal with the MP & Silva agency for international rights over four seasons, from 2013-14 to 2016-17, worth about €1.2m per season. The deal excludes Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg and the Alto Adige region of Italy.

The deal includes the top-tier Handball-Bundesliga, the second-tier 2. Liga, the DHB-Pokal cup competition including the Final Fours, the Super Cup and the All Star game.

The league's managing director Frank Bohmann told *TV Sports Markets* this week the new media-rights deal was a "marvellous result for German handball".

“We defined our four big targets one-and-a-half years ago. First, to increase TV coverage. Second, to increase the quantity and quality of production. Third, to raise the licence fee. Fourth, to return some clips rights to the clubs. We have achieved all four objectives.”

Under the new deal, clubs will receive highlights of their matches to exploit via social media and club websites at 2pm the following day.

Bidding

The league tendered its rights on August 24 with bids due by September 23. It was not advised on the process by an agency, preferring to sell rights in-house.

The Handball-Bundesliga received a joint offer from ARD/ZDF with Sky, a joint offer from telco Deutsche Telekom with Sport1, a bid from US media group Discovery Communications and an offer from OTT platform DAZN, owned by the Perform Group. Several sports-rights agencies are also said to have bid.

After first-round bids were received, the league held further talks with interested parties before inviting second-round bids. The league then whittled down potential winning bids to two joint offers: from ARD/ZDF with Sky, and Telekom with Sport1. The final decision on the new deal was made by the league board.

It is thought the combined value of the Deutsche Telekom and Sport1 offer may have been higher than the winning bid from ARD/ZDF and Sky.

Telekom was pushing hard to get the rights, which would have complemented its coverage of the domestic basketball and ice hockey leagues (*TV Sports Markets* 18:12; 20:2).

The joint acquisition represents the first time ARD/ZDF and Sky have bought sports rights together. Local experts view the teaming up as a response to growing pay-television competition in the country.

Sky's interest was driven by a wider focus on handball rights. The broadcaster holds EHF Champions League rights in a three-season deal, from 2014-15 to 2016-17, worth about €1.2m per season. It also showed the 2015 men's IHF World Championship in Germany and Austria in a deal worth about €250,000 (*TV Sports Markets* 18:17; 19:1).

Fewer on free-to-air

Although the league will still receive live free-to-air exposure in its new deal, far fewer matches will be shown live on free-to-air from 2017-18.

Currently, Sport1 shows 60 live matches per season on its main free-to-air channel. In the new deal, 16 matches per season will be shown free-to-air: ARD/ZDF will show 12 live matches per season, while Sky will show four live matches per season on its Sky Sport News channel.

Of the decline in live free-to-air coverage, Bohmann said: “That’s the price you have to pay when you have a pay-television channel as a partner, but there will be a large increase in the highlights broadcast – there will be more highlights on public television than before, and on Sky Sport News.”

Previous deals

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

From 2006-07 to 2008-09, the league is thought to have earned about €1m per season from deals with ARD, DSF and sports broadcaster Sportdigital. From 2003-04 to 2005-06, ARD/ZDF paid the league about €420,000 per season (*TV Sports Markets* 10:9). ◆

TENNIS

IMG takes ATP betting package to buttress defence against rivals

By Richard Welbirg

ATP World Tour betting streaming rights have been acquired by the IMG agency after it beat four other bidders – including the incumbent Perform Group – TV Sports Markets understands.

Streaming rights covering the ATP World Tour Masters 1000 and World Tour 500 series were tendered by ATP Media, the commercial arm of the tour, late last year. A four-year deal with IMG worth about \$15m (€14m) per year, from 2017 to 2020, was finalised in May.

The tour sells its betting streaming rights (live visual coverage for bookmakers) separately from its betting data rights (real-time event information), though not all right-holders do.

The tour's betting data rights are also held by IMG via the agency's acquisition of sports data company Enetpulse in October 2012.

The ATP deal is one of the most-valuable tennis betting rights contracts in the world, reflecting the volume of high-quality content in the package. Tennis is one of the most valuable sports for bookmakers because it provides a huge number of matches on which to bet year-round.

Other deals

All betting rights to the Women's Tennis Association Tour are contained in Perform's \$525m, 10-year deal for global media rights from 2017 to 2026 (*TV Sports Markets* 18:23).

International Tennis Federation data rights are held by betting-related services company Sportradar in a five-year deal, from 2017 to 2021, worth about \$14m per year (*TV Sports Markets* 20:7).

The ITF has the largest amount of content, including the Davis and Fed Cups, but most notably the thousands of games played in the feeder tournaments to the ATP and WTA Tours.

The federation did not centralise its betting streaming rights when it last sold its rights, primarily because it believed its data rights were more valuable. The betting streaming rights are sold by the national tennis federations that operate ITF events.

The ITF's deal with Sportradar contains a clause confirming it will not attempt to centralise these rights or sell to another agency during the term of the contract.

Grand slams

In late 2015 IMG agreed a deal with the Fédération Française de Tennis for international data and streaming rights to the French Open. The deal is worth about €3m per year in total for an initial two years, 2016 and 2017, and the FFT has an option to extend it to cover 2018 and 2019. The deal was agreed directly between IMG and the FFT.

The deal marked the first time the FFT carved out betting rights as a separate package. IMG was not awarded rights in France as local regulation mandates that betting rights in the country are made available to licensed operators for a fee of one per-cent of their gross revenues.

The All England Lawn Tennis Club splits Wimbledon betting rights into separate deals for streaming and data; the two contracts are held by Perform and IMG respectively.

Both deals run for three years, from 2015 to 2017, and are worth a combined total of about £4m (€4.7m/\$5m). The AELTC will tender its rights for a new cycle in the first quarter of 2017.

Sportradar acquired combined streaming and data rights to the Australian Open for three years, from 2017 to 2019, after a tender shortly following this year's event. The deal is thought to be worth \$4m per year (*TV Sports Markets* 20:14).

US Open streaming and data rights are included within IMG's nine-year advisory deal with the US Tennis Association from 2017 to 2025 (*TV Sports Markets* 19:5). ♦

FOOTBALL

Surprise as Channel 4 outbids the BBC for women's Euro 2017

By Robin Jellis

UK commercial broadcaster Channel 4 outbid public-service broadcaster the BBC for rights to the women's European Championship in 2017.

Channel 4 will pay just over €1m (\$1.1m) for Euro 2017. The BBC paid about €500,000 for Euro 2013. Both deals were struck with sports broadcaster Eurosport, which has a wider deal covering many tournaments with Uefa, European football's governing body.

Channel 4's deal, struck last month, was a surprise as the BBC has been the traditional broadcaster of women's football in the UK – it showed the 2015 Fifa World Cup as well as Euro 2013. It also shows Women's Super League and women's FA Cup matches.

Eurosport held a tender process with bids due in October. The BBC could not match Channel 4's offer due to restrictions on its sports-rights budget.

One rights expert said the Channel 4 deal reflected the growing interest in women's sport and the recent success of the England women's national team. The expert also pointed out that the rights will play an important role in helping Channel 4 fulfil its public-service remit.

One observer said Eurosport's decision to sublicense Euro 2017 rights in the UK to Channel 4 instead of the BBC "doesn't say a lot for the BBC/Eurosport Olympic Games alliance".

In February, the BBC acquired free-to-air rights to the 2022 and 2024 Olympic Games from Eurosport (and its owner, US media group Discovery Communications) in return for pay-television rights to the 2018 and 2020 Olympic Games, plus £115m (*TV Sports Markets* 20:2).

As part of that deal, the BBC and Eurosport agreed to collaborate on some future rights deals. This included the BBC giving its approval to Eurosport's non-exclusive deal for UK Wimbledon rights with the All England Lawn Tennis Club.

TV Sports Markets understands Eurosport has also acquired non-exclusive rights to the 2018 Commonwealth Games from the BBC. The BBC paid just over £3m for rights to the event (*TV Sports Markets* 20:7).

Despite this close co-operation in recent months, Eurosport opted to award Euro 2017 rights to Channel 4.

Channel 4 has confirmed it will show live coverage of all England and Scotland matches at Euro 2017, as well as at least one semi-final and the final. It will release full details of all matches closer to the start of the tournament, on July 16.

The deal comes while UK rights to the 2019 Fifa Women's World Cup are on the market. Fifa – world football's governing body – issued a tender for the rights on October 10, with bids due by November 3. The BBC is thought to have paid about €500,000 for rights to the 2015 edition.

Uefa/Eurosport

Eurosport holds pan-European rights to Euro 2017 as part of a wider European deal covering Uefa's rights in the four-year period from 2014 to 2017.

As well as rights to Euro 2017, the deal also included: the final of the women's Champions League; the annual U17s and U19s men's and women's European Championships; the annual Futsal Cup club competition; and the Futsal Euro in 2014 and 2016.

It is difficult to put a value on the deal as Eurosport produces all of these events. Eurosport is also sublicensing Euro 2017 rights in certain territories, with Uefa receiving a portion of this revenue. Uefa and Eurosport had a similar deal covering the 2009 to 2013 period.

In the 2014-2017 cycle, Uefa carved out rights to Euro 2017 in France, Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden from the Eurosport deal. It carved out rights in the Netherlands as the tournament will be hosted there, while the other three territories are the most valuable in Europe for women's football.

In July, Uefa and CAA Eleven – Uefa's sales agent for its national team competitions – agreed a Euro 2017 deal with Dutch public-service broadcaster NOS worth about €750,000.

In May, French public-service broadcaster France Télévisions acquired Euro 2017 rights for about €5m, a huge increase on the Euro 2013 deal with digital-terrestrial channel W9, worth €800,000 (*TV Sports Markets* 20:11).

In March 2014, Swedish public-service broadcaster SVT and commercial broadcaster TV4 acquired Euro 2017 rights jointly for about €1.5m.

Uefa is currently in negotiations over a deal in Germany. Rights to Euro 2013 were held by public-service broadcasters ARD and ZDF. ◆

FOOTBALL

Ghana FA opts for 10-season, \$18m deal with StarTimes

By Callum McCarthy

The Ghana Football Association has sealed a 10-season deal with StarTimes under which it will earn almost \$1.8m (€1.7m) per season for all its domestic football media rights.

Digital-terrestrial and pay-television operator StarTimes will pay a total of \$17.95m from 2016-17 to 2025-26 for rights to: the top-tier Ghana Premier League; the second-tier National Division One; Ghana FA Cup; Ghana Women's League; and youth football.

The agreement ends StarTimes's relative dormancy over the last 18 months, in which it has limited its activity and reformed its acquisition strategy. It is also the operator's first acquisition of a top-tier African football league.

The length of the deal – unprecedented for any domestic football property in Africa – has surprised many. Observers have queried the league's decision to agree a 10-season deal given the sub-Saharan African market is becoming increasingly competitive.

Start-up pay-television broadcaster Kwesé Sports is thought to have bid \$1.2m per season, over a much shorter term, for the top-tier Ghana Premier League only. Informed sources believe Kwesé would have been willing to increase this to about \$1.4m per season should negotiations have continued.

This amount, combined with the sale of Ghana FA Cup rights, would likely have come close to the average of \$1.795m per season the association will earn from StarTimes.

Pay-television broadcaster SuperSport is thought to have offered just over \$1m per season for all Ghana FA rights, also over a shorter term.

The new deal will earn the Ghana FA almost double the amount of its previous three-season deal with SuperSport, from 2013-14 to 2016. That deal, worth about \$900,000 per season, included significant production costs. SuperSport's total outlay was about \$3m per season (*TV Sports Markets* 20:20).

It is unclear how much StarTimes will invest in production, but informed sources believe it will be significantly less than SuperSport's investment of about \$2.1m per season.

As part of the deal, StarTimes has donated a production vehicle to the association. It is unclear why it has done this as StarTimes is expected to be responsible for producing matches, not the association. StarTimes declined to comment when contacted by *TV Sports Markets*.

The new deal was brokered by Proton Sports, a Ghanaian agency primarily involved in athlete representation and event management. Its chief executive, Kurt Okraku, is also the chief executive of Dreams FC, a Premier League club.

Proton will earn commission for brokering the StarTimes agreement. Local reports suggest this fee could be as high as 20 per cent, while sources close to the deal suggest its fee will be lower. Proton Sports did not respond to requests for comment when contacted by *TV Sports Markets*.

StarTimes strategy

StarTimes recently opened a pay-television operation in Ghana, despite being embroiled in a legal battle with the Ghanaian government over the termination of its contract to oversee the country's digital migration process.

The deal with the Ghana FA is designed to boost pay-television subscriptions and to foster long-term loyalty from local consumers.

StarTimes is expected to acquire local sports rights in other sub-Saharan territories. It recently began a partnership with Cameroon's public-service broadcaster CRTV in which it provided the broadcaster with a modern production vehicle, enabling it to host-broadcast matches from the 2016 Africa Women Cup of Nations.

It is thought StarTimes is hoping to acquire rights to the Cameroon Elite One league, the country's top-tier football league, currently held by CRTV (*TV Sports Markets* 20:17).

StarTimes hopes that local sport acquisitions – as well as striking deals with governments to oversee their digital migration projects and become their default digital-terrestrial television provider – will solidify its presence across the region.

StarTimes has accumulated between 7m and 8m pay-television subscribers across sub-Saharan Africa, and is strongest in Nigeria – the region's second-largest market.

Its next target is to challenge the dominance of pay-television operator Canal Plus Afrique in Francophone territories. StarTimes is expected to begin bidding against Canal Plus for French-language sports rights, and is developing the capability to put French-language tracks on its coverage.

Canal Plus has enjoyed strong subscriber growth in Francophone African territories, reaching 2.2m by the end of September. This success has mitigated, to some extent, its poor fortunes in France. Media group Vivendi, its parent company, reported its subscriber base in France was in "continuous decline".

In response to StarTimes, Canal Plus has begun distribution of its Easy TV digital-terrestrial service. So far it has launched this service in the Congo and the Democratic Republic of Congo. ◆

BASKETBALL

Eleven steps into Singaporean breach and adds rights in Taiwan

By Richard Welbirg

Two recent deals with the National Basketball Association have fulfilled different needs for Eleven Sports Network in Singapore and Taiwan.

A four-season deal in Singapore, from 2016-17 to 2019-20, will provide an important content base for the nascent broadcaster.

In Taiwan, a deal for the 2016-17 season alone is unlikely to be a significant subscription driver, but it connects Eleven with one of the strongest sporting brands in the country.

The deal in Singapore, thought to be worth about \$2m (€1.9m) per season, helped the NBA earn a decent uplift from a market that had appeared challenging.

Incumbent rights-holder StarHub, which paid about \$1.5m per season over three seasons from 2013-14 to 2015-16, was not prepared to maintain or increase its current level of investment in the rights. Rival telco Singtel made a low bid.

Eleven was prepared to meet the NBA's asking price because, although the league is not a premium property in Singapore, it provides a large volume of well-produced content.

Eleven's deal in Taiwan covers OTT rights for three regular-season games per week and selected playoff games. It is worth close to \$750,000.

Basketball is the second-most popular sport in Taiwan, behind baseball, and the NBA is the most important basketball property in the market.

The Taiwanese deal sits alongside contracts with pay-television broadcasters Videoland and Fox Sports Asia. These deals run concurrently from the 2014-15 season, and earn the NBA a total of between \$8m and \$9m per season. It is unclear when the deals terminate.

Videoland pays about 60 per cent of the total in return for eight regular-season games per week and exclusive coverage of the playoffs. It sublicenses three games per week to digital operator Elta. Fox's deal, agreed directly with the NBA, covers three regular-season games per week.

Fox and Elta previously had deals covering 2012-13 and 2013-14, while Videoland had a one-season deal covering 2013-14.

The NBA earned a combined total of about \$5m per season in the 2013-14 season. Rights were shared evenly between the three broadcasters.

China

TV Sports Markets understands the NBA's renewal of its rights deal with Chinese IPTV operator BesTV – agreed in October – will run from 2016-17 to 2019-20. It will end at the same time as the league's headline digital rights deal with streaming company Tencent (*TV Sports Markets* 19:3).

The new deal is thought to be worth about \$23m per season. It expands BesTV's rights to allow coverage of NBA games on BesTV's mobile apps. It is a massive increase on the value of BesTV's previous three-season deal, from 2013-14 to 2015-16, worth just over \$4m per season.

Tencent's deal, from 2015-16 to 2019-20, was initially worth \$500m plus a share of advertising and commercial revenue estimated to be \$200m. But the deal was expanded in the summer to integrate the NBA's international League Pass, allowing Tencent to show every NBA game.

Expanding the deal was reported to add \$50m per season to Tencent's rights fee over the remaining four years of the contract, but sources close to the league claimed the additional cost was higher. ♦

TENNIS

FFT nears French Open renewal across Mena with beIN Sports

By Robin Jellis

The French tennis federation is nearing a renewal with beIN Media Group for rights to the French Open tournament in the Middle East and North Africa, *TV Sports Markets* understands.

The new deal is expected to run for five years, from 2017 to 2021, and be worth about \$4m (€3.8m) per year. It has been agreed directly between beIN and the Fédération Française de Tennis.

It will represent an increase in value of about 60 per cent on beIN's four-year deal, from 2013 to 2016, worth about \$2.5m per year.

The new deal is understood to have been agreed at the Sportel Miami trade fair in March 2015. However, the deal's completion has been delayed by the departure of Michel Grach, the FFT's former media and sponsorship director, and the federation's focus on the construction of a new stadium.

beIN will show coverage on its beIN Sports pay-television channels. The French Open deal means beIN has strengthened its grip on grand slam tennis rights in the region. In April this year, beIN bought rights to the only grand slam missing from its portfolio: Wimbledon.

That deal is for five years, from 2016 to 2020, and is worth about \$4m per year. This is up from the \$1.7m per year paid by rival pay-television broadcaster Abu Dhabi Media in a five-year deal, from 2011 to 2015 (*TV Sports Markets* 19:13).

It also holds rights to the Australian Open in a five-year deal, from 2015 to 2019, worth an average of \$1.7m per year, and US Open rights under a five-year deal, from 2013 to 2017, worth about \$3m per year (*TV Sports Markets* 20:3).

It also holds rights to all ATP World Tour Masters 1000 and 500 series in a five-year deal, from 2014 to 2018, worth close to \$4m per year.

In addition, beIN holds International Tennis Federation and Women's Tennis Association rights as part of wider deals.

The media group has strong ties to tennis. Nasser Al-Khelaifi, chairman and chief executive of beIN, is president of the Qatar Tennis Federation and a former professional tennis player. Al-Khelaifi is also vice president for West Asia at the Asian Tennis Federation.

BeIN's deal for ITF rights is global, from 2015 to 2021, and is worth just over \$15m per year. The deal covers the Davis Cup and Fed Cup (*TV Sports Markets* 19:3).

BeIN also holds WTA rights via a multi-territory sublicensing deal with the Perform Group over five years, from 2017 to 2021. The deal covers Mena, several European territories – including France, Spain and Turkey – the US and Australia. Perform holds global WTA rights in a 10-year deal, from 2017 to 2026, worth \$525m (*TV Sports Markets* 18:23). ◆

BOXING

Sauerland fee stays steady as Sat.1 renews rights in Germany

By Robin Jellis

The value of Sauerland boxing rights in Germany remained steady in a renewal with leading commercial broadcaster ProSiebenSat.1 earlier this month, despite the addition of new events from next year.

Promoter Kalle Sauerland, who runs the boxing promotion, agreed a three-year renewal with Sat.1, from 2017 to 2019. The deal will only be extended beyond the first and second years if certain targets are met by Sauerland and Sat.1.

It is understood the value of the deal will be the same as the value of Sat.1's current two-year deal, for 2015 and 2016, worth a total of about €6.4m per year (\$6.8m). Sat.1 pays about €800,000 per event in a deal covering eight events per year (*TV Sports Markets* 18:19).

In the new deal, Sat.1 will continue to cover production costs on top of its rights fee. One boxing rights expert said a world title fight would cost between €250,000 and €350,000 to produce.

Sauerland did not tender the rights in a new cycle because it preferred to renew with its incumbent broadcast partner. As such, the renewal was agreed directly between the two parties.

Sat.1 was keen to renew as it regards boxing as one of the top three sports in the country. The new deal includes more events – a minimum of 12 per year – but the overall fee has stayed steady because the added events are of lower quality.

Eight events per year will be shown on the main Sat.1 commercial channel – these are expected to be world title fights. At least four events per year will be shown on Sat.1's OTT platform, Ran Fighting.

TV Sports Markets understands Sauerland could earn additional revenue dependent on the performance of its events on Ran Fighting.

In the current deal, the Sat.1 channel shows six events per year on a free-to-air basis. Two events per year are available on a pay-per-view basis on Maxdome, Sat.1's video-on-demand service.

Sauerland was keen to expand the number of events as it seeks to develop boxing talent in the country. Local experts explain the flat fee by pointing to the fact few strong German boxers have emerged in recent years.

The new deal prevents Sauerland's total earnings in the country from further decline. The last time these rights were sold the promotion's total earnings fell from about €13.2m per year in a two-year deal with ARD – for 2013 and 2014 – to €6.4m per year with Sat.1.

It is understood that Sauerland is also close to a long-term extension with multi-territory commercial and pay-television broadcaster Modern Times Group for rights in Scandinavia.

Other boxing

The Sauerland extension furthers Sat.1's commitment to German boxing – it also has a deal for fights of German boxer Felix Sturm, for which it pays between €1.5m and €2m per fight.

Rival commercial broadcaster RTL has a five-fight deal with Wladimir Klitschko worth between €3m and €3.5m per fight. The deal was agreed in July last year and includes four more fights. However, it is understood the broadcaster was not interested in Sauerland rights.

Regional broadcaster MDR – a member of public-service broadcaster ARD – holds rights to SES-Boxing fights for which it pays about €200,000 per event. ♦

FOOTBALL

Charlton renews Bundesliga rights in hot Israeli TV market

By Robin Jellis

Israeli pay-television broadcaster Charlton has renewed its deal for German Bundesliga media rights, *TV Sports Markets* understands.

The new deal will run for three seasons, from 2017-18 to 2019-20, and will be worth just under €1m (\$1.1m) per season. This is almost double the value of Charlton's existing two-season deal, for 2015-16 and 2016-17, worth about €500,000 per season.

It represents another increase for the league in Israel: Charlton's previous three-season deal, from 2012-13 to 2014-15, was worth €400,000 per season (*TV Sports Markets* 18:18).

Charlton's new deal has been agreed in principle but is yet to be finalised. The deal was agreed in direct talks between the broadcaster and the league's commercial arm, DFL Sports Enterprises.

The league met and spoke with interested broadcasters at the Sportel Monaco trade fair in October.

The strongest competition to Charlton is understood to have come from local telco Partner, which is yet to acquire any sports rights. Local rights experts say the presence of the telco as a potential bidder is the main reason behind the fee increase.

Partner bid aggressively – though unsuccessfully – for Israeli Premier League and English Premier League rights last December, forcing these rights fees up (*TV Sports Markets* 20:15).

Basic-tier sports broadcaster One is said to have been interested but was unwilling to match Charlton's fee. The league is thought to have sought about €1.5m per season for the rights in a new deal.

Pay-television broadcaster the Sports Channel is not thought to have bid. In recent months it has renewed Formula One, Euroleague basketball and domestic basketball rights, while also sublicensing domestic football rights from Charlton, restricting its spending power.

Formula One went from \$300,000 per year to \$375,000 per year; the Euroleague rose from about \$3m in 2015-16 to just over \$6m per season; and the domestic basketball league went from ILS10m (€2.4m/\$2.6m) per season to ILS15m per season. The Sports Channel's sublicensing deal with Charlton for rights to the top-pick live Israeli Premier League match each week and highlights is worth about ILS60m per season.

Other territories

Bundesliga rights in Israel were not included in the league's tender covering Europe earlier this year. Poland is the only European territory in which the league is yet to agree a deal for 2017-18 onward.

Coverage in Austria and Switzerland is yet to be announced, but it is understood the league's domestic live rights-holders – pay-television broadcaster Sky Deutschland and sports broadcaster Eurosport – will be awarded the same set of rights they will hold in Germany. ◆

BASKETBALL

BeIN renews NBA rights in France to add to earlier Mena deal

By Robin Jellis

BeIN Media Group increased its fee for National Basketball Association media rights in France by about 23 per cent ahead of the new season.

The deal in France will run for four seasons, from 2016-17 to 2019-20, and will be worth an average of about \$8m (€7.6m) per season. This is up from the \$6.5m per season beIN paid in its previous four-season deal, from 2012-13 to 2015-16 (*TV Sports Markets* 20:16).

The new deal was agreed directly between the NBA and beIN. The league did not tender its rights or hold talks with other broadcasters – it seeks to renew with its incumbent partners for most of its media-rights deals around the world.

BeIN will continue to show games on its pay-television beIN Sports channels. The deal covers live rights to all games, the same as the broadcaster's current deal.

BeIN will also host the NBA's website in the country, replacing French newspaper *L'Équipe*. It will provide extensive video highlights and original content in French.

Interest in the NBA in France is currently high – nine French players play in the league, including stars Nicolas Batum and Tony Parker. However, games are usually shown late at night and ratings are low.

The deal ensures a second successive rights-fee increase for the NBA in France. In the 2010-11 and 2011-12 seasons the league had deals with three broadcasters worth a total of \$5.5m per season.

It had deals with: now-defunct pay-television broadcaster Orange Sport worth about \$2.5m per season; pay-television broadcaster Canal Plus worth about \$1.5m per season; and sports broadcaster Ma Chaîne Sport worth about \$1.5m per season (*TV Sports Markets* 14:20; 14:23).

Mena

TV Sports Markets understands beIN renewed a deal covering the Middle East and North Africa some time ago, though neither the broadcaster nor the league announced the extension.

BeIN's previous three-season deal, from 2013-14 to 2015-16, was worth about \$6.5m per season. It is understood the new deal will run for five seasons, from 2016-17 to 2020-21, and will be worth slightly less than \$8m per season.

It is understood that beIN faced no competition from other broadcasters in the region. BeIN and the league agreed a deal in direct talks.

Matt Brabants, the league's senior vice president of global media distribution and business operations, told *TV Sports Markets*: "The business of the global game has never been better – we have never been stronger as a brand or property.

"Our appeal is truly global. We have 113 international players from 41 territories. That's a record. Twenty-five per cent of NBA rosters are made up of international players and this is one of the main factors leading to the global appeal of the sport." ♦

FOOTBALL

Eurosport faces no competition for Afcon rights in UK and Ireland

By Frank Dunne

Sports broadcaster Eurosport is thought to have faced no real competition for the rights in the UK and Ireland to the 2017 and 2019 Africa Cup of Nations.

The broadcaster is paying a total of about £500,000 (€589,000/\$624,000) for the two tournaments. The deal was agreed with the Lagardère Sports agency, the global rights-holder for the competition.

Eurosport is also thought to be in talks with Lagardère about acquiring the same set of rights in Spain and Portugal.

A like-for-like comparison with the previous deal is not possible, as Eurosport held UK and Ireland rights in 2013 and 2015 as part of a pan-European deal, thought to have been worth \$2.5m per edition.

Pay-television broadcasters BT Sport and Sky were not interested. Each already has a large portfolio of top football rights. The Afcon falls in January, when the main European football leagues are in full flow.

Lagardère's best hope of generating some competition was ITV, but the commercial broadcaster is thought to have been lukewarm about the property and has cut back its spending on sports rights. In 2015, it acquired rights to seven live matches and highlights in a sublicensing deal with Eurosport.

For the new cycle, Eurosport did not make an offer for rights across Europe. Lagardère has been selling the rights on a market-by-market basis.

In July, it agreed a deal with sports channel Fox Sports in Italy worth €600,000 for the two competitions (*TV Sports Markets* 20:13).

In France, the rights to at least 2017 and 2019 have been acquired by beIN Media Group, which is thought to have had a pre-deal in place with Lagardère covering its core markets of the Middle East and North Africa and France.

Eurosport's pan-European deal for 2013 and 2015 excluded France, where pay-television broadcaster Canal Plus paid €5.4m for rights to the two editions.

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

TV CHINA

LeSports CEO confirms strategy change amid cash-flow troubles

By Richard Welbirg

Chinese streaming operator LeSports will change its acquisition strategy to focus on premium content, chief executive Lei Zhenjian told *TV Sports Markets* this week.

LeSports has been the most aggressive of China's emergent digital players, with a policy of pursuing almost every property that came on the market. It has built up a huge portfolio of rights at all levels of the market.

Current portfolio of LeSports

Property	
AC Milan TV	Italian Serie A
ATP World Tour 1000 and 500 events	Major League Baseball
Bellator Fighting Championships	Major League Soccer
Chinese Basketball Association	MotoGP
Chinese Super League	National Basketball Association
English Premier League	Pac 12
English Football Association events	Scottish Professional Football League
FEI events	Tour de France
FIBA Stanković Continental Champions' Cup	Uefa Champions League
Fifa World Cup	Uefa Europa League
French Ligue 1	Uefa European Championships
German Bundesliga	US Open (tennis)
Giro d'Italia	USGA events (including US Open)
International Boxing Federation (China events)	Wimbledon
International Champions Cup	World Rally Championship

Source: *TV Sports Markets Rights Tracker*

But the company has missed payment deadlines on some deals amid rumours of cash-flow problems at its LeEco parent company (*TV Sports Markets* 20:19).

Speaking exclusively to *TV Sports Markets* at the LeSports Connect conference in Dongguan, China, Lei said: "In the past few years we have been purchasing a lot of rights so we can create a large user base.

"In future, when we purchase rights we will see how many users this can bring us and what value they can bring. And so, yes, LeSports will primarily focus on premium content."

LeSports's largest deal in China is for Chinese Super League digital rights in 2016 and 2017, worth CNY1.35bn (€185m/\$196m) per year. Its Hong Kong arm, LeSports HK, holds English Premier League rights from 2016-17 to 2018-19 in a deal worth about \$130m per season (*TV Sports Markets* 20:4; 20:16).

Addressing the cash-flow question, Lei said such issues were faced by every company in the course of its development. And he said a more sensible approach to rights acquisition was likely throughout the Chinese media-rights market.

“Starting from 2017 you will see some adjustments to the industry. We believe more and more media platforms will be more sensible about rights costs, and as business models becomes more mature, rights costs will also be more reasonable.

“It is true that rights costs have been surging over the last two years, and it has brought great pressure to many companies.”

Exploiting sports media rights is the largest part of the LeSports business, which also includes event organisation, smart sporting goods and ‘value-added’ services (*TV Sports Markets* 19:15).

Lei said media rights represented over 60 per cent of the company's overall costs and formed the basis for two-thirds of its overall revenue. The company has spent CNY2m on media rights in 2016.

PPTV Premier League

Lei said last month's purchase by rival streaming company PPTV of Premier League rights in China from 2019-20 to 2021-22 was unlikely to change the structure of the market because the deal does not begin for three years.

PPTV struck a deal worth about \$700m – or just over \$233m per season – with the league last month, outbidding LeSports, streaming company Tencent, Super Sports Media Group and the MP & Silva agency (*TV Sports Markets* 20:20).

Super Sports Media Group is not thought to have made a competitive bid. Perhaps more surprisingly, LeSports and Tencent are thought to have been a long way short of PPTV's second-round bid. Both LeSports and Tencent are believed to have made bids closer to \$300m in the first round, and not to have increased these by much in the second round.

PPTV increased its bid significantly in the second round in order to win out over MP & Silva, which is thought to have offered \$660m in the first round of bidding. MP & Silva did not increase its offer further in the second round. ◆

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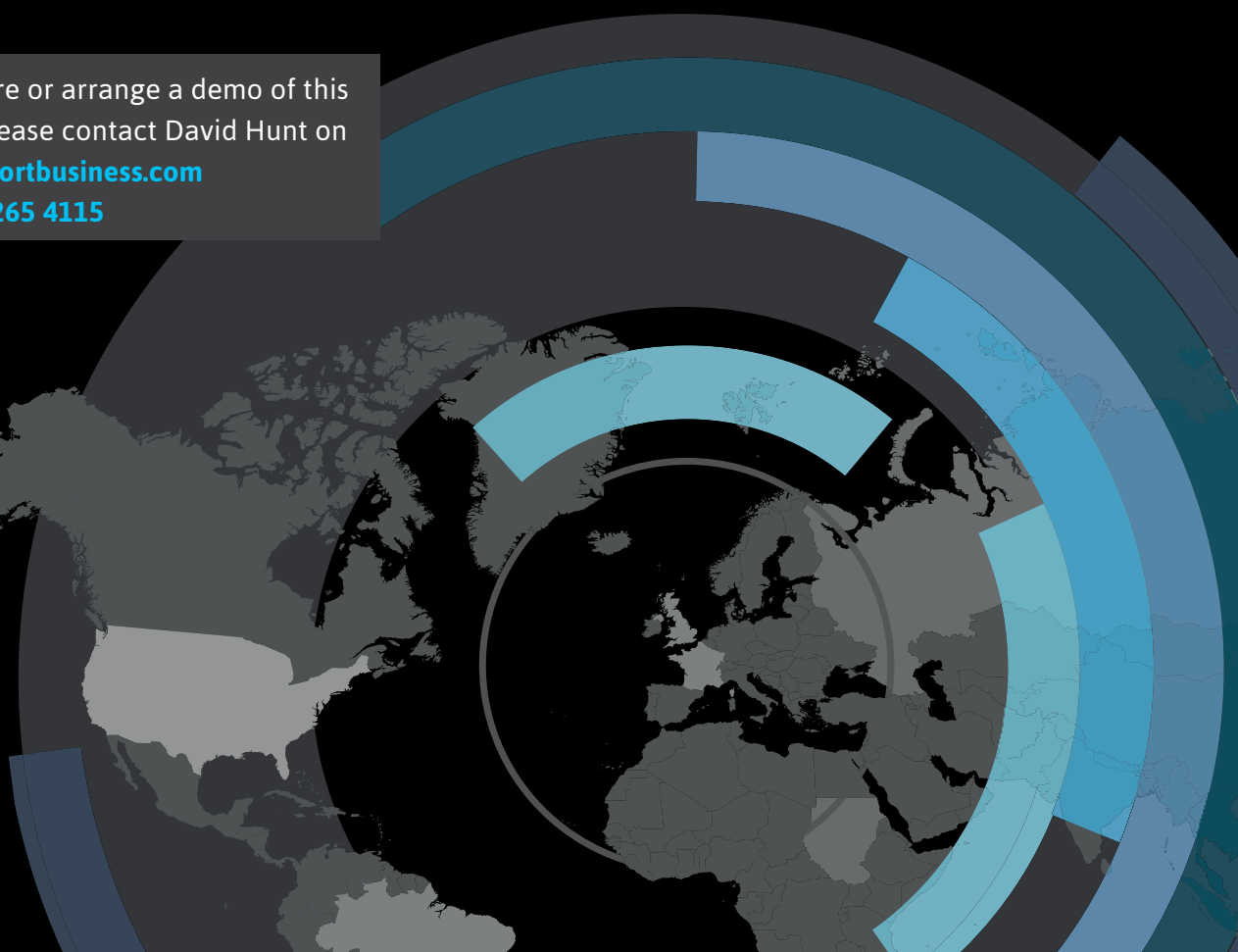
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- how historic trends might affect the value of rights in a particular market
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MEDIA RIGHTS DEALS

NOVEMBER 17 TO 30

FOOTBALL

- ◆ Online streaming company PPTV acquired English Premier League rights in China for three seasons, from 2019-20 to 2021-22. The deal was first reported in *TV Sports Markets* 20:20.
- ◆ Pay-television operator Digiturk – owned by beIN Media Group – retained its rights to the Süper Lig and 1. Lig, the top two divisions of Turkish football. The agreement was reached with the Turkish football federation, Türkiye Futbol Federasyonu, and will be worth \$500m (€453m) per season plus VAT over five seasons, from 2017-18 to 2021-22.
- ◆ Telco Econet agreed a deal with the Council of Southern Africa Football Associations (Cosafa) for rights to the Cosafa U20 men's and women's tournaments across sub-Saharan Africa. The exclusive one-year deal runs until the end of October 2017 and includes the option of a two-year extension.
- ◆ Pan-African digital-terrestrial and pay-television operator StarTimes acquired rights to the top-tier Ghana Premier League in a deal with the Ghana Football Association (page 24).
- ◆ French pay-television broadcaster SFR Sport acquired rights to Portuguese cup competitions the Taça de Portugal and Taça da Liga. SFR Sport will broadcast coverage for the remainder of the 2016-17 season.
- ◆ International sports broadcaster Eurosport acquired rights in the UK and Ireland to the 2017 and 2019 editions of the Africa Cup of Nations national team tournament (page 36).

OTHER SPORTS

- ◆ **Aussie Rules:** Australian commercial broadcaster Seven renewed a rights deal with the South Australian National Football League. The new agreement covers 2017 and 2018, and includes an option to extend the deal for a further four years.
- ◆ **Basketball:** International sports broadcaster Eleven Sports Network acquired NBA OTT rights in Taiwan (page 26).
- ◆ **Basketball:** Finnish telco Elisa acquired rights for Liga ACB, Spain's top-tier league, in the 2016-17 season.
- ◆ **Boxing:** Russian state broadcaster Channel One acquired rights for the WBA, WBC and IBF light heavyweight title bout between Sergey Kovalev and Andre Ward on November 19.
- ◆ **Cycling:** Seven agreed a rights deal for the Deakin Elite Women's Road Race, which takes place in Australia on January 28.
- ◆ **Handball:** The German handball league, the Handball-Bundesliga, agreed a new domestic deal jointly with public-service broadcasters ARD/ZDF and pay-television broadcaster Sky Deutschland (page 17).
- ◆ **Handball:** German sports broadcaster Sport1 acquired rights for this year's EHF Women's European Championship in Sweden.
- ◆ **Ice Hockey:** The National Women's Hockey League agreed a deal with streaming service Cheddar, which will show weekend games for the remainder of the 2016-17 regular season.

MEDIA RIGHTS DEALS

NOVEMBER 17 TO 30

- ◆ **Kickboxing:** Eleven Sports Network acquired exclusive rights in Belgium and Poland to the Glory: Collision event, which will take place in Oberhausen, Germany, on December 10.
- ◆ **Motor Racing:** Pay-television broadcaster OSN acquired rights to the World Touring Car Championship in the Middle East and North Africa. The deal started with the season-ending Race of Qatar event on November 25, and includes all rounds of the 2017 season.
- ◆ **Netball:** UK pay-television broadcaster Sky signed a four-year deal with the England Netball governing body, from 2017 to 2020. Sky will show: the Netball Superleague; the Netball International Series and the Quad Series; and all home England international matches.
- ◆ **Olympic Games:** US media company Discovery Communications announced its sports broadcaster Eurosport will be the exclusive home of the Games in Germany from 2018 to 2024 (page 3).
- ◆ **Rugby Sevens:** The International Olympic Committee's Olympic Channel acquired streaming rights for World Rugby's 2016-17 Sevens Series.
- ◆ **Rugby Sevens:** US network CNN acquired rights for World Rugby's 2016-17 Sevens Series.
- ◆ **Rugby Union:** Eurosport acquired exclusive rights in Italy for the remainder of the 2016-17 Pro12 season. At least 10 home matches of an Italian team – either Benetton Treviso or Zebre – will be shown live, as well as some away matches. Home matches will also be shown on Eurosport's channels across Europe and Asia.
- ◆ **Skiing:** Czech public-service broadcaster Česká Televize extended a deal for rights to the Ski Classics long-distance championship. The three-season deal runs from 2016-17 to 2018-19.
- ◆ **Skiing:** Free-to-air sports broadcaster Sport TV acquired rights to the Ski Classics in Slovenia.
- ◆ **Skiing:** International pay-television broadcaster Fox Sports extended rights deals for the Ski Classics in Cyprus, Greece, Israel, Malta and Turkey. It also struck a new deal for the rights in the Netherlands.
- ◆ **Skiing:** Swedish public-service broadcaster SVT acquired rights for the Ski Classics.
- ◆ **Skiing:** Russian free-to-air and pay-television broadcaster Match TV acquired rights to the Fédération Internationale de Ski competition the Cross-Country World Cup for 2016-17 only.
- ◆ **Tennis:** UK public-service broadcaster the BBC agreed an extension for Wimbledon grand slam rights, from 2021 to 2024 (page 7).
- ◆ **Tennis:** Swiss public-service broadcaster SRG acquired exclusive rights for the Women's Tennis Association tournament in Biel/Bienne. The deal will run for four years, from 2017 to 2020.
- ◆ **Wrestling:** German pay-television broadcaster Sky Deutschland acquired rights to events organised by WWE. Customers in Austria and Germany will have access to all WWE pay-per-view events. From April 2017, Sky Deutschland will also broadcast live coverage of all *WWE Raw* and *SmackDown* programmes.

MEDIA RIGHTS DEALS

NOVEMBER 17 TO 30

MEDIA RIGHTS NEGOTIATIONS

- ◆ The *Wall Street Journal* reported that e-commerce and media company Amazon has held talks with major US sports leagues to explore whether it could create a premium live-streaming sports package as part of its Amazon Prime subscription service.
- ◆ Football Federation Australia issued tender documents for rights to the top-tier A-League. Bids are said to be due by December 9, with the federation reportedly targeting a four season deal from 2017-18 onward.
- ◆ Vitaly Mutko, the president of the Russian Football Union, will hold talks with Fifa over the sale of media rights to the 2018 World Cup in the country after the proposed fee rocketed, according to the Tass news agency. The rights also include the 2017 Confederations Cup. Both will be hosted in Russia. Mutko said that “initially the price was set at \$32m (€30m)” but “the current one stands at \$100m” for the rights.
- ◆ Brazilian football club Palmeiras agreed to assign its Série A pay-television rights to Esporte Interativo, according to multiple Brazilian media reports. Palmeiras will reportedly end its association with media company Globo in favour of a six-year agreement with Esporte Interativo, from 2019 to 2024.
- ◆ Clubs in Argentina’s top-tier Primera División rejected an initial media-rights offer from US media companies Fox and Turner and will submit a counterproposal. Fox and Turner are said to have offered an initial 2bn pesos per year (€123m/\$130m) from 2017, with a built-in annual

increase of 10 to 12 per cent from 2020. The offer included an option for the league to review the contract every five years.

NEWS IN BRIEF

NOVEMBER 17 TO 30

- ◆ China's Leshi Holdings, which controls the LeEco conglomerate, secured \$600m (€544m) in funding. The funds will come from more than 10 Chinese companies, with an initial \$300m to be directed toward LeEco Global and the firm's automotive business by the end of November. The company's owner Jia Yueting reportedly signed the financing agreements with senior executives from firms including Heilan Group, Luye Group and Man Wah Holdings.
- ◆ Pan-European motorsports channel Motors TV was acquired by digital technology business Motorsport Network. Motorsport Network said Motors TV would transition to become the backbone of OTT service Motorsport.tv. Jean-Luc Roy, founder of Motors TV, stressed however that the channel would retain its linear channels.
- ◆ The International Table Tennis Federation will end its exclusive commercial and marketing partnership with TMS International on January 1 in favour of exploiting its rights in-house. The ITTF's marketing and Asia-Pacific headquarters will manage the rights from next year. All of TMS International's deals brokered with partners will be transferred to the ITTF on January 1.
- ◆ The board of the DFL, the German football league, unveiled a new media-rights income distribution model across the top two divisions in the country, the Bundesliga and 2. Bundesliga. The model will run for four seasons, from 2017-18 to 2020-21.
- ◆ American football's National Football League rejected suggestions it might scrap or scale back its Thursday Night Football programme. Responding to reports, the NFL said in a statement it was "fully committed" to Thursday Night Football.
- ◆ US media company NBCUniversal will show live coverage of the National Hockey League's 2017 All-Star Game on commercial channel NBC. The game was due to be shown on pay-television channel NBC Sports Network.
- ◆ The British Olympic Association streamed coverage of the England national team's Table Tennis European Championship qualification match against Slovenia on November 22, via the official BOA Facebook page.
- ◆ The British Touring Car Championship motor racing series agreed a two-year extension to its partnership with the Haymarket Consumer Media division of UK media company Haymarket Media Group. The deal covers 2017 and 2018.
- ◆ The Rojadirecta website was ordered by the commercial court of A Coruña in Spain to immediately cease providing illegal football coverage. It was also ordered to compensate the Mediapro agency.
- ◆ Streaming website Spox.com, owned by the Perform Group, will launch in Austria on December 13 in partnership with the Styria Media Group. The Sportnet.at website will be rebranded as Spox Austria, with the platform working closely with Perform's OTT service, DAZN.
- ◆ The National Basketball Association signed a multi-year partnership with Lithuanian internet news portal Delfi. The agreement includes plans for Delfi to host the nba.com/Lithuania website.

NEWS IN BRIEF

NOVEMBER 17 TO 30

It will provide fans in Lithuania with one live regular-season game per week and select NBA playoff games.

◆ Media company CSI Sports agreed a deal with Nordic telco DNA to carry its Fight Sports pay-television channel in Finland.

◆ Sky New Zealand filed a lawsuit in the country's High Court against media companies Fairfax, NZME and TVNZ, claiming each breached copyright regulations in posting clips of the pay-television broadcaster's rugby union coverage on their websites.

◆ Founder members Atlético Paranaense and Coritiba withdrew from Brazilian domestic football competition the Primeira Liga, citing dissatisfaction with the division of broadcast-rights revenue.

◆ Mexican regulator the Procuraduría Federal del Consumidor (Profeco) fined Chivas TV, the in-house streaming platform of Liga MX football team Guadalajara, 5.68m pesos (€258,000/\$273,000) for failures relating to the service. The fine was issued following an investigation launched by Profeco on August 12 due to "repeated failures" of the service during a match against Monterrey on July 23. Action was also taken due to the terms of contracts signed with consumers enabling Chivas TV to modify the content of the contract.

◆ Cameroonian investment company Medicam has been granted permission by Cameroon's ministry of communications to launch what it claims will be the country's first dedicated sports channel. AfroSport TV will focus on African,

European and Middle Eastern sport. Medicam has already secured carriage deals with cable-television operators SWE Cable and TV Cam, and is in talks with a further 12 companies.

◆ Kenyan free-to-air television platform Bamba TV launched a new 24-hour sports channel, Bamba Sport.

◆ Media company CSI Sports, the owner of Fight Sports, agreed a distribution deal for the pay-television channel with DAZN, the OTT service operated by the Perform Group, in Japan and Germany, Austria and Switzerland.

◆ Sky chief executive Jeremy Darroch said the pay-television broadcaster would prioritise the most important rights and let others go as it reduces its dependence on sports.

◆ Nascar chairman Brian France said the North American stock car-racing series remains in a strong position despite a fall in television ratings. France said the audience was not "going away" and pointed to the series' growing digital performance as evidence of a shift in consumption habits.

◆ The International Luge Federation will stream live coverage of its 2016-17 World Cup and World Championship events on its official website. The majority of events will be accompanied by English-language commentary.

◆ The International Floorball Federation signed a global deal with the International Olympic Committee's Olympic Channel. The Olympic Channel will stream live coverage of at least 33 hours of the 2016 men's World Floorball

NEWS IN BRIEF

NOVEMBER 17 TO 30

Championships, including the final.

- ◆ Sport video news agency SNTV reached an agreement with Ski Classics organisers to distribute news clips worldwide during the 2016-17 season of the long-distance skiing championship.
- ◆ Dugout, a new digital media platform supported by elite European football clubs, officially launched on November 28.
- ◆ Fina, the global governing body of aquatic sports, partnered with digital media company Omnigon to launch its first mobile app. The first release will primarily focus on swimming. An update is planned for March 2017 with diving data and results.

INDUSTRY MOVES

- ◆ Michael Lang was promoted by media company Discovery Networks International to the role of president of international development, digital and Discovery Nordics. Lang will continue to report to JB Perrette, president and chief executive at the Discovery Networks International division of Discovery Communications. Lang will be responsible for leading the business across Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden.
- ◆ Nitin Kukreja resigned from his role as president and head of sports at pay-television broadcaster Star India.
- ◆ ITN Productions appointed former Formula E executive Tim Godfrey as partnerships director within its sports production business.

- ◆ The Infront Sports & Media agency confirmed that Marco Bogarelli, president of its Italian division, and Giuseppe Ciocchetti, managing director of the regional subsidiary, would be leaving the company. The pair agreed to mutual terminations of their contracts and left Infront Italy on November 28 to pursue “a new professional opportunity”.