

FOOTBALL

IMG strengthens ties with growing Chinese Super League in strategic rights acquisition

By Richard Welbirg and Callum McCarthy

IMG's distribution deal for the Chinese Super League's international rights is a strategic acquisition of a property that's "going places", the agency told *TV Sports Markets*.

Earlier this month IMG agreed a deal with China Sports Marketing, the league's global rights-holder, covering the 2016 and 2017 seasons. The agency holds an option to extend the deal by three years, from 2018 to 2020. IMG is thought to be paying a minimum guarantee of about \$3m (€2.7m) per year.

The deal excludes digital rights in territories where new media company Le Sports holds them as part of its CNY2.7bn (€376m/\$414m) domestic deal with CSM (*TV Sports Markets* 20:4). These are Chinese Taipei, Hong Kong, Macau,

selected territories in Southeast Asia, as well as the US and Canada.

Speaking to *TV Sports Markets*, IMG's head of football, Michael Mellor, said: "We think this is a league that seems to be going places. The evidence is in the investment in players. They say they want to grow the league as well, and we obviously want to be sharing in that."

Global awareness of the CSL is low despite a series of high-profile player acquisitions ahead of the 2016 season. And IMG faces difficulties selling the rights in several important regions because of the overlap with Le Sports.

In North America, Le Sports's streaming service will be able to target the expatriate Chinese community directly. In

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FOOTBALL

Premier League free-to-air fee falls in Africa

By Callum McCarthy

The value of the English Premier League's free-to-air rights in sub-Saharan Africa has fallen by about 17 per cent after a difficult cycle in which the last rights-holder handed back its rights.

Pay-television start-up Kwesé TV, owned by telco Econet Wireless, secured the rights in a new three-season deal, from 2016-17 to 2018-19, worth about \$10m (€9.1m) per season.

The league issued a tender for the rights at the end of January. The league split its rights into three packages: 1) South


Africa, 2) Nigeria, and 3) the rest of English-speaking sub-Saharan Africa (*TV Sports Markets* 20:2). Kwesé has acquired the rights to each of the three packages.

The fall in price is seen by many local experts as a market correction after years of overpayment. The Optima Sports Management International agency paid \$12m per season for the same set of rights in the current three-season cycle, from 2013-14 to 2015-16, only to default on its payments after one season.

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FASTRACK 1

NEWS IN BRIEF

RTBF and Telenet share F1 spoils across Belgium

Formula One Management this month extended a deal with Telenet for Flemish-language rights in Belgium, earning an increase of about 13 per cent.

Pay-television broadcaster Telenet will pay about €850,000 (\$935,000) per year in a new three-year deal, from 2017 to 2019. This is up from the €750,000 per year it pays in its current three-year deal, from 2014 to 2016.

The deal covers all rights in Flanders, the Flemish-speaking part of Belgium. It was agreed in direct talks with FOM, the commercial rights-holder of the Formula One championship. No tender was issued, but FOM is understood to have spoken to all interested broadcasters in the country.

Under local listed-events legislation, the Belgian grand prix must be shown live and in full on free-to-air in both Flemish and French. As such, Telenet sublicenses rights to the race to public-service broadcaster VRT. It is a yearly rolling contract and a deal for the 2016 season has been agreed.

FOM has a separate deal in Wallonia for French-language rights. These are held by public-service broadcaster RTBF in a two-year deal, from 2016 to 2017. The broadcaster is understood to have an option to extend the contract by two years, covering 2018 and 2019.

The RTBF deal is understood to be far more valuable than the Telenet contract because of the hosting of the Belgian grand prix in Wallonia; it is raced on the Circuit de Spa-Francorchamps. RTBF is thought to pay a high fee and also invests significantly in production.

FOM is understood to have seriously considered the possibility of synchronising its sales cycles and selling its rights to one broadcaster across the whole territory. It is thought that FOM held talks with sports broadcasters Eleven Sports Network and Eurosport about such a deal. ■

Shankai to gain from Uefa rights

Chinese sports marketing company Shankai Sports is expected to make a substantial profit on the streaming rights to Uefa properties it acquired last year.

Shankai agreed a joint sponsorship and digital rights deal with European football's governing body covering the eight years from 2015 to 2022.

It is thought to be paying €60m (\$68m) for digital rights in China to the European Qualifiers for the 2018 and 2022 Fifa World Cups, for Euro 2020, plus the Euro 2020 finals.

Given the boom in digital sports rights in China over the last year, the value looks low. There is no revenue-sharing mechanism that would allow Uefa to share in any upside.

But Uefa is thought to be satisfied with the deal, which is worth a total of €200m. Shankai is paying €70m per four-year sponsorship cycle.

One expert said Uefa had hit its media-rights revenue targets for Euro 2016 some time ago and had shifted its emphasis to hitting sponsorship targets.

The expert said Uefa had knowingly allowed Shankai the chance to make a big profit on the digital rights in order to secure a big sponsorship deal.

Shankai this week told *TV Sports Markets* it would auction the digital rights next year. It will work closely with Uefa on identifying potential partners. All contracts will be signed off by the governing body.

The Shankai deal includes digital rights to the Euro 2020 finals, but not to Euro 2016. State broadcaster CCTV has exclusive rights across all platforms for this summer's tournament. It is currently negotiating with Uefa to acquire free-to-air rights for 2020 – these were not included in the Shankai deal – and is said to be confident of closing a deal. CCTV held exclusive rights to the European Qualifiers for Euro 2016 in a deal worth \$10m.

All rights deals for European national team competitions are brokered for Uefa by its sales agency CAA Eleven. ■

Econet takes over EFC contract

Telco Econet Wireless has paid a huge increase to land rights to the Extreme Fighting Championship across sub-Saharan Africa, prising the property from dominant broadcaster SuperSport and adding much-needed content to its Kwesé Sports channel.

The three-year deal, which runs from March 2016 to March 2019, is worth about \$600,000 (€545,000) per year. This is about 300 per cent more than the value of the EFC's previous deal with pay-television broadcaster SuperSport, from June 2013 to March 2016, worth \$150,000 per year. The EFC hosts about 10 events per year.

SuperSport is thought to have tabled an increased offer and was confident of renewing the rights, but was unaware of Econet's strong interest and its willingness to pay a large sum.

The EFC, Africa's top mixed martial arts promotion, was one of the only available properties in sub-Saharan Africa, with almost all others tied up until at least the end of this year. It is Econet's second sports acquisition for its planned pay-television operation Kwesé TV following a deal for Copa del Rey rights last October (*TV Sports Markets* 20:2).

Econet's rights are exclusive in all sub-Saharan African territories except South Africa, where its rights are non-exclusive. Econet has no plans to move its Kwesé TV service into South Africa, but will live-stream events on Kwesé Sports. It will hold rights in the country alongside commercial broadcaster e.tv, the EFC's new linear broadcast partner.

The EFC's deal with e.tv, which is based on a share of advertising revenue, will provide it with maximum exposure in South Africa and reprises a deal between the two parties agreed in 2012.

Kwesé Sports began broadcasting as a free streaming service on March 5, and will continue to do so until it becomes a pay-television channel on the Kwesé TV service in August. ■

FOOTBALL

IMG acquires CSL rights as the league is “going places”

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Southeast Asia, a deal for linear broadcast rights only would be of limited interest to major pan-regional broadcasters like Eurosport or Fox International Channels as they seek exclusivity.

The strategic value for the agency is in deepening its relationship with a property that is benefiting from enormous investment by club owners and is backed by the Chinese government’s determination to make the country a football power.

The deal was agreed without a tender process in February. IMG had been close to a deal with CSM for all international rights last December, before Le Sports made its offer for rights in China and other territories. IMG resumed talks with the CSL once that deal was completed.

IMG is thought to have been awarded the rights partly based on the strength of its existing relationship with the CSL – it advises the league on central sponsorship sales as part of a 10-year deal running from 2012 to 2021. It will also offer its services as a production consultant as part of the new deal.

The agency’s focus will be on achieving broad coverage for the league over the coming months. Mellor said: “It’s mostly about international broadcast visibility, but we also think it has significant value. It looks great, stadiums are full and it’s a

IMG begins CSL sales process with StarTimes deal

The IMG agency began its distribution of Chinese Super League international media rights by agreeing a deal with pan-African pay-television broadcaster StarTimes earlier this month.

StarTimes will pay \$300,000 (€272,000) per year for exclusive rights to the 2016 and 2017 CSL seasons, with an option to extend the deal for 2018. The deal with IMG was completed after swift private talks.

The broadcaster had planned to purchase CSL rights for more than a year, and faced no competition for the rights. One rival African broadcaster said it was put off bidding as it felt StarTimes, a Chinese-owned company, would have an advantage in any bidding process.

It is thought pay-television start-up Kwesé TV, owned by telco Econet

Wireless, was also interested in the rights, but was not considered a credible option. IMG needed a linear broadcaster for 2016 but Kwesé TV will not launch as a traditional pay-television service until August. Its Kwesé Sports channel is currently only operating as a free streaming service.

The CSL signed a hugely lucrative domestic media rights deal with China Sports Media last October, worth CNY1.6bn (€223m/\$245m) per year from 2016 to 2020. This gave its clubs the financial power to buy established international stars, making the league more attractive to broadcasters (*TV Sports Markets* 19:19).

The CSL will join Italy’s Serie A, Germany’s Bundesliga and France’s Ligue 1 in StarTimes’s domestic league portfolio. ■

fantastic product now. That’s backed up by the amount of interest from broadcasters.”

As *TV Sports Markets* went to press, IMG had agreed deals with: pay-television broadcaster Sportklub in the Balkans; state broadcaster TDM in Macau; state broadcaster Dubai Sports in the Middle East and North Africa; pay-television broadcaster StarTimes in sub-Saharan Africa (see box), and the Saran Media agency in Turkey.

It is close to deals covering Brazil, France, Israel, Latin America, Malaysia, Portugal, Singapore, and the UK.

Mellor identified South America and sub-Saharan Africa as key regions for the

property due to the number of players from these areas playing in the CSL.

CCTV deal

Chinese state broadcaster CCTV last week completed a deal with CSM for CSL free-to-air rights during the 2016 season.

It includes a live Saturday evening game from each of the 30 match-days, plus a further 20 matches to be selected by the broadcaster. The deal is worth about CNY15m (€2.1m/\$2.3m).

CSM has already agreed the Le Sports deal for new media rights, plus free-to-air deals with 13 regional channels. ■

[www. For the full interview with Michael Mellor, visit our website.](#)

FOOTBALL

Econet acquires EPL rights as it seeks to drive subscribers

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The rights were picked up by pay-television broadcaster SuperSport, which covered Osmi’s fee. Coverage was shown in about 10 territories on the GoTV

digital-terrestrial service operated by Multichoice, the parent company of SuperSport (*TV Sports Markets* 18:17).

The value of Kwesé’s deal is similar to what Osmi paid in the previous three-season cycle, from 2010-11 to 2012-13.

Kwesé will act as an agency and sell on rights to free-to-air broadcasters in the region, but refinancing its spend is not understood to be its key priority.

Kwesé is expected to create its own tailored feed for broadcasters, and will

sponsor the coverage to promote its Kwesé TV pay-television service, which will launch in August.

By selling free-to-air rights to Kwesé, the league can build a relationship with a broadcaster which could bid for pay-television rights across sub-Saharan Africa when SuperSport’s existing contract expires after the 2018-19 season.

SuperSport has a long-term relationship with the league, and its deal for pay-television rights in the new cycle will be

worth about \$180m per season, up from about \$113m per season in its current deal (*TV Sports Markets* 19:15).

Kwesé's plan

Under the deal, Kwesé will receive live rights to one Saturday afternoon match each week – usually a mid- to lower-tier fixture – a weekly highlights show, and other ancillary programming.

One informed source said SuperSport will have non-exclusive free-to-air rights to one live match per week as part of its pay-television deal. Neither SuperSport nor the Premier League responded to requests for comment this week.

Agencies with a strong presence in sub-Saharan Africa's free-to-air sector are expected to work with Kwesé to sell advertising space on the broadcasts.

Kwesé will look to secure coverage in as many territories as possible. The league has no minimum requirement for reach and distribution.

Rights fees will be sought in major markets, but Kwesé is unlikely to source income this way in smaller territories as free-to-air broadcasters in many of these countries cannot afford big upfront fees.

Dearth of competition

The only known competition to Kwesé for the rights came from Lagardère Sports-owned agency Ufa Sports, which is believed to have bid about \$8m per season for rights across the whole region.

The league split the rights into three packages to encourage competition, but is thought to have preferred to award the rights to one pan-regional bidder.

Traditional bidders for free-to-air rights in the region saw little point in bidding. Most were deterred by the league's reputation for seeking large fee increases from cycle to cycle in a market where free-to-air broadcasters cannot pay big fees. One potential bidder expected the rights to climb to \$15m per season and didn't register interest as a result.

African free-to-air specialist agencies TV Media Sport and Octagon did not bid, while incumbent rights-holder SuperSport showed no interest. Media rights agency Bravig, fronted by ex-Osmi consultant Mark Lewis, also declined to bid.

Market research conducted by one other interested party calculated the maximum which could be earned from sublicensing or sponsorship fees across sub-Saharan Africa to be about \$6m per season – half of the current value of the rights.

In addition, the research showed that the cost of distributing the rights – including production and staff costs – could reach about \$4m across the lifetime of the deal. ■

BASKETBALL

Saran struggles with NBA as Turkish interest wanes

By Callum McCarthy

The Saran Media agency's barter deal with Turkish commercial broadcaster TV8 for National Basketball Association rights demonstrates how local interest in the NBA has waned over the last two years.

TV8 acquired NBA rights for the 2015-16 season from the agency in January, as part of an exchange of programming between the two parties. In return, Saran is thought to have received rights in some territories outside Turkey to popular entertainment shows, such as *Survivor* and *The Voice*.

For the 2014-15 season, Saran sold the rights to digital-terrestrial channel SportsTV for a fraction of the fee it pays the NBA. In both the current and previous season, established pay-television operators Digiturk and Tivibu showed little interest in buying the rights.

Saran's three-season deal with the NBA, from 2014-15 to 2016-17, is worth about \$2.5m (€2.3m) per season. This is a considerable drop from the \$3.75m per season paid by media group Doğan Holding from 2011-12 to 2013-14. Doğan owns commercial broadcaster NTV and pay-television platform D-Smart.

TV8's NBA coverage began with a live broadcast of the All-Star Game in January. Since then, TV8 has shown one live game each night. It will also broadcast this season's playoffs.

Digiturk and Tivibu were unwilling to match the NBA's asking price of \$2.5m per season from 2014-15.

Local sources say Saran initially asked pay-television operators for about \$4m per season for a package of exclusive NBA rights and non-exclusive carriage of NBA TV, the league's linear NBA TV channel.

The NBA had offered Turkish broadcasters exclusive rights to all NBA programming and carriage of NBA TV.

One source said Tivibu had agreed a deal in principle directly with the league before Saran bought the rights. Tivibu's deal would have been worth about \$2.5m per season from 2014-15 to 2016-17, but its board of directors vetoed the deal saying the cost couldn't be refinanced.

Saran has agreed a non-exclusive carriage deal for NBA TV with D-Smart over three seasons, from 2014-15 to 2016-17.

Waning interest

The NBA has been up against tough market conditions since the crash of the Turkish lira against the dollar in 2014, but local experts believe there are other factors behind the league's decreasing media-rights value in the country.

Several experts said Doğan's \$3.75m-per-season spend overvalued the rights, and that Saran's current deal represents a market correction. Some experts also criticised the coverage on Doğan's D-Smart, saying it failed to engage current and potential fans.

The time-zone has always been an issue for the NBA in Europe, but its status as a prestige property in Turkey has protected its value until now. But broadcasters no longer see the property as a big driver of subscriptions.

Live NBA games are almost always broadcast between 1am and 6am in Turkey, and ratings are low in comparison with domestic and European club basketball. Basketball is the second-most popular sport in Turkey behind football.

The NBA's core Turkish fanbase is mostly under-25. Broadcasters feel that instead of watching the league on a linear broadcast channel, this demographic is more likely to subscribe to NBA League Pass, the NBA's OTT-streaming service. ■

FOOTBALL

Clubs chafe at FLi digital deal but have few options

By Frank Dunne

The English Football League is battling to keep all of its clubs locked into a collective agreement for the exploitation of digital rights with its wholly-owned subsidiary Football League Interactive (FLi).

Some of the bigger clubs want to quit the deal to exploit their own digital rights, which would hit revenues for smaller clubs and threaten the future of FLi.

One source close to the clubs said that, over the coming weeks, the discussion could develop into a bitter dispute about who owns the intellectual property to the teams' match coverage. "Some of the clubs are ready to rock the boat on this one," he said. However, the rebel clubs appear to be on weak ground legally.

Earlier this month the league invited "agencies, sports technology integrators and media companies" to put forward proposals "providing sports specific solutions for web and mobile platforms, delivering audio/video content and managing payments services".

The tender covers three separate functions for five seasons, from 2016-17 to 2020-21. Companies can bid for one or more of them. These are:

1. The development of a standard app that would be used by clubs
2. The overhaul of the standard website template used by all clubs
3. The hosting and delivery of video services.

From next season, for the first time, clubs will have the ability to live stream any matches which are not offered to broadcasters as part of the international rights packages sold by the Pitch International agency.

FLi currently manages the websites of all 72 league clubs and a number of clubs in the Premier League under a series of deals agreed in 2003 which are due to expire between February and April next year.

FLi collects all revenues from advertising on club sites and distributes it among the clubs according to their volume of web traffic. FLi has an agreement with digital specialists the Perform Group to manage content on the sites.

The Football League covers the three tiers of English football beneath the Premier League – the Championship, League One and League Two.

Costs

One informed source said the majority of clubs, especially the smaller clubs, have generally been happy with the way the system operates. They do not have to employ anyone to work on building, populating and maintaining a website and can earn, in many cases, hundreds of thousands of pounds each season.

The initial investment that would be required for clubs to replicate the service they currently receive from FLi would be about £250,000 (€324,000/\$356,000).

Some of the bigger clubs have raised concerns with the league about the service they have received from FLi. These range from the limited number of website templates available to them to limits imposed on them about posting short-form content via their social media platforms – FLi owns the rights to the material. The overriding concern is that clubs want to be in control.

As one well-placed source put it: "Live rights are sold centrally in long-term deals, so when you are under pressure to try to increase revenues, digital is one of the few options left to you. At the moment, there are limits on how you can do that.

"Strictly speaking, if you start putting content on a club app or social site, you are in breach of the league's agreement with FLi. The current model just doesn't make sense in 2016."

Several clubs want to drop out of the collective platform, especially now there is a possibility to stream live matches. Others have discussed creating small consortia to handle digital rights.

A source close to one of the big clubs said an acceptable outcome of the current process would be if clubs were presented with a number of scenarios they could choose to opt in or out of.

The source said: "The league should come up with its strategy for maximising digital rights and then say to clubs: 'do you want us to manage your website, app or social media operations? Do you want us to commercialise your website, app or social media operations?'"

He added that some of the big clubs would be happy to outsource website management to FLi for a fee but don't want to assign their rights or hand over control of their revenues. If any club wants to do everything itself it should be allowed to do so, the source added.

However, another informed source said that up to 12 of the bigger clubs were unlikely to renew with FLi and that "without them it's likely the whole concept collapses". A large proportion of the commercial value of the league is wrapped up in the top 10 to 12 clubs.

Intellectual property

When one club mooted the possibility of leaving the collective platform it was told by the league that all of the intellectual property in its matches belonged to the league. Clubs have been told that if they opt out of a central platform and want to manage their own live streaming they would have to acquire the rights from the league for an annual six-figure pound sum.

All league clubs, as a condition for membership of the league, assign all IP rights in home league and cup matches to the league, subject to some minor carve-outs on things like post-match clip exploitation. This is also the case with the Premier League, which gives certain rights back to its clubs through a 'deed of licence'.

One senior competition lawyer said that as the league had sold its domestic media rights long term, the clubs had little bargaining power on the issue.

"The broadcaster may have copyright in the recorded transmissions and then assign these IP rights to the league, which can then 'sell' individual rights to clubs," he said. "It is the league, as organiser of the competition, that grants a licence to a broadcaster to film the matches and then, as part of that TV deal, the broadcaster may assign its IP rights back to the league."

He said that cases such as the European Commission investigation into the Uefa

Champions League, which said that clubs and Uefa were co-organisers, were not appropriate precedents on which the Football League clubs could build a case.

“For the purposes of the antitrust cases in Brussels, much of the discussion was on who could legitimately be considered as the organiser of the competition and, therefore, as the entity entitled to grant a licence to a broadcaster to film the matches that take place in the context of the competition.”

Live rights

Pitch markets the league's international rights in a five-season deal, from 2012-13 to 2016-17, worth about \$20m per season. The league last month confirmed a five-season extension, from 2017-18 to 2021-22, with Pitch worth about \$35m per season (*TV Sports Markets* 19:23).

The league's domestic live rights are held by pay-television operator Sky in a three-season deal, from 2015-16 to 2017-18, worth about £90m per season. This was extended last February by one season, to cover 2018-19, for a fee of about £100m (*TV Sports Markets* 19:4). ■

FOOTBALL

New format for Belgian second tier drives revenues

By Robin Jellis

Introducing a professional format from 2016-17 and reducing its number of clubs has helped the Belgian second-tier football league more than double the value of its media rights.

The Belgian second tier, Division 1B, last month signed a four-season deal with pay-television operator Proximus TV. The deal will run from 2016-17 to 2019-20, and covers both media and sponsorship rights. It will be worth about €1.1m (\$1.2m) per season, split €850,000 per season for the media rights and €250,000 per season for title sponsorship rights.

Second-tier clubs have until now agreed individual media-rights deals. Proximus holds rights in the current 2015-16 season in deals worth a total of about €400,000.

The new deal represents the first time second tier media rights have been sold collectively.

The deal with Proximus was agreed directly by the Pro League, which is responsible for Belgian league football. The league first approached broadcasters about a deal in October last year, with a deadline for bids in November. The league did not issue a tender for the rights.

Ludwig Sneyers, Pro League chief executive, told *TV Sports Markets* this week: “I think there are a lot of reasons why the fee has increased.

“There are only eight teams now, but the level of these teams will be higher, and the quality of the matches will be higher, as will the production. If you are producing some games in a good atmosphere, with more people attending, that increases the value of the product not just on the pitch.”

The second tier is currently comprised of 17 teams. From 2016-17, it will be reduced to eight teams, all of which will be professional. Teams in the second tier will play each other four times over the course of a season.

Proximus will cover production costs to matches on top of its rights fee. A second-tier match is understood to cost between €10,000 and €15,000 to produce. Proximus will show at least two live matches each weekend.

A source close to the broadcaster said an association with smaller Belgian clubs is important for its image. Proximus sought the rights due to their local relevance, and as they complement its coverage of the top-tier Pro League.

The broadcaster feels the second tier will become a stronger product with fewer teams, most of whom have recently been in the top tier and are more popular.

The Pro League is Proximus's most important sports property, but it also holds pay-television rights to the Uefa Champions League in a deal worth close to €3m per season (*TV Sports Markets* 18:19). Proximus also carries Andrea Radrizzani's Eleven Sports Network pay-television channels.

Revenue distribution

In order to help second-tier clubs become more competitive, the Pro League will

pay a total of €4.5m to teams in 2016-17.

The seven teams remaining in the second tier will each receive €500,000, while the team relegated from the Pro League will receive €1m. The relegated Pro League team will be paid more as it will have higher costs.

The nine teams relegated from the second to the third tier at the end of the 2015-16 season will each be paid €50,000. All leagues below the second tier will remain amateur leagues.

Pro League tender

The Pro League has an advisory deal with the MP & Silva agency for top-tier media rights – the deal is for six seasons, from 2014-15 to 2019-20, and is worth a total of €450m: €70m per season in the first three seasons and €80m per season in the latter three seasons (*TV Sports Markets* 18:4).

The agency and league agreed deals with the three main pay-television operators – Proximus, Telenet and Voo – worth a total of about €60m per season. Each of the broadcasters holds non-exclusive live rights (*TV Sports Markets* 18:12).

A tender for the rights in a new three-season cycle, from 2017-18 to 2019-20, will be issued after this summer. Sneyers is confident the fees paid by broadcasters will increase in a new deal – he pointed to the entrance of Eleven in Belgium as one of the likely reasons.

Sneyers added: “The competition is always getting better and better. Our clubs are doing well in European competition: Gent got to the round of 16 in the Champions League, as did Anderlecht in the Europa League. The level of interest in our players is very good.”

The league and MP & Silva are understood to have abandoned their plan to launch a league channel, at least for the last season of the current cycle.

The league agreed a four-season deal for Division 1B rights so the final season of the contract, in 2019-20, would coincide with the final season of the Pro League's deal with MP & Silva. This means the league could potentially sell rights to both tiers at the same time in any future deal. ■

[www. For the full interview with Ludwig Sneyers, visit our website.](#)

RUGBY UNION

Coliseum opts for OTT in Asia and quits New Zealand

By Richard Welbirg

New media player Coliseum has developed into a pan-Asian service and will wind down operations in its home market of New Zealand.

Coliseum's Rugby Pass OTT service launched on February 26 in 23 territories across Asia, excluding Japan, and in the Indian subcontinent. The service is available online and via an app on mobile, tablet, Apple TV and Chromecast.

Coliseum founder Tim Martin told *TV Sports Markets* this week: "Rugby is a sport that needs major aggregation. We thought if we could put it all in one place it would be attractive, because it [the sport] does suffer from fragmentation worldwide."

Key content at launch includes exclusive English Rugby Football Union rights from 2016 to 2020, acquired in a deal with the Pitch International agency, and digital rights to Sanzar competitions from 2016 to 2020, acquired in a sublicensing deal from Setanta Sports Asia, the pan-Asian pay-television broadcaster owned by the Discovery

Communications media group.

TV Sports Markets understands Coliseum and Discovery are close to an agreement under which the latter will take a 23.5-per-cent stake in Rugby Pass, and will have the option to acquire a controlling interest within five years. Martin declined to comment.

Working with Discovery could help Coliseum with the promotion of Rugby Pass, which will face significant marketing costs to grow a subscriber base from zero.

Several experts said Rugby Pass had a good chance of success if it could acquire top season-long rugby content. One said: "If they are able to ensure they capture most of the rights to the major international leagues then there is an audience. There are 1.4m expats in Asia-Pacific – a few hundred thousand of these, at least, will want their diet of rugby."

Martin believes the service can be profitable within two to three years. He said: "Lots of people [at Sportel] in Singapore were questioning whether this OTT model can make a profit. Of course it can. We have a lot of experience of it from New Zealand. We know what it looks like."

Out of NZ

Meanwhile, Coliseum is winding down its operations in New Zealand. Coliseum launched its first OTT product in the

country following its acquisition of English Premier League rights from the MP & Silva agency in 2013 (*TV Sports Markets* 17:12).

Martin said his plan for a rugby offering pre-dated the launch of its Premier League Pass service, but it had acquired Premier League rights "for survival" after failing to acquire requisite rugby rights.

Over the following years Coliseum built further OTT products based on its rights acquisitions, including Top 14 Pass, World Golf Pass and PGA Tour Live. In December 2014 it took its content into Lightbox Sport, a joint venture with telco Spark (*TV Sports Markets* 19:2).

The venture aimed to challenge dominant pay-television sports broadcaster Sky New Zealand. But it never got off the ground.

Martin explained: "We had a vision that we would 1) integrate into Lightbox, 2) be packaged as part of the mobile and broadband offer, and 3) receive exposure to existing Spark customers. But we didn't achieve any of those."

Neither Lightbox Sport nor Coliseum will independently look to acquire new content in New Zealand. Deals for the Top 14 and PGA Tour have one and four years left to run respectively; the companies are exploring how the rights will be exploited in the remaining years. ■

[www.](#) For the full interview with Tim Martin, visit our website.

PAY-TV JAPAN

MP & Silva the beneficiary of new OTT competition

By Richard Welbirg

Emerging competition in Japan's digital sector helped the MP & Silva agency earn significant profit on its deals for England's Premier League and Spain's LaLiga.

The agency has struck a deal worth a total of about \$180m (€164m) with telco SoftBank. The deal covers three Premier League seasons, from 2016-17 to 2018-19, and four LaLiga seasons, from 2016-17 to 2019-20.

The agency agreed a five-season deal for LaLiga rights last July, from 2015-16 to 2019-20, for just over €15m per season. Rights for the 2015-16 season were sold on to pay-television broadcaster Wowow in a deal worth about \$13m.

It pays \$29m per season for Premier League rights in the 2016-17 to 2018-19 cycle (*TV Sports Markets* 19:21). The 57-per-cent increase on IMG's 2013-14 to 2015-16 deal called into question how MP & Silva would refinance the deal.

It has answered those questions emphatically, making a huge margin: it spent about \$137m acquiring both leagues, but earned about \$193m in sales.

TV Sports Markets understands the \$180m total splits approximately \$112m

for the Premier League, or just over \$37.3m per season, and \$68m for LaLiga, or \$17m per season.

SoftBank plans

SoftBank will exploit the rights via an app on mobiles and tablets. Rather than a standalone OTT service, the goal of the service is to drive new mobile phone subscribers and increase its average revenue per user. The service will cost ¥3,000 (€24/\$26.40) per month, but just ¥500 per month for existing SoftBank subscribers.

SoftBank is the third-largest mobile operator in Japan, with 39.6m subscribers. Rivals NTT Docomo and KDDI Corp have 69.6m and 45.2m respectively. ■

FASTRACK 2

NEWS IN BRIEF

TVR's struggles mean deal for Euro 2016 looks difficult

Huge debts and the threat of insolvency mean TVR, Romania's public-service broadcaster, is struggling to agree a deal for this summer's Euro 2016.

TVR ended 2015 with cumulative losses of RON689m (€154m/\$170m), which undermines its ability to bid for sports rights.

Uefa, European football's governing body, has thus far agreed a deal with Telekom Romania worth about €6m. The telco has acquired rights to all 51 matches at the tournament, but only 28 will be on an exclusive basis (*TV Sports Markets* 19:17).

Uefa has held back a package of 23 matches, on a non-exclusive basis, for a free-to-air broadcaster. The package is for the top match each day, including matches of the Romanian national team, plus a share of the quarter-finals, both semi-finals and the final.

Uefa and its sales agent, CAA Eleven, initially sought about €6m for the free-to-air rights. The rights were offered to the market on November 9, with bids due by November 27. Uefa has since scaled back its income expectations considering TVR's financial difficulties and a lack of interest from other broadcasters.

TVR held rights to Euro 2012 as part of its membership of the European Broadcasting Union, the consortium of public-service broadcasters. The EBU acquired rights across 36 territories in a deal worth €130m (*TV Sports Markets* 13:9). TVR contributed just over €9m for rights in Romania, although it then had fully exclusive rights to all matches.

TVR's other main sports-rights contracts are for: the Fifa World Cups in 2018 and 2022, which it acquired via the EBU, for which it will pay about €18m in total; and European Qualifier matches of the Romanian national team from 2014-15 to 2017-18, which it also acquired via the EBU, contributing €4m to €5m (*TV Sports Markets* 18:6).

In a letter to Romanian prime minister Dacian Cioloş earlier this month, EBU director general Ingrid Deltenre said the EBU had rescheduled TVR's debts, but that it is still owed €15m. ■

Digiturk secures share of Euros

Turkish state broadcaster TRT is set to sublicense a package of Euro 2016 matches to pay-television operator Digiturk in a deal worth about TRY8m (€2.5m/\$2.7m).

It is thought that TRT and Digiturk will each have the right to show all matches non-exclusively. TRT is expected to show at least matches of the Turkish national team and one match from each day of the tournament, while Digiturk will broadcast all matches.

TRT acquired all Euro 2016 rights in January, shortly after Turkey's qualification for the tournament. It agreed to pay €16m in a deal with Uefa's sales agent CAA Eleven (*TV Sports Markets* 20:1).

Informed sources say Digiturk was the only logical sublicensee of the rights – it is the largest pay-television operator in Turkey, with about 3.5m subscribers, enabling it to agree lucrative sponsorship deals around its coverage.

Rival pay-television operator Tivibu, owned by telco Türk Telekom, was also interested in acquiring some rights but not at such a high price. Between its cable-television Home offering and its IPTV Go service, Tivibu has about 1.9m subscribers.

Türk Telekom is, however, bidding for mobile rights to the tournament. These were tendered by TRT about a month ago – the deadline for bids has already passed. The rights are expected to be worth about TRY700,000. ■

Chelsea follow United in-house

English Premier League club Chelsea will take the global distribution of its Chelsea TV channel in-house from next season, *TV Sports Markets* understands.

Until now, Chelsea TV has been distributed outside the UK by the IMG

agency. IMG's distribution deal ends on June 30 and will not be renewed.

Christian Purslow, the club's managing director, told *TV Sports Markets* this week: "Chelsea Football Club has decided to control the marketing of our content and assets directly and will therefore no longer be working with IMG on the international distribution of rights to Chelsea TV."

He said the switch would "enable us to pick the best partners to maximise the visibility and accessibility of our TV channel in the most compelling packages for our fans around the world".

Chelsea has already contacted its distributors around the world to promote "an enhanced Chelsea TV HD content offering" from next season and to offer the alternative of a twice-weekly three-hour programming block.

Chelsea is following in the footsteps of fellow Premier League club Manchester United, which in 2010 took the distribution of its MUTV channel in-house (*TV Sports Markets* 14:10).

IMG had also distributed MUTV. It paid a minimum guarantee of \$10m (€8.7m) for the international rights for three seasons, from 2007-08 to 2009-10, generating sales of \$14m.

It is understood that IMG pays a higher minimum guarantee in its current three-season deal with Chelsea, from 2013-14 to 2015-16, but considers the market for club channels to be flat, and only offered half as much in renewal negotiations.

The agency had offered to more than double its offer to renew the United deal in 2010, but the club wanted direct control over all its key assets.

In May 2013, United hired Universal Sports Network chief executive David Sternberg to head up digital operations, including the distribution of MUTV.

Sternberg left in July 2015 and is now understood to be advising Chelsea on the distribution of Chelsea TV. He is thought to have met with potential distributors at the Sportel Asia trade fair in Singapore last week. ■

TVSportsMarkets RIGHTSTRACKER

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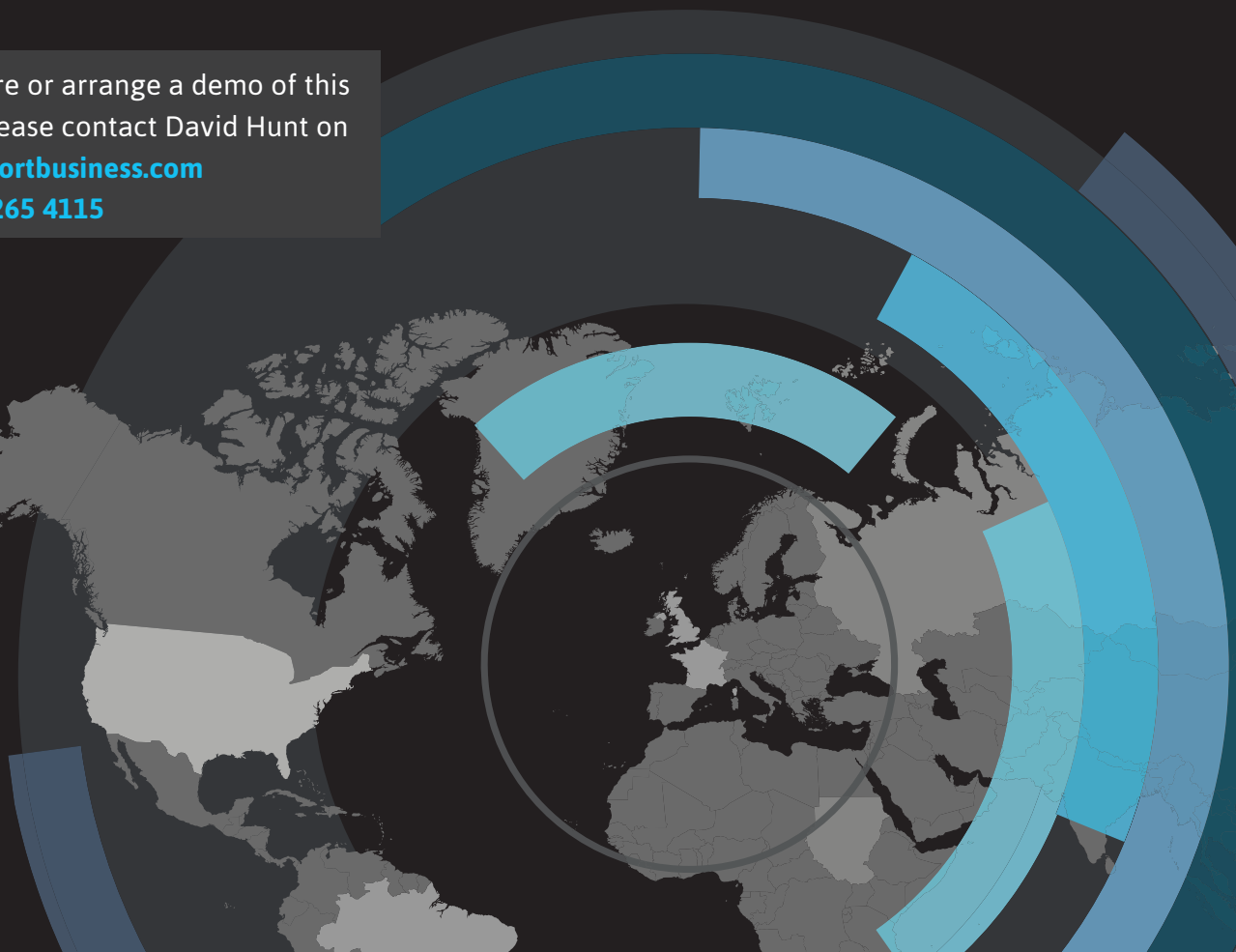
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SPORTS CLIPS: News from TVSM Daily from March 3 to 23

MEDIA RIGHTS 1

Football: Euro 2016, Chinese Super League, EPL, World Cup and more

- **Football:** Irish public-service broadcaster RTÉ agreed to sublicense rights from the Uefa Euro 2016 national team tournament to commercial broadcaster TV3. RTÉ will retain rights for 30 first-choice matches, including all of Ireland's matches. TV3 will have exclusive rights for 21 games. They will share rights for the final.
- **Football:** German public-service broadcaster ARD agreed a three-season extension, from 2016-17 to 2018-19, to its rights deal with the German Football Association (DFB) for the DFB-Pokal domestic knockout club competition. The deal was first reported in *TV Sports Markets* 20:3.
- **Football:** The IMG agency agreed a deal with the China Sports Media agency for international rights – including in-flight rights – to the Chinese Super League in 2016 and 2017 (page 1).
- **Football:** Chinese state broadcaster CCTV agreed a sublicensing deal with CSM for CSL rights (page 1).
- **Football:** Australian public-service broadcaster SBS and telco Optus agreed cross-sublicensing deals for the English Premier League and 2018 Fifa World Cup. Optus will sell to SBS exclusive free-to-air rights for one Premier League match per round for three seasons, from 2016-17 to 2018-19. SBS will offer a replay of every match within 72 hours. Optus will launch a dedicated channel for its coverage of the league. For the World Cup, SBS will retain first-pick free-to-air rights for 25 matches, including all Australia national team matches, and sublicense 39 exclusive matches to Optus. Optus will also take live rights for other events operated by Fifa, the sport's global governing body, from 2017 to 2019, including the 2017 Confederations Cup and the 2019 women's World Cup, with SBS holding free-to-air rights to some matches.
- **Football:** SBS acquired exclusive free-to-air rights in Australia for the Uefa Euro 2016 national team tournament. SBS will show live coverage of eight knockout matches, including the final, on the SBS and SBS HD channels.
- **Football:** Le Sports, which is operated by Chinese internet company LeEco, agreed a deal in Hong Kong for the English FA Cup knockout tournament. The deal includes the remaining games from this season's competition and runs until the end of the 2017-18 season.
- **Football:** International sports broadcaster Eleven Sports Network sealed a deal with the Mediapro agency for Brazilian domestic football rights in Belgium, Chinese Taipei, Luxembourg, Poland and Singapore. The multi-year deal covers the top-tier Campeonato Brasileiro Série A and the Campeonato Paulista Série A1 São Paulo state league.
- **Football:** Russian state broadcaster Channel One agreed a deal with the Russian Football Union for rights to national team friendly matches through to the start of the Uefa Euro 2016 national team tournament, according to the Tass news agency.
- **Football:** German sports broadcaster Sport1 acquired rights to the International Champions Cup pre-season club tournament for two years, 2016 and 2017. It will broadcast a minimum of 16 live matches each year on an exclusive basis in Germany and Austria, as well as non-exclusively in Switzerland.
- **Football:** US sports broadcaster ESPN agreed a three-year deal, from 2016 to 2018, for exclusive rights to the International Champions Cup.
- **Football:** Indian pay-television broadcaster Neo Sports acquired rights for the Coppa Italia and Coupe de France knockout competitions. The rights cover the latter stages of the 2015-16 season.
- **Football:** Telco Econet acquired English Premier League free-to-air rights in sub-Saharan Africa for three seasons, from 2016-17 to 2018-19. Econet's Kwesé Sports platform will show live free-to-air coverage of one Saturday afternoon match per round. The matches, weekly preview and review shows will be available in: Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Comoros Islands, Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, St Helena, São Tomé and Príncipe, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Zambia, Zaire and Zimbabwe. The agreement excludes Arabic-language rights in Chad, Djibouti and Somalia and French-language rights in Madagascar, Mauritius, Mayotte and Réunion (page 1).

SINCE LAST TIME

- Telco SoftBank invested \$250m (€227m) in the WME-IMG agency. The agency will use the capital to grow through “new investments, acquisitions and joint ventures”.
- Italian media company Mediaset is closing in on a deal to sell its pay-television division, Mediaset Premium, to French media company Vivendi. Mediaset chief executive Pier Silvio Berlusconi is “determined to sell and a deal could be signed shortly,” a source close to the negotiations told the Reuters news agency. Vivendi is seeking to buy Mediaset's 89-per-cent stake in the division, reportedly in a half cash, half shares deal.
- Australian pay-television operator Foxtel and pay-television broadcaster Fox Sports could merge under a deal being discussed by Foxtel's equal shareholders, telco Telstra and media company News Corp. According to the *Sydney Morning Herald* newspaper, the merger could pre-empt a multi-billion-dollar initial public offering of most of Telstra's stake in the combined pay-television operation in the second half of 2016. Telstra has indicated to

SPORTS CLIPS: News from TVSM Daily from March 3 to 23

MEDIA RIGHTS 2

Commonwealth Games, World T20, European cycling, PGA Tour and more

- **Badminton:** The French Badminton Federation struck a domestic rights deal with digital-terrestrial television channel L'Équipe 21 for its 2016 European Championships.
- **Basketball:** Japanese telco SoftBank acquired exclusive rights for the new B League top division in the country as part of a broader commercial agreement with the Japan Professional Basketball League. The deal, which also includes commercial partnership rights, is worth a total of about ¥12bn (€96m/\$106m) over four seasons, from 2016-17 to 2019-20, according to the *Japan Times* newspaper. SoftBank will stream coverage of all first and second division games via computers, tablets and smartphones on a subscription basis.
- **Basketball:** Indian pay-television broadcaster Ten Sports acquired rights for the country's Professional Basketball League top-tier club competition for five years, from 2016 to 2020. Ten Sports will broadcast live coverage of at least 36 matches during the 2016 season, including the end-of-season playoffs, semi-finals and final. The deal was agreed with the United Basketball Alliance, which operates the league.
- **Commonwealth Games:** UK public-service broadcaster the BBC extended its long-term rights deal to cover the 2018 edition of the Games. It will broadcast 180 hours of live coverage.
- **Cricket:** Australian pay-television broadcaster Fox Sports and commercial broadcaster Nine sealed late rights deals for the 2016 World Twenty20 tournament in India. Fox Sports will broadcast all 35 matches from the men's competition and at least 10 matches from the women's tournament. Nine will show live coverage of all matches featuring the Australia national team as well as the final. There had been fears the men's tournament would not be available on Australian television following an impasse in negotiations with pay-television broadcaster Star India, which wanted to sell the rights as part of a package rather than as a standalone property.
- **Cricket:** Flow, the Caribbean pay-television platform owned by telco Cable & Wireless Communications, acquired rights for the 2016 Indian Premier League Twenty20. Flow will show live coverage of all 60 games.
- **Cycling:** The European Broadcasting Union consortium of public-service broadcasters agreed a rights deal with the European Cycling Union to cover the European Cycling Championships, starting this year. The EBU was granted exclusive worldwide rights to the road, track, mountain bike, BMX and cyclo-cross European Championships.
- **Golf:** Indian pay-television broadcaster Neo Sports agreed a multi-year extension to its rights deal with the US PGA Tour, through to 2021.
- **Handball:** Sportdeutschland.tv, the online sports channel operated by the German Olympic Sports Confederation, acquired rights for the International Handball Federation's qualifying tournaments ahead of the 2016 summer Olympic Games.
- **Horse Racing:** Satellite Information Services, a service provider for the betting and broadcast industries, extended a rights distribution deal with the Horse Racing Ireland and Association of Irish Racecourses bodies. The renewal, which covers the distribution of live pictures and data to licensed betting offices internationally, will run for five years, from 2019 to 2023. SIS also secured exclusive rights from 2017 to stream Irish racing to online operators worldwide and to distribute direct-to-home pictures. The deal, which requires the approval of the board of Horse Racing Ireland and the membership of the Association of Irish Racecourses, will feature 355 fixtures being made available to bookmakers for inclusion on their in-house channels, most of which are produced by SIS. The arrangements will include a review of the future of Irish racing on DTH television. SIS will immediately seek proposals for the provision of DTH coverage of Irish racing from 2017.

News Corp – which owns 100 per cent of Fox Sports – that it is seeking to integrate Fox Sports into Foxtel ahead of floating 60 per cent of the telco's stake in the pay-television operation, the *Australian Financial Review* newspaper added.

- Times Internet, the digital arm of the Times of India media group, reached a deal to acquire Willow TV International, a cricket-dedicated broadcaster in the US. Times Internet director Satyan Gajwani told Indian newspaper *the Economic Times* the company had committed \$100m (€91m) towards the acquisition.
- BeIN Media Group expanded its interests outside the sports market by acquiring leading US film and television studio Miramax. The group secured a 100-per-cent stake in Miramax by agreeing a deal with selling shareholders including Qatar Investment Authority and Colony Capital.

MEDIA INTERNATIONAL

- UK public-service broadcaster the BBC increased its savings target by £100m (€129m/\$142m) to £800m per year over the next five years, blaming the rising costs of sports rights and producing drama programming.
- The Turner Sports division of US cable-television broadcaster Turner Broadcasting System struck a partnership with mobile social media platform Snapchat for two years, from 2016 to 2017. Turner Sports will utilise Snapchat's 'Live Stories' service surrounding competitions such as the March Madness college basketball tournament as well as events in college baseball and professional golf.
- Major League Baseball agreed a multi-year deal with Snapchat

SPORTS CLIPS: News from TVSM Daily from March 3 to 23**MEDIA RIGHTS 3****NHL, MotoGP, Superbike World Championship, Formula One and more**

- **Ice Hockey:** Internet company Yahoo struck a deal in the US to show live coverage of out-of-market games from the National Hockey League. Fans will be able to access games for free on Yahoo without a cable-television subscription or authentication. Yahoo will stream a 'game of the day' on up to four days per week, as well as highlights of every game on an on-demand basis. The coverage will be in addition to Wednesday and Sunday national NHL games already promoted by Yahoo in partnership with the NBC Sports Group division of media company NBCUniversal.
- **Motorcycling:** French public-service broadcaster France Télévisions agreed a deal to provide coverage of the 2016 MotoGP world championship event in the country on May 8.
- **Motorcycling:** Pay-television broadcaster ESPN agreed a three-year extension, from 2016 to 2018, to its rights deal in Latin America and the Caribbean for the MotoGP world championship. The deal was struck with Dorna Sports, MotoGP's commercial rights-holder.
- **Motorcycling:** UK commercial broadcaster ITV sealed a highlights deal with Dorna Sports for the Superbike World Championship.
- **Motorsport:** The NBC Sports Group division of media company NBCUniversal sealed a one-year extension to its rights deal for the Formula One world championship in the US, covering the 2017 season.
- **Motorsport:** Pay-television broadcaster Telenet extended its Formula One deal in Flemish-speaking Belgium for three years, from 2017 to 2019 (page 2).
- **Motorsport:** Greek public-service broadcaster ERT acquired free-to-air rights for Formula One across three years, from 2016 to 2018. The deal with the Asset Ogilvy agency includes live coverage of all races, with the exception of four events that are scheduled for the early hours of the morning in Greece.
- **Motorsport:** Romanian pay-television platforms Digi Sport and Dolce Sport, which are owned by telcos RCS-RDS and Telekom Romania respectively, secured rights for the 2016 and 2017 Formula One world championships.
- **Motorsport:** Norwegian state broadcaster NRK sealed a rights deal for the World Rallycross Championship covering three years, from 2016 to 2018. NRK will provide live coverage of every round on free-to-air channels NRK1 and NRK2. The deal was brokered on behalf of the championship by the IMG agency.
- **Motorsport:** Latvian telco Lattelecom acquired rights for the 2016 World Rallycross Championship.
- **Motorsport:** UK pay-television operator Virgin Media and pay-television broadcaster BT Sport struck one-off deals to show the Mexican leg of the Formula E electric car-racing championship on March 12. The race was also streamed live in the UK via video-sharing websites Dailymotion and YouTube, as well as on the official Formula E mobile application and website. The deals were agreed after commercial broadcaster ITV, the series' live rights-holder in the UK, decided against providing live television coverage of the race due to a scheduling clash with the semi-final of the Snooker World Grand Prix.

through which it expanded its association with the platform by holding a 'Snapchat Day' event on March 11. Players were allowed to use smartphones and official 'SnapBat' selfie sticks in dugouts and bullpens during spring training games. Snapchat will also cover MLB games and events through the season.

- English Premier League club Everton entered into a partnership with Snapchat. Snapchat users can follow a dedicated Everton account to access video content and images of behind-the-scenes action at the club's Goodison Park stadium and training ground.
- The CBS network in the US will show coverage of the final round of the Ladies Professional Golf Association's Marathon Classic tournament for the first time this year.
- US pay-television sports broadcaster ESPN agreed a carriage deal with PlayStation Vue, the internet television service owned and operated by consumer electronics company Sony. Along with ESPN, ESPN2, ESPNU, ESPNEWS and SEC Network, the agreement includes various channels operated by ESPN's parent company, Walt Disney.
- German media company ProSiebenSat.1 will launch a new combat sports digital platform, ranFighting.de. The service will offer pay-per-view live coverage of some boxing contests – the first time ProSiebenSat.1 will have taken such an approach with the sport – as well as live coverage, highlights and archive footage of mixed martial arts, kickboxing, judo, taekwondo and karate. The platform will launch with coverage of German Arthur Abraham's super middleweight boxing clash with Gilberto Ramirez in Las Vegas in the early hours of April 10.
- International sports broadcaster Eleven Sports Network reached a carriage deal in Poland with cable-television operator Promax. The Eleven and Eleven Sports channels were made available to all Promax subscribers until the end of March as part of a promotional period. From April, the channels will be available to subscribers of the Wygodny HD and Plus HD packages.
- The Mediapro agency expanded the reach of its Canal F1 Latin America channel by agreeing a carriage deal with Argentinian cable-television operator Cablevision ahead of the start of the 2016 season.
- Le Sports, which is operated by Chinese internet company LeEco, unveiled a new watch-and-buy service to complement its coverage

SPORTS CLIPS: News from TVSM Daily from March 3 to 23

MEDIA RIGHTS 4

Olympic Games, Six Nations, English Premiership, ATP World Tour and more

- **Multi-sport:** Swiss public-service broadcaster SRG SSR agreed a three-year rights deal, from 2016 to 2018, with Indoor Sports – the umbrella body that oversees the country's national championships in basketball, handball, floorball and volleyball. SRG SSR will stream playoff games across the sports, starting in April, via the SRF.ch, RTS.ch or RSI.ch online platforms, with selected contests shown on television.
- **Olympic Games:** Dutch public-service broadcaster NOS agreed a sublicensing deal with US media and entertainment company Discovery Communications for free-to-air and digital rights to the 2018 and 2020 Games. Discovery's pan-European sports broadcaster, Eurosport, will retain exclusive live rights for certain events, including the 2018 Games ice hockey competition.
- **Rugby Union:** French public-service broadcaster France Télévisions extended a rights deal for coverage of the Six Nations national team tournament and France national team autumn internationals. The Six Nations deal, sealed with the Six Nations Committee, will run for five years, from 2018 to 2022, while the autumn internationals agreement with the French Rugby Federation (FFR) will cover five seasons, from 2016-17 to 2020-21. The federation also awarded rights covering the France team in the women's Six Nations event and the Top 8, the top women's domestic tournament in the country. France Télévisions acquired rights for live coverage of the national women's team in the Six Nations and the final of the Top 8, which will also be shown live by Eurosport France.
- Eurosport will also broadcast delayed coverage of France national women's team games. The FFR also awarded rights for the domestic amateur Fédérale 1 and Jean Prat Trophy tournaments and one France v Barbarians representative team match per season to French digital-terrestrial television channel L'Équipe 21 for the same five-year period.
- **Rugby Union:** NBC Sports Group acquired rights in the US for the Premiership, the top division in England. The deal will run for three seasons, from 2016-17 to 2018-19, but included live coverage of the first Premiership match in the US between London Irish and Saracens in New Jersey on March 12. Pay-television channel NBC Sports Network will show up to 24 regular-season 'games of the week' and up to 50 other matches will be streamed live every season on the NBC Sports Live Extra digital service.
- **Table Tennis:** The International Table Tennis Federation sealed a rights distribution deal with Lagardère Sports, the sports marketing division of conglomerate Lagardère. Lagardère will distribute rights to the ITTF's events worldwide on an exclusive basis, excluding China, Chinese Taipei, Japan and Singapore. The deal will run for five years, 2016 to 2020, and was brokered by the TMS International agency.
- **Tennis:** ESPN acquired rights in Latin America, the Caribbean, Australia and New Zealand for the men's ATP World Tour. The rights will run for five years, from 2016 to 2020, and will cover the tour's top-tier Masters 1,000 and second-tier 500 series events, as well as the season-ending ATP World Tour Finals.
- **Tennis:** US pay-television broadcaster Tennis Channel expanded a rights deal for the French Open for eight years, from 2016 to 2023. Tennis Channel's coverage of the event will increase from 50 hours to 110 hours from the 2016 edition.
- **Winter Sports:** The CBC Sports division of Canadian public-service broadcaster CBC acquired rights for events operated by the International Ski Federation (Fis) and the International Bobsleigh and Skeleton Federation. The Fis deal will cover five seasons, from 2016-17 to 2020-21, while CBC Sports will show IBSF World Cup and World Championship events over two seasons, from 2016-17 to 2017-18. The deals were brokered on behalf of the federations by the Infront Sports & Media agency.
- **Wrestling:** The European Broadcasting Union consortium of public-service broadcasters agreed a four-year extension, from 2017 to 2020, to its exclusive rights deal with the United World Wrestling global governing body. The EBU will also be the federation's exclusive technical service provider for worldwide distribution of the programming.
- **US College Sport:** The Fox Sports division of US network Fox signed an exclusive multimedia rights deal with the athletics division of Auburn University. The deal is worth a guaranteed \$120m (€109m) over 10 seasons, from 2016-17 to 2025-26.

of the Chinese Super League, the top division of domestic football. Le Sports launched a shopping service covering the league and other sports properties through its Super TV platform on March 4, allowing viewers to purchase officially licensed products while they are watching a match.

- Indian pay-television broadcaster Ten Sports will rebrand its suite of channels on April 1. The Ten Sports, Ten Action, Ten Cricket, Ten HD and Ten Golf channels will become Ten 1, Ten 2, Ten 3,

Ten 1 HD and Ten Golf HD. Ten Sports also secured a licence from the country's Ministry of Information & Broadcasting to launch a high-definition channel under the name Ten 2 HD.

- UK pay-television broadcaster Sky is to launch a new sports channel that will be available to its non-sports subscribers at no extra cost. Customers in the UK and Ireland with a basic Sky subscription will be able to access the new channel, Sky Sports Mix, from this summer. The channel will feature live coverage of

SPORTS CLIPS: News from TVSM Daily from March 3 to 23

football leagues in Spain and the US, as well as Fifa World Cup qualifiers and some English Premier League and English Football League games. Golf from Europe and the US, as well as international cricket, will also be offered, along with women's golf, cricket and netball.

- Canadian pay-television sports broadcaster TSN secured a deal with Sky to enhance the former's coverage of the Formula One motor-racing world championship. TSN will deliver expanded pre-race and post-race coverage during the 2016 season on top of the broadcaster's existing practice and qualifying coverage. TSN's race-day coverage will feature commentary, analysis and interviews from Sky's team.
- Spanish agency Mediapro will launch a new free-to-air sports channel on digital-terrestrial television in the country. Mediapro secured the channel slot in a deal with the Unidad Editorial media company. The launch will require the approval of Spain's Ministry of Industry. The value of the licence agreement could be worth up to €3.5m (\$3.9m) per year.
- Vodafone called on the Comisión Nacional de los Mercados y La Competencia, Spain's competition regulator, to intervene in its dispute with rival telco Telefónica over coverage of the Formula One motor-racing world championship and the MotoGP motorcycling series. Vodafone's director of legal and regulatory affairs, Pedro Peña, said a complaint submitted to the authority in February has gone unanswered. Vodafone claims Telefónica must be forced to share 50 per cent of its premium content – including sports rights – with its rivals under a condition imposed by the regulator when Telefónica's takeover of Spanish pay-television operator Canal Plus was approved in 2015.

MEDIA RIGHTS NEGOTIATIONS

- UK commercial broadcaster ITV is close to extending a rights deal with World Rugby, rugby union's global governing body, for its Rugby World Cup tournament, according to *the Daily Telegraph* newspaper. The deal would cover three editions of the tournament, in 2019, 2023 and 2027.
- The next cycle of domestic rights for the Bundesliga, the top division of German football, will not include a shortened Saturday night highlights programme. It had been suggested that the format of the 90-minute highlights programme – which has carried the name 'Sportschau' on public-service broadcaster ARD for 55 years – could be halved to run from 6.30pm to 7.15pm rather than until 8pm.
- The German Football League (DFL) kicked off the sales process for the next cycle of domestic rights for the Bundesliga and Bundesliga 2 – the top two divisions in the country – and the Supercup knockout competition. The rights – which were put on the market following consultation with the Bundeskartellamt, the German competition authority – will cover four seasons, from 2017-18 to 2020-21. Companies were invited to register an interest in live and highlights rights on satellite, terrestrial, cable, IPTV, online and mobile platforms.
- The German Handball Association scheduled meetings in mid-March with the International Handball Federation in a bid to secure free-to-air coverage of the 2017 men's World Championship in Germany.
- Santos and Internacional joined fellow Campeonato Brasileiro Série A club Atlético Paranaense in accepting an offer from sports broadcaster Esporte Interativo for the pay-television rights to the top division of Brazilian football. The clubs have backed Esporte Interativo rather than media company Globo, their current rights-holder.
- Norwegian commercial and pay-television broadcaster TV2 is close to sealing a rights deal for national team qualifying and tournament properties operated by Uefa, football's European governing body. TV2 chief executive Olav Sandnes said that the broadcaster is in "exclusive final negotiations" for the rights.

ALSO SINCE LAST TIME

- The Lagardère Sports and Entertainment division of media conglomerate Lagardère reported a substantial rise in turnover and operating profit for 2015, fuelled by major football events. Sales totalled €515m (\$567.5m), up 19.6 per cent year-on-year on a like-for-like basis.
- The MP & Silva agency entered into a strategic partnership with live streaming solutions provider Simplestream.
- Technology company Intel acquired Replay Technologies, which specialises in providing 3D video technology to US sports broadcasters, in a deal worth \$175m (€160m). Replay's technology was used in the 2016 NBA basketball league All-Star Weekend and the 2016 NFL American football Super Bowl.
- US telco AT&T and its DirecTV subsidiary will show the 2016 Masters golf tournament in 4K ultra high-definition format. The tournament will be the first broadcast on DirecTV's new 4K-dedicated channel in April.
- The Fox Sports division of US network Fox expanded a partnership with broadcast technology company NextVR to show seven games from the 2016 Big East men's basketball college tournament in virtual reality.
- US football-dedicated digital streaming platform fuboTV raised \$15m (€13.4m) in a Series B funding round, led by investments from European broadcast group Sky and US media company 21st Century Fox. Sky invested \$6m in fuboTV, but the details of Fox's investment were not disclosed. Sky and Fox will take board positions at the platform.
- Digital sports media content company Whistle Sports closed its latest round of Series C funding, which reportedly raised \$20m, having secured investment from Sky and the NBC Sports Ventures division of US media company NBCUniversal. US broadcast and digital media company Tegna and private investment vehicle Emil Capital also invested.
- US sports broadcaster ESPN is considering launching a direct-to-consumer offering, according to Bob Iger, chief executive of the US sports broadcaster's parent company, Walt Disney.
- Indian cricket players Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma joined Unscriptd, a new publishing platform that aims to help

SPORTS CLIPS: News from TVSM Daily from March 3 to 23

- professional athletes to create and publish unfiltered personal stories in short-form video format.
- The International Cricket Council revealed plans for expanded live broadcast coverage of the 2016 women's World Twenty20 national team tournament. The ICC TV division will produce live coverage of 13 matches during the event, having broadcast only the semi-finals and final in the previous four editions.
 - The ATP Media broadcast division of the ATP World Tour, the top professional men's tennis circuit, entered into a partnership with virtual reality company LiveLike VR. The two parties established a virtual reality lounge at the BNP Paribas Open for the duration of the tournament in Indian Wells, USA.
 - Agon, the organiser and commercial rights-holder of the World Chess Championship, launched legal action against the Chess24, InternetChessClub, Chessgames and Chessbomb websites for "blatantly flouting" restrictions on live coverage of the ongoing World Chess Candidates tournament in Moscow. Agon introduced a new rights model for this year's events whereby all video footage, as well as the moves from each game, must be shown exclusively via worldchess.com and by approved broadcast partners in certain countries. Websites were previously able to receive highlights of moves without broadcast limitations.
 - Internet company Yahoo launched a new service dedicated to coverage of major eSports events. Yahoo Esports will offer live coverage of events as well as additional content such as interviews and features.
 - European broadcast group Sky established a new virtual reality division, Sky VR Studio, which will act as an in-house production unit and will create virtual reality content for sports, movies, news and entertainment programming.
 - Sports technology company Stats agreed a partnership with Virtually Live, which enables sports fans to experience live games and events through virtual reality. The two parties conducted successful trials focusing on Scottish football matches before confirming the collaboration.
 - Swiss sports channel SSF has ceased broadcasting amid financial difficulties. Reports that its parent company entered insolvency were not confirmed.
 - The QYOU, a curator of internet video content for subscription-television services, entered into a partnership with the Broadreach Media agency. Broadreach will distribute the network's QYOU Sports programme, which shows sports-related viral videos.
 - Energy drinks giant Red Bull delayed plans to launch a second media platform, according to the *Salzburger Nachrichten* newspaper. Red Bull Global TV was due to begin operating in April, but the launch will be delayed by at least six months.
 - Media company Constantin Medien, which operates German sports broadcaster Sport1, the Sport1 Media sports marketing company and the Team Marketing agency, registered group sales of €481.6m (\$531m) in 2015 – down slightly from €487.8m in 2014 – but a significant increase in profit from operations, from €21.4m to €40.3m.
 - World Rowing reported a 43-per-cent year-on-year increase in total television hours covering its 2015 World Rowing Championships. The number of television channels broadcasting the World Rowing Championships increased from 77 in 2014 to 181 in 2015.

INDUSTRY MOVES

- Jonathan Davies was appointed to lead international media company Discovery Communications' new global advertising sales division, One Discovery World. He will oversee a new leadership team that will feature international advertising sales executives that represent regions. The division will seek to combine Discovery's entertainment content and platforms with international sports broadcaster Eurosport.
- Modern Times Group, the multi-territory commercial and pay-television broadcaster, promoted Peter Nørrelund to the role of executive vice-president and chief executive of its sports division, MTG Sport.
- Niaz Samadzadeh was appointed to lead SNTV Brand Solutions, a new division operated by sports news video agency SNTV to help companies to create sponsored video content.

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