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FOOTBALL

Lagardère gets Afcon deals done but misses out on major markets

By Callum McCarthy

LAGARDÈRE CAF SALES

- Lagardère has earned about €12m from 18 free-to-air Afcon deals
- Negotiations with African Union of Broadcasting prove key
- The agency is paying \$1bn for rights to Caf events over 12 years, from 2017 to 2028

Lagardère Sports has completed 18 free-to-air deals in sub-Saharan Africa for the 2017 Africa Cup of Nations, pushing deals over the line with discounted prices and the inclusion of several other tournaments.

Nonetheless, the agency was unable to complete free-to-air deals in four of Africa's biggest markets: Angola, Kenya, Nigeria and Uganda.

The agency will earn about €12m (\$12.5m) from these deals, negotiating most with public-service broadcasters via the African Union of Broadcasters. The AUB negotiated on behalf of its member broadcasters before leaving them to decide whether to complete deals at the agreed prices.

Lagardère's final asking prices were considerably cheaper than those of the LC2 Médias-Afnex agency, which was employed by Lagardère to conduct free-to-air sales in the region from 2009 to 2016 (*TV Sports Markets* 17:2; 20:19).

Lagardère is paying \$1bn for rights to Confederation of African Football tournaments – including the Afcon – from 2017 to 2028 (*TV Sports Markets* 19:12).

Speaking exclusively to *TV Sports Markets* this week Junior Binyam, media director at Caf, said he was pleased with the overall outcome for the 2017 Afcon.

“There is a lot of piracy in our region and the only way to overcome that is to have free-to-air broadcasters involved,” Binyam said. “I think the fact Lagardère was willing to negotiate with the AUB has made all the difference. When LC2 was in charge of selling these rights they were not proactive, and did not talk to the AUB.”

Pay-television broadcaster beIN Sports holds Caf rights in the Middle East and North Africa, and sublicensed Afcon 2017 rights in just one territory, Algeria, to commercial broadcaster Décision TV.

beIN has little incentive to sell free-to-air rights to the tournament.

The broadcaster did not agree deals in Morocco or Tunisia, while Egyptian public-service broadcaster ERTU did not approach beIN to open negotiations due to a political impasse between Egypt and Qatar (see separate story, page 29).

Local experts believe free-to-air sales of the Afcon are low on Lagardère's list of priorities, but its incentive to sell is far greater than beIN's.

Much of the agency's investment in Caf rights will be earned back from pay-television deals with SuperSport in sub-Saharan Africa and beIN Sports in Mena – from 2017 to 2024 – and a lucrative sponsorship deal with oil and gas company Total, worth about \$250m from 2017 to 2024. But Lagardère still has to work hard on other deals to break even.

Done deals

Lagardère was forced to relax the price demands it set out in November, which grouped broadcasters into four bands.

Lagardère asking prices, November

Price band	Non-AUB member (€)	AUB member (€)
A (Participating nation)	1,350,000	1,100,000
B (Non-participant with developed market)	700,000	400,000
C (Non-participant with undeveloped market)	500,000	300,000
D (Non-participant with serious economic/stability problems)	100,000	15,000

Source: TV Sports Markets Rights Tracker

Lagardère asking prices, January

Price band	Non-AUB member (€)	AUB member (€)
A (Participating nation)	N/A	550,000
B (Non-participant with developed market)	N/A	400,000
C (Non-participant with undeveloped market)	N/A	150,000
D (Non-participant with serious economic/stability problems)	N/A	15,000

Source: TV Sports Markets Rights Tracker

Lagardère had completed five deals before January 7, one week before the start of the tournament. These were with public-service broadcasters in Côte d'Ivoire (RTI), Gabon (Gabon TV), Ghana (GBC), Senegal (RDS), and South Africa (SABC).

A slew of last-minute deals – repeating a pattern seen over the last few tournaments – more than doubled Lagardère's total income from free-to-air rights. These were completed after the agency

halved its asking price in all but one of these territories: Tanzania.

Lagardère also included discounted free-to-air rights to the Caf Champions League; Caf Confederations Cup; African Nations Championship; African Women's Cup of Nations; and three national team youth tournaments, covering 2017 and 2018, to convince broadcasters to sign.

Completed free-to-air deals for Afcon 2017

Territory (Broadcaster)	Price (€)	Band (Deal date)
Benin (ORTB)	150,000	C (January)
Burkina Faso (RTB)	550,000	A (January)
Cameroon (CRTV)	550,000	A (January)
Congo (Télé Congo)	150,000	C (January)
Côte d'Ivoire (RTI)	1,100,000	A (December)
Democratic Republic of the Congo (RTNC)	550,000	A (January)
Gabon (Gabon TV)	1,100,000	A (November)
Ghana (GBC)	1,100,000	A (December)
Guinea (RTG)	150,000	C (January)
Madagascar (TVM)	150,000	C (January)
Mali (ORTM)	150,000	C (January)
Niger (ORTN)	150,000	C (January)
Senegal (RTS)	1,100,000	A (December)
South Africa (SABC)	3,600,000	N/A (November)
Tanzania (ZBC)*	400,000	A (January)
Togo (TVT)	550,000	A (January)
Zimbabwe (ZBC)	550,000	A (January)

Source: TV Sports Markets Rights Tracker

*ZBC is not an AUB member but completed deal at AUB price

Major regions go without

There was little to no interest in the rights in Nigeria due to the failure of the national team to qualify for the tournament. It is thought Lagardère excluded Nigeria from its price-banding as it wanted more than the €400,000 it sought from other non-participants with a developed media market.

Nigeria is sub-Saharan Africa's second-most developed media market, and major rights-holders often treat the territory as an individual market.

Public-service broadcasting consortium the Nigerian Television Authority has previously bid as high as \$3.5m for free-to-air Afcon rights – in 2013. But the depreciation of the Nigerian naira due to falling oil prices has left Nigerian companies unable to afford prices set in dollars, euros and sterling. This is also the case in Angola, where the kwanza has depreciated significantly.

Public-service broadcaster the Uganda Broadcasting Corporation released a letter it sent to Lagardère on January 11 explaining it could not meet the €550,000 asking price. The 2017 Afcon is the first for which Uganda has qualified since 1978.

Negotiations with the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation broke down in early January as Lagardère's asking price – thought to be well in excess of the €400,000 required of a broadcaster in 'Band B' – was deemed too high by the broadcaster.

The KBC received the Afcon final for free in 2015, and struggles to pay rights fees that reflect the size of the country's market. Despite being a public-service broadcaster, the KBC receives no government funding and has to refinance rights fees from advertising.

Kenya and Uganda have both completed the digital migration process, meaning their national broadcasters are only available via satellite and digital-terrestrial television. Both the UBC and the KBC are currently unable to geo-block their channels in neighbouring countries such as Ethiopia, Rwanda, Somalia, and Tanzania, and were unwilling to pay to do so.

Deals outside Africa

Multi-tournament deals have been completed in the UK & Ireland, Spain and Portugal with sports broadcaster Eurosport, and in Italy and the Netherlands with global channel syndicator Fox Networks Group (*TV Sports Markets* 20:13).

In the UK & Ireland, Eurosport will pay about £500,000 (€584,000/\$615,000) for the 2017 and 2019 Afcon tournaments. In Italy, Fox will pay about €600,000 for the same rights (*TV Sports Markets* 20:21).

In Turkey, pay-television operator Tivibu bought rights to the 2017 tournament only for about €100,000. It will show the tournament on its basic-tier Tivibu Spor channel.

BeIN Sports holds rights to the 2017 and 2019 Afcon in France, as well as rights to the Caf Champions League until the end of 2018. It is understood the rights in France were not acquired as part of beIN's deal for Mena. Pay-television broadcaster Canal Plus paid a total of €5.4m for rights to the 2013 and 2015 tournaments. It is thought beIN is paying about double this amount for 2017 and 2019.

No deal has been completed in either Germany or the Nordics. Eurosport is thought to have turned down the rights in these regions. Eurosport held pan-European rights to the 2013 and 2015 tournaments, paying \$2.5m per tournament. ◆

FOOTBALL

Uefa completes successful set of national team sales in Belgium

By Robin Jellis

Uefa took advantage of strong broadcaster interest in Belgium, driven by the success of the national team, to secure an increase in the value of its national team rights package last month.

European football's governing body will earn €17m (\$17.8m) from 2018-19 to 2021-22 for all first-, second- and third-party rights to Belgium's European Qualifier and Nations League matches.

A direct comparison to the value of Uefa's current cycle of national team rights is difficult as the Nations League will largely replace national team friendly matches currently sold by local federations. But rights to all European Qualifier matches from 2014-15 to 2017-18 are currently worth about €8.7m in deals with several Belgian broadcasters.

Last month, Uefa also sold Euro 2020 rights to public-service broadcasters RTBF (in French-speaking Wallonia) and VRT (in Flemish-speaking Flanders). The combined value of the deals is about €11m, with VRT paying close to €6.5m and RTBF paying just over €4.5m.

Euro 2016 rights in the country were held by the same two broadcasters as part of a wider 26-territory deal struck by the European Broadcasting Union – the consortium of Europe's free-to-air broadcasters – worth about €120m (*TV Sports Markets* 19:13).

RTBF and VRT were two of the larger guarantors of the EBU deal, together contributing about €10m: about €5.5m from VRT and about €4.5m from RTBF.

Uefa tender and broadcaster offers

Uefa and its sales agent, CAA Eleven, tendered Euro 2020 rights as well as all European Qualifier and Nations League rights on August 30, with bids due by September 27.

Uefa made available three packages of first- and second-party Belgian national team matches from 2018-19 to 2021-22: one package included Belgium's Nations League matches and friendly matches; while Belgium's European Qualifier matches were split between the other two.

In Flanders, all three of these packages were awarded after one round of bidding to commercial broadcaster VTM in a deal worth €8m. It is thought that VRT's offer for the same rights in Flanders was much lower, with one source saying the public-service broadcaster's offer was €5m.

Local experts are unsure whether VTM will be able to refinance its investment. Due to the more regular content provided by European Qualifier and Nations League matches, the broadcaster was more interested in these rights than those to Euro 2020.

The commercial broadcaster is understood to have been willing to pay such a high fee due to the success of the Belgian national team in recent years, and the increasing popularity of its top players.

In Wallonia, RTBF acquired first- and second-party rights to Belgium's European Qualifier matches for about €4.5m, while commercial broadcaster RTL acquired first- and second-party rights to Belgium's Nations League matches for about €2m.

The total of €14.5m across Belgium over the four seasons is much higher than deals in the country for European Qualifier matches only from 2014-15 to 2017-18.

Rights to Uefa national team properties in Belgium

2018-19 to 2021-22

Property	Broadcaster	Value (€m)
Euro 2020, Flanders	VRT	6.5
Euro 2020, Wallonia	RTBF	4.5
First- and second-party European Qualifiers and Nations League, Flanders	VTM	8
First- and second-party European Qualifiers, Wallonia	RTBF	4.5
First- and second-party Nations League, Wallonia	RTL	2
Third-party European Qualifiers and Nations League, all of Belgium	Eleven	2.5

Source: TV Sports Markets Rights Tracker

Those rights are currently held by RTBF and VRT as part of a wider EBU deal covering 30 territories, worth about €70m. RTBF and VRT's combined contribution is about €7.5m, with VRT paying about €3.5m and RTBF paying about €4m (*TV Sports Markets* 17:6; 17:19).

When this deal was struck, in April 2013, the Belgium national team was 19th in the Fifa rankings. It is now ranked fifth, and was second for much of last year.

Rights to Uefa national team properties in Belgium

2014-15 to 2017-18

Property	Broadcaster	Value (€m)
Euro 2016, Flanders	VRT*	5.5
Euro 2016, Wallonia	RTBF*	4.5
First- and second-party European Qualifiers, Flanders	VRT*	3.5
First- and second-party European Qualifiers, Wallonia	RTBF*	4
Third-party European Qualifiers, Flanders	Telenet	0.8
Third-party European Qualifiers, Wallonia	BeTV	0.4

Source: TV Sports Markets Rights Tracker

* Acquired via membership of the European Broadcasting Union

Friendly matches in the 2014-15 to 2017-18 cycle are sold by the Belgian football federation. The federation sells these matches on a case-by-case basis, sometimes bundling together matches that take place in a short period of time.

In Flanders, rights are bought by either VRT or VTM, while RTBF buys them in Wallonia. Matches are said to be worth about €250,000, with fees in Flanders about €150,000 per match and about €100,000 per match in Wallonia.

Euro 2020

The VTM deal for first- and second-party European Qualifier and Nations League matches in Flanders was agreed first, in mid-to late-October, while the Euro 2020 deals with RTBF and VRT were agreed in late November.

It is understood VTM's surprise acquisition of Belgium's European Qualifier and Nations League matches in Flanders encouraged VRT to increase its offer for Euro 2020 rights.

One source suggested missing out on the European Qualifier and Nations League rights may also mean VRT bids more aggressively for domestic Pro League highlights or live Uefa Champions League rights when these are tendered.

Talks over a deal for Euro 2020 took longer as there was less competition. Commercial broadcasters consider the cost to acquire the rights in Belgium too high for a one-off, four-week tournament and almost impossible to refinance.

As well as RTBF and VRT, the only other bidder is understood to have been sports broadcaster Eleven Sports Network. Eleven's interest was driven by its desire to acquire non-exclusive OTT rights to the tournament. However, its offer was low and both public-service broadcasters wanted to retain OTT rights exclusively for use on their apps and websites.

Third-party matches

However, Eleven was successful with its bid for third-party European Qualifier and Nations League matches from 2018-19 to 2021-22. The deal will be worth about €2.5m across the four seasons and will cover all of Belgium.

The broadcaster's deal is roughly double the combined value of the current European Qualifier deals from 2014-15 to 2017-18, worth a total of about €1.2m.

Pay-television broadcaster Telenet holds third-party European Qualifier rights in Flanders for about €800,000, while pay-television broadcaster BeTV holds rights in Wallonia for about €400,000.

Telenet and BeTV are thought to have bid for the rights, but not aggressively. Pay-television broadcaster Proximus – which operates across the whole country – did not bid. It did not believe the rights would drive subscribers, especially as it also has carriage of the Eleven channels. ♦

FOOTBALL

Kwesé and SuperSport share the spoils as Fifa makes hay in Africa

By Callum McCarthy

FIFA IN AFRICA

- Fifa will earn at least \$46m for its 2018 World Cup rights in sub-Saharan Africa
- Kwesé Sports will pay between \$32m and \$34m
- SuperSport will pay between \$12m and \$14m

Kwesé Sports and SuperSport will share pay-television rights to the 2018 Fifa World Cup in sub-Saharan Africa after both broadcasters agreed to acquire the rights non-exclusively outside South Africa, *TV Sports Markets* understands.

Start-up free-to-air and pay-television broadcaster Kwesé Sports, owned by telco Econet, will pay between \$32m (€30.5m) and \$34m for exclusive free-to-air and non-exclusive English- and Portuguese-language pay-television rights across all sub-Saharan African territories, excluding South Africa.

Pay-television broadcaster SuperSport will pay between \$12m and \$14m for exclusive free-to-air and pay-television rights in South Africa, and non-exclusive pay-television rights in the rest of sub-Saharan Africa. It can also broadcast in English and Portuguese.

All 64 matches will be simulcast by both broadcasters outside South Africa. The deals include rights to the Fifa Confederations Cup in 2017.

Fifa will earn a total of about \$46m from the deals, with French-language pay-television rights still to be sold. Football's world governing body is thought to be close to a deal for these rights with pay-television operator Canal Plus Afrique.

Both deals were completed in private negotiations after a formal first round of bidding (*TV Sports Markets* 20:21). Bids in the first round fell well below Fifa's expectations.

Digital-terrestrial and pay-television operator StarTimes is thought to have made another offer in talks with Fifa, but the quality of its coverage is thought to have been a concern. StarTimes was also interested in acquiring French-language rights as it attempts to challenge Canal Plus.

So far, Fifa has earned an increase of about 95 per cent on the \$23.5m it earned from free-to-air and pay-television sales of the 2014 tournament.

It earned \$11m from a deal with SuperSport, in which the broadcaster acquired free-to-air and pay-television rights in South Africa, as well as pay-television rights across the region; about \$6.5m from the Optima Sports Management Agency for free-to-air rights in Nigeria; and \$6m in a deal with the African Union of Broadcasters, the consortium of African public-service broadcasters (*TV Sports Markets* 17:7).

SuperSport weathers the storm

SuperSport has limited its spend to fractionally more than it paid for rights to each of the 2010 and 2014 tournaments – \$11m. This is a continuation of a strategy it employed when bidding for Cricket Australia and Premiership Rugby rights last summer.

SuperSport negotiated deals for these properties in South Africa only – effectively ceding rights to Kwesé in the rest of sub-Saharan Africa – for fees similar to those it paid for rights across the region in its previous deals. While SuperSport ended up paying about the same amount for fewer rights, it managed to protect its position in South Africa – by far its strongest and most reliable market – while keeping its costs under control.

In its new deal for World Cup rights, SuperSport went one step further by holding onto non-exclusive rights outside South Africa. The broadcaster was worried that a total loss of World Cup rights would trigger churn to Kwesé's yet-to-be-launched pay-television service. It did this by leveraging its long-term relationship with Fifa, and paying a little more than it did in its previous deal.

SuperSport is likely to sublicense free-to-air rights in South Africa to public-service broadcaster the SABC. Its deal with the SABC in 2014 was worth \$10m, which almost completely refinanced its total spend on the rights.

Kwesé continues to pay big

While SuperSport is thought to be happy with its deal, Kwesé is thought to be just as happy with its own, despite the considerable expense. Kwesé will not have the exclusivity it sought in the first round of bidding, but will have the opportunity to go head-to-head with SuperSport from a production standpoint.

Kwesé will also have exclusive free-to-air rights outside South Africa, giving it the option of using the World Cup as a powerful – but expensive – marketing tool to convert free-to-air viewers into pay-television subscribers.

Fifa expects Kwesé to sell a package of free-to-air rights to public-service broadcasters in the region, and Kwesé may employ a specialist agency to do this.

The broadcaster will also consider employing an agency to secure sponsorship for its coverage in order to further refinance its spend, as the Infront Sports & Media agency did for its distribution of the 2016 Olympic Games (*TV Sports Markets* 20:13).

Uefa rights

A deal for rights to Uefa Euro 2020, European Qualifiers from 2018-19 to 2021-22, and the Nations League in 2018-19 and 2020-21 across sub-Saharan Africa is thought to be close.

Sources close to the situation believe CAA Eleven, Uefa's sales agent for its national team rights, has chosen a winner but is yet to inform broadcasters of the result. ◆

REGULATION

Lega, Infront, Mediaset and Sky exonerated over Serie A sales

By Frank Dunne

The vindication last month by a Roman court of the way Lega Serie A sold its media rights for the current cycle was absolute, but not definitive. A ruling by the country's highest administrative court will be needed to settle the case.

On December 23, the Tribunale Amministrativo Regionale (Tar) for the region of Lazio overturned fines against the league, its media rights adviser – the Infront Sports & Media agency – and broadcasters Sky and Mediaset Premium.

The fines – totalling €66m (\$69m) – were imposed by the country's antitrust authority, l'Autorità Garante della Concorrenza e del Mercato, in April (*TV Sports Markets* 20:7).

The authority found all four guilty of anti-competitive behaviour for the way Serie A media rights in the 2015-16 to 2017-18 cycle had been awarded, and in a subsequent sublicensing deal between Mediaset and Sky. All four appealed to the Tar.

The Tar supported the main arguments put forward by the four parties in their defence and was highly critical of the antitrust authority's handling of the case. This included its decision to open an investigation in February 2015, on the basis of an article in a national newspaper, when all the details of the deals had been in the public domain since June 2014.

The antitrust authority has appealed the Tar ruling to the Consiglio di Stato, the country's highest administrative court, whose ruling will be final. The court could confirm the Tar ruling, confirm the original antitrust ruling, or partially accept the antitrust ruling leading to a reduction in the fines.

One senior Italian competition lawyer said it was impossible to predict the outcome but that “it is not infrequent that the Consiglio di Stato overturns a Tar Lazio ruling in antitrust matters”. The court's ruling is expected in the autumn.

The Tar addressed the appeal of each party separately.

Lega Serie A

The antitrust authority ruled the league had been party to anticompetitive agreements and fined it €1.944m. The Tar agreed with all points of law on which the league challenged the antitrust ruling.

These included arguments that:

- the differences between the outcome of the process and its original tender rules were “arbitrarily” considered to represent a restriction of competition, and “erroneously” considered to have had the object of doing so
- the league was extraneous to the alleged anti-competitive agreement between the two broadcasters
- the authority’s ruling lacked any evaluation of the effects on competition in the media market as a result of the final award of the rights, and was therefore flawed in competition law
- the authority was unable to demonstrate any element of fraud or malice by the league
- the authority had breached the “legitimate expectations” of the league in opening an investigation, as it had earlier approved both the league’s original sales guidelines and the later sublicensing deal between Mediaset and Sky
- the level of fine was disproportionate because it violated the adversarial principle and the league’s right to a defence under the Italian constitution.

The Tar said the authority never clarified how competitive market conditions would have been undermined by the way the rights were sold. It said the original ruling contained no detailed analysis relating the outcome of the tender to the actual functioning of the market.

Instead, it focused narrowly on how the rules of the league’s own ITT had been applied. The Tar said, even in doing so, the authority did not give sufficient weight to the fact that after the initial round of bids, the league sought the opinion of an independent antitrust expert who supported the league’s decision not to assign the two most important packages to the highest bidder, Sky.

The authority ruling meant that, in practice, the parties had been guilty of bid rigging. The Tar said an allegation of collusive behaviour could not stand up in the context of a process where there had been aggressive bidding by both broadcasters in the first round, followed by legal threats by Mediaset and Sky against the league.

Infront

The antitrust authority ruled that Infront had played a decisive role in the award process, influencing individual clubs to vote in favour of its proposed solution, handling negotiations between Mediaset and Sky, and convincing Sky to give up its threatened legal action. The agency was fined €9.05m.

Infront argued the ruling contracted all relevant precedents under Italian and European competition law. It was also in breach of the Italian constitution and the European Convention on Human Rights.

The agency argued that:

- there was a lack of evidence to support the authority's claims, and that its conclusions were manifestly "illogical" and "irrational"
- the authority had not taken into account "essential elements" of evidence and had misused others
- the authority had failed to demonstrate the existence of an anticompetitive agreement
- the fine imposed on Infront was disproportionate according to criteria established in European competition law.

The Tar said Infront "could not be qualified as a party" to an anticompetitive agreement and did not stand to benefit financially from the award of the rights. There were other possible outcomes which would have earned it more commission in its role as adviser.

The court rejected the view that Infront had been the architect of the way the rights were awarded, arguing that it had acted merely as an adviser, not a "decision-maker".

It had provided, upon the request of the clubs, technical clarifications on the complex situation thrown up by the various bids, taking into consideration the relative market positions of the different broadcasters. It had been consistent throughout the process in its view that it would not have been possible, for antitrust reasons, to award both key rights packages to an operator that had a dominant position in the pay-television market.

Despite internal Mediaset emails which appeared to suggest the contrary, the Tar ruled that Infront had been unaware of the subsequent sublicensing deal between Mediaset and Sky, and that the negotiation strategy had been that of Mediaset alone.

Mediaset

The antitrust authority said Mediaset was the main beneficiary of the alleged anticompetitive agreements and fined the broadcaster €51.419m. Mediaset raised many of the same legal points as Infront. It also argued that its fine was disproportionate.

In addition, it argued the ruling contradicted the authority's own findings when earlier approving the sublicensing deal with Sky, and in rejecting a complaint from consumer rights group Codacons about the way the rights were awarded.

As with the other parties, the Tar upheld Mediaset's arguments. It said the sublicensing of one package of rights by Mediaset to Sky was fully legitimate. It had helped avoid a legal battle which would have resulted in an impasse in the market, with potentially negative consequences for consumers. It also helped maintain competition in the pay-television market.

Sky

The authority ruled Sky had also been party to anticompetitive agreements but its role had been marginal and defensive. It fined Sky €4m.

Many of Sky's arguments in its appeal were similar in law to those of Infront and Mediaset.

In addition, Sky argued the authority had produced no proof of Sky's involvement in anticompetitive behaviour. It had failed to give due weight to the fact Sky had been the victim of the original bidding process in not having been awarded the rights to the two most important packages despite having made the highest bid.

Sky said the authority had not taken into account it had publicly attacked the initial league decision regarding the award of the rights. It had publicly disassociated itself from the behaviour of the other players in the process.

Sky also argued the authority should have coordinated its investigation with a parallel criminal investigation by the Milan prosecutor's office into the role of three senior Infront executives – Marco Bogarelli, Giuseppe Ciocchetti and Andrea Locatelli – in the tender process.

The Tar said the authority never adequately explained what advantages there would have been for Sky in voluntarily giving up package B (digital-terrestrial rights to the top eight teams) and agreeing a sublicensing deal with Mediaset to acquire the inferior package D (platform-neutral rights to the other 12 teams).

The authority also failed to demonstrate there had been a common strategy uniting all four parties: Sky, Mediaset, the league and Infront. As in the other three cases, the Tar upheld the appeal and quashed the fine. ♦

FOOTBALL

FFA secures ‘whopper’ deal with Fox, yet to sell free-to-air match

By Richard Welbirg

FFA DOMESTIC DEAL

- Fox Sports will pay up to A\$346m over six seasons from 2017-18 to 2022-23
- The FFA currently earns A\$160m from Fox and SBS for a wider package of rights
- One weekly free-to-air A-League match is yet to be sold

Football Federation Australia’s new domestic deal for top-tier A-League rights has succeeded in squeezing a good increase from an uncompetitive landscape.

The deal, signed late last month with pay-television broadcaster Fox Sports, will be worth up to A\$346m (€237m/\$249m) over six seasons, from 2017-18 to 2022-23, or an average of A\$57.7m per season.

Fox will pay A\$51m in the first season and A\$56m per season thereafter. It will pay an extra \$7.5m per season in 2021-22 and 2022-23 if ratings targets are met. Its commitment will be split 90:10 between cash and contra.

As well as the A-League, the deal covers rights to the women’s W-League and Australian national team friendlies. The FFA is yet to sell simulcast rights to one A-League match per week to a free-to-air broadcaster.

The deal was agreed in direct negotiations following the FFA’s tender, which closed on December 9.

The association decided to take the rights to market rather than strike a deal during Fox’s exclusive negotiating window, which closed in September 2016.

There were no other bidders. Experts say this was likely due to Fox’s matching clause, which meant a rival would have had to offer an extreme value to win the rights.

Telco Optus, which shocked Fox with its acquisition of English Premier League rights in November 2015, decided the A-League would add few subscribers (*TV Sports Markets* 19:20).

TV Sports Markets understands the A\$346m also includes payments from pay-television operator Foxtel for some sponsorship rights and digital rights for the Foxtel Go platform. Foxtel is half-owned by News

Corporation, Fox Sports's parent company, and half by telco Telstra.

It is also notable that Fox's new deal is for six seasons, rather than the four-season term proposed by the FFA in its tender. One source said this was the price the FFA has paid to remove Fox's matching clause.

But given the FFA's reliance on Fox the deal ought to be regarded as a success. No commercial broadcaster would pay such a high fee, and no player which could has the same penetration.

Colin Smith, an experienced Australian media-rights consultant, said the deal was "a whopper in the sense of A-League TV ratings and the number of subscribers it gets for Fox".

Foxtel subscriber numbers reached about 2.9m in the first half of 2016. Its major subscription drivers are the top divisions of domestic rugby league and Aussie rules football (*TV Sports Markets* 19:15; 19:22).

But the A-League is Fox's only top domestic summer sport. Renewing the rights is an essentially defensive move to prevent excessive churn.

The FFA's existing agreements with Fox and public-service broadcaster SBS cover four A-League seasons, from 2013-14 to 2016-17, and Asian Football Confederation rights for four seasons from 2012-13 to 2015-16.

For both sets of rights the FFA earned A\$160m – A\$148m cash and A\$12m in contra. Fox paid A\$128m of the total and SBS A\$32m (*TV Sports Markets* 16:21).

AFC rights were not sold by the FFA in the current cycle, making a direct comparison difficult. From 2016-17 to 2019-20, AFC rights have been acquired by Fox in a deal with the Lagardère Sports agency worth about \$5.75m per season (*TV Sports Markets* 20:19).

Free-to-air

In the current deal with the FFA, SBS holds rights to one Friday-night match per week. But the time slot has struggled for ratings throughout the contract and *TV Sports Markets* understands the broadcaster – which is partially ad-funded – has lost money on its investment. Matches are now shown on its secondary channel, SBS Viceland, and attract less than 100,000 viewers each.

The FFA sweetened the pot for free-to-air buyers in the new cycle by replacing the Friday-night match with a Saturday-evening match – for which TV audiences are generally larger – but it received no bids.

This is mostly because Australia's commercial networks are keeping their powder dry ahead of the sale of Cricket Australia rights. These are expected on the market in the spring. Competition will be particularly fierce for rights to the Big Bash Twenty20 league.

Ten pays A\$20m per season for these rights from 2013-14 to 2017-18, the first sales cycle for the

competition, and it has been a huge ratings success.

Nine pays A\$98m per season for linear broadcast rights to Tests and limited-overs internationals hosted in Australia over the same duration, but is thought to be losing money on the deal.

There is likely to be a realignment in the new cycle, with the Big Bash rights rising in value enormously and the value of Test and limited-over internationals falling.

A source close to Nine said that, having considered the package, it was very unlikely to bid for the A-League free-to-air rights under any conditions.

That Fox's matching clause applies to any bids on this package seems to favour Ten. Foxtel took a 15-per-cent stake in the commercial broadcaster in June 2015. If Seven bids, Fox can simply indicate what Ten should offer to match it.

Expansion

The FFA believes expansion of the A-League from nine Australia-based teams to 11 (one team is based in Wellington, New Zealand) is vital for its success. Current FFA chairman Steven Lowy, speaking in May 2016, said:

“Nine teams in Australia is not enough, it's not enough for us to penetrate the commercial opportunities, it's not enough to have enough stakeholder penetration, it's not enough to have market share, it's not enough for us to properly compete against AFL, rugby league, rugby union and cricket.”

The association is targeting the addition of the two new teams for the 2018-19 season. Its preference would be to add a third team in Sydney and in Melbourne, the country's two largest cities.

The FFA's tender allowed bidders to express their preferences over the location of future franchises. One source suggested Fox had a veto over franchise proposals. Fox's new contract contains a fee escalator in the event of expansion. ◆

HANDBALL

German bank agrees surprise deal for IHF World Championship

By Robin Jellis

German bank Deutsche Kreditbank (DKB) took the unusual step of acquiring International Handball Federation World Championship media rights this month.

DKB bought rights in Germany, Austria and Switzerland to the men's tournament, which runs from January 11 to 29. The deal is worth just under €1m (\$1.05m).

Global media rights to the IHF men's and women's World Championships of 2015 and 2017 are held by beIN Media Group in a deal worth CHF100m (€93m/\$98m) (*TV Sports Markets* 18:1).

The deal between beIN and DKB was brokered by the Lagardère Sports agency. BeIN had initially approached German broadcasters either by itself or together with the Pitch International agency.

Lagardère Sports's Robert Müller has good contacts in handball – Müller sold rights to the 2011 and 2013 men's and women's IHF World Championships globally after agreeing the Ufa Sports agency's global deal worth just over CHF50m (*TV Sports Markets* 13:11).

Müller also had experience of selling the rights from his time at the Sportfive agency, which held IHF World Championship rights in 2007 and 2009 in a deal worth about CHF30m.

Germany is an important market for IHF rights. The men's German national team won the EHF Euro 2016 tournament and is currently top in the IHF rankings.

Rights to the 2015 men's World Championships in Germany were acquired by pay-television broadcaster Sky for about €250,000 following a protracted sales process (*TV Sports Markets* 19:1).

Then, there was a dispute with German free-to-air broadcasters due to their availability outside Germany on the Astra and HotBird satellites. BeIN was unwilling to sell rights to broadcasters whose signal was available across the Middle East and North Africa, eroding the exclusivity and therefore diluting the value of the rights in key territories for beIN.

This time, beIN held discussions with German free-to-air broadcasters to see if their stance had changed. It hadn't, and due to their unwillingness to encrypt their signal, beIN was only open to deals with pay-television broadcasters – due to their encryption – and geo-blocked websites.

There is understood to have been interest from Sky, although they ended their pursuit for the rights in December after failing to agree a fee.

OTT platform DAZN – owned by digital media specialists Perform – is also thought to have been priced out of a deal early this month, with its cut-off point for a deal thought to have been about €500,000.

There is also said to have been interest in the rights from online channel Sportdeutschland.tv, majority owned by media group ProSiebenSat.1.

DKB's motivation

DKB is not monetising the rights – it has not sold any advertising inventory around its coverage and all matches are available for free.

One local rights expert said DKB had received some money toward its costs from health insurer AOK, which is a shirt sponsor of the men's national team, in return for some advertising inventory.

Local rights experts regard the DKB deal as a marketing ploy for two reasons. First, having agreed a last-minute deal when there was a risk the tournament would not be broadcast will position it positively. Second, it was keen for the tournament to be broadcast in Germany to showcase its sponsorship of the German federation.

DKB is the shorts sponsor of the German national team in a deal worth about €300,000 per year, according to research from *Sports Sponsorship Insider*. It also title sponsors the Handball-Bundesliga – the German top-tier league – in a deal worth about €2m per year.

The bank is showing geo-blocked coverage of the IHF World Championship on the handball.dkb.de website. BeIN had few concerns about live coverage in Germany only being available on a website due to the high level of broadband and mobile penetration in the country.

Additional IHF coverage

BeIN and Pitch have secured additional non-live coverage of the IHF men's World Championship with several major media companies in Germany.

Highlights clips and/or news access rights have been acquired by public-service broadcasters ARD and ZDF; publishing company Axel Springer; ProSiebenSat.1; commercial broadcaster RTL; the SID news agency; Sky; and sports broadcaster Sport1. These deals are based on a rate card where a buyer pays a fixed cost per minute of coverage. ◆

FOOTBALL

Agencies continue to bid low for Primeira Liga in second round

By Callum McCarthy

Second-round bids for Portuguese Primeira Liga international rights have once again fallen below Sport TV's expectations, despite a five-way agency shootout.

In the second round of bidding, pay-television broadcaster Sport TV sought bids for all territories outside Portugal, Spain, France and sub-Saharan Africa for three seasons, from 2017-18 to 2019-20.

Rights in France, Spain and sub-Saharan Africa – three of the four most valuable markets for the rights – have already been sold. Rights in Spain were sold privately prior to the tender, while rights in France and sub-Saharan Africa were sold in the first round of bidding, which closed on November 30.

Second-round bids for rights in all remaining territories were made by MP & Silva and Infront Sports & Media. Lagardère Sports bid for rights in selected territories. Joint bids were made by Pitch International and Mediapro (all territories); and by IMG and B4 Capital (all territories excluding Asia-Pacific).

MP & Silva and Infront are each thought to have tabled bids of about €5m (\$5.2m) per season. The value of Mediapro and Pitch's bid is thought to be a little higher than this.

The IMG/B4 bid – in which B4 would likely buy on behalf of pay-television broadcaster Abu Dhabi Sports – is thought to be worth slightly more than Mediapro and Pitch's bid on account of B4's valuation of the rights in the Middle East. IMG has bid for all other territories apart from Asia-Pacific.

It is thought all parties would seek to package the Primeira Liga with other club or national team football rights. Industry experts believe Lagardère would have the most difficult task in selling Primeira Liga rights as it has the fewest relevant football rights with which to package the league.

Bids for individual territories were allowed in the first round. In the second round, companies had to bid for at least one of the following defined regions: Asia-Pacific; Brazil; Europe; Latin America; the Middle East and North Africa; North America; and Oceania.

Prior to the first round, Sport TV was hoping for a total of between €12m and €13m per season, excluding sub-Saharan Africa. After global bids fell within the €6m to €7m range – and with certain rights now sold – Sport TV's expectation was lowered to €10m per season in the second round.

Done deals

Rights in Spain were not included in the original tender as these had already been sold privately to Mediapro. The agency will pay about €1m per season and is expected to exploit them on its commercial broadcaster Gol (*TV Sports Markets* 20:21).

Rights in France and in sub-Saharan Africa were sold in the first round of bidding, which closed on November 30.

In France, telco Altice will pay about the same as in its current deal for the 2016-17 season – €600,000 per season. Altice owns 25 per cent of Sport TV.

Pay-television operator Zap has acquired pay-television English-, French- and Portuguese-language rights across sub-Saharan Africa, from 2017-18 to 2019-20, in a deal viewed as a formality by rival broadcasters and agencies because Zap is owned by Portuguese telco Nos, which part-owns Sport TV. There was surprise from some African experts that these rights were even tendered.

Zap has held these rights across sub-Saharan Africa since 2010-11, when it took over from pay-television broadcaster SuperSport. It has warehoused English- and French-language rights due to piracy concerns.

Multiple industry sources believe Zap's new deal to be worth in excess of €10m per season, up from €8m per season for the same rights in its current deal. But some local experts strongly dispute this, saying the rights are currently worth between €2m and €2.5m per season.

A useful comparison is with pay-television operator Canal Plus Afrique's deal for French-language Ligue 1 rights across sub-Saharan Africa. Canal Plus pays about €12m per season, from 2015-16 to 2017-18 (*TV Sports Markets* 19:16). It is thought to have about 2.2m pay-television subscribers in Francophone Africa.

Zap, a Portuguese-language service operating mainly in Angola and Mozambique, currently has between 250,000 and 300,000 subscribers. This is down from over 500,000 subscribers in 2008, prior to the crash in the price of oil. Oil is Angola's main export and the backbone of its economy.

English-, French- and Portuguese-language rights in sub-Saharan Africa were made available as a single package in the first round of Sport TV's tender. A package of English- and French-language rights were also available, but Portuguese-language rights could not be bought separately.

Free-to-air and pay-television broadcaster Kwesé Sports submitted a bid for all rights in sub-Saharan Africa. SuperSport elected not to bid.

Agency apathy

Despite the quantity of competition, agencies are largely apathetic about the rights and aren't relishing the prospect of taking them to market.

Bidders are enthused about the Primeira Liga's promise as an international property, and can understand why Sport TV value the product so highly. However, the league has very little history as an international product as this is the first time the rights have been tendered as a centralised package.

Agencies believe it will take two or three three-season cycles before the property's commercial potential can be reached. Most agency bidders would have preferred a longer term than the three seasons offered.

Multiple bidders complained to Sport TV about their appointment of the European Broadcasting Union as the technical service provider. The EBU is thought to be asking for up to €1,200 per match, per territory. In many territories, these costs could outweigh the total rights fee should a broadcaster air more than one match per week.

One agency bidder said they are concerned about the long-term future of Sport TV's 10-season domestic and international rights deals with Primeira Liga clubs. In December 2015 and January 2016, telcos Nos and Altice acquired rights to the 18 top-flight clubs, prior to Altice taking a stake in Sport TV (*TV Sports Markets* 20:1).

Many of these deals will last for 10 seasons, despite Portugal's competition authority, the Autoridade da Concorrência, ruling that media-rights deals with professional football clubs must be limited to three seasons. ◆

FOOTBALL

Bids in for Argentine football but questions remain unanswered

By Richard Welbirg

Argentina's Primera División is beset by uncertainty as a leaderless football association – its government funding withdrawn and a new season imminent – fields offers for its media rights and searches for a new president.

The relatively abrupt end to the Fútbol para Todos programme – via which the Argentine government paid to ensure the top-tier league was shown on free-to-air television – has brought the rights to South America's second-strongest league on the market, and attracted some of the region's biggest players.

But there are questions over whether the Asociación del Fútbol Argentino's current management can legally sign off on any deal – it has been without a president since Luis Segura was removed amid fraud allegations last June.

And there is no possibility AFA presidential elections can be held before the new season begins: these are planned for April at the earliest. The 2017 Primera season is slated to begin on February 3. It is uncertain how the season will be broadcast.

Several experts consulted by *TV Sports Markets* said it would be unsurprising for the government, AFA and free-to-air broadcasters to agree an ad-hoc continuation of last season's broadcast arrangements. Some said it was also possible the AFA may delay the start of the season.

Equally, the AFA's management and the clubs could accept an offer from one of the interested parties, despite this potentially undermining the election of any new president.

AFA management also has to placate its clubs, which are claiming non-payment of Fútbol para Todos revenues in May, June, July and December, and partial payments in October and November.

Fox/Turner favourites, for now

Negotiations are advanced between the AFA and a joint venture between pay-television broadcaster Fox Sports Latin America and US media group Turner. Last November, the venture made a bid to acquire global Primera rights over 15 years from 2017 to 2032. This initial offer was for ARS2bn (€132m/\$138m) in the first season, rising thereafter.

It was later increased to ARS2.2bn in the first season. But this is some way short of the ARS3.5bn per year thought to be sought by the clubs, which must ratify any deal accepted by the AFA.

Fox is one of the three major pan-regional sports broadcasters, alongside ESPN Latin America and DirecTV.

Turner has made a policy of investing in sport in South America. It acquired Brazilian broadcaster Esporte Interativo in January 2015 and has since turned it into a competitive pay-television player.

ESPN Latin America and the Mediapro agency have also joined together to express interest in the rights. Though yet to make a formal offer, they are discussing a five-year term at a similar annual value to the second Fox/Turner bid.

Under the proposal, ESPN would broadcast coverage in Argentina and likely across the rest of Latin America. Mediapro would handle production and international rights distribution.

Presidential election

After Segura was removed – charged with misappropriation of Fútbol para Todos funds – football’s global governing body, Fifa, appointed a ‘normalisation committee’.

It had several jobs: running the daily affairs of the AFA, revising its statutes to bring them in line with current Fifa standards, and organising elections by June 30, 2017 at the latest.

Candidates for the presidency have not yet declared, though an early favourite is Marcelo Tinelli, vice-president of San Lorenzo and host of *ShowMatch*, one of Argentina’s highest-rating television shows.

Tinelli ran against Segura in the farcical election of December 2015, which was abandoned after 75 voters somehow produced a 38-38 tie. He withdrew as a candidate ahead of the rescheduled elections in June 2016, which were in any case pre-empted by Segura’s removal and Fifa’s involvement. Tinelli has a good relationship with the top clubs and is involved in the current media-rights negotiations.

Fútbol para Todos

From 1991 to 2009, Primera División rights were held by Televisión Satelital Codificada, a joint venture between Grupo Clarín and the Torneos y Competencias agency. Its final contract was slated to run for seven seasons, from 2007-08 to 2013-14, but when Primera División clubs ran into severe financial troubles, putting the 2009-10 season in jeopardy, the AFA asked TSC for more money.

It refused, and the AFA broke the contract in August 2009. Instead, it accepted an offer from Cristina Kirchner’s government for the state broadcaster to show matches.

The government offered ARS600m in the 2009-10 season. The contract was set to run until 2018-19. Mauricio Macri was elected president in October 2015. His government confirmed the cancellation of Fútbol para Todos almost a year later.

Overall, the Argentine state paid about ARS9.5bn to the clubs, via the AFA, between 2009 and 2016. ◆

FOOTBALL

NOS pays 10% more for Euro 2020 rights in the Netherlands

By Robin Jellis

Dutch public-service broadcaster NOS has agreed to pay an increase of just over eight per cent for rights to Euro 2020, compared to Euro 2016.

It is understood NOS will pay about €26m (\$27.2m) for Euro 2020, up from about €24m for Euro 2016.

The deal was agreed with Uefa, European football's governing body, and CAA Eleven, Uefa's sales agent for its national team competitions.

The rights were tendered on November 7 with bids due by December 6. The deal was announced on December 23. NOS acquired the rights after one round of bidding.

There was limited competition for the rights. There was interest from commercial broadcasters RTL and SBS, although it is unclear whether either bid. Local experts feel the rights are too expensive for RTL or SBS to seriously challenge NOS.

Dutch listed-events legislation requires all European Championship matches to be shown on free-to-air television, limiting the value of the rights in the country.

But the price was propped up as there is strong interest in the national football team and NOS earns high viewing figures for major tournaments.

Furthermore, Amsterdam will host four Euro 2020 matches – the tournament is being played in 13 European cities as part of its 60th anniversary celebrations. If the Dutch national team qualifies for the tournament, it would play at least two matches in the Amsterdam Arena.

Uefa European Championship rights fees in the Netherlands

Tournament	Broadcaster	Value (€m)
Euro 2020	NOS	26
Euro 2016	NOS	24
Euro 2012	NOS	18
Euro 2008	NOS	21.5

Source: TV Sports Markets Rights Tracker

The broadcaster said it had earned strong ratings for its coverage of Euro 2016 despite the failure of the Dutch national team to qualify.

In a public statement, NOS director Jan de Jong said: “The time that NOS could broadcast all sports is over, but the most important sport is still with us: the Olympics, the [Fifa] World Cup and now also the 2020 European Championship.”

NOS holds rights to the 2018 and 2022 Fifa World Cups via its membership of the European Broadcasting Union. The EBU’s March 2012 deal for the 2018 and 2022 tournaments – covering 37 territories – is worth between €310m and €315m (*TV Sports Markets* 16:7).

In March 2016, NOS sublicensed rights in the Netherlands to the 2018 and 2020 Olympic Games from sports broadcaster Eurosport in a deal worth about €20m (*TV Sports Markets* 20:6).

Qualifier and Nations League rights

Uefa tendered rights to European Qualifier and Nations League matches at the same time as Euro 2020. The governing body is understood to have gone through several rounds of bidding for all European Qualifier and Nations League matches from 2018-19 to 2021-22.

For first- and second-party rights, Uefa is understood to have closed the tender without agreeing a deal. It will now hold direct talks with interested broadcasters.

For third-party rights, Uefa went through three rounds of bidding and is now in an exclusive stage of negotiation with one broadcaster.

Rights to first- and second-party Netherlands matches in European Qualifiers from 2014-15 to 2017-18 are held by NOS in a deal worth about €18m. Rights to third-party European Qualifier matches are held by pay-television broadcaster Ziggo over the same period in a deal worth about €4m (*TV Sports Markets* 17:23).

Following its investment in Euro 2020, one local expert said it may be difficult for NOS to acquire rights to first- and second-party European Qualifier as well as Nations League matches over the four seasons from 2018-19 to 2021-22.

Friendly matches of the Dutch national team, currently sold by the Dutch football federation – the KNVB – will be sold by Uefa from 2018-19 onward.

Netherlands friendly matches from 2014-15 to 2017-18 were bought by channel syndicator Fox Networks Group for about €800,000 per match. ◆

REGULATION

Lagardère's Caf deal with beIN challenged by Egyptian authority

By Callum McCarthy

The Egyptian Competition Authority's accusation of anticompetitive practices against the Confederation of African Football is thought to be the first stage of the Egyptian government's attempt to erode the power of Qatari pay-television broadcaster beIN Sports in the country.

On January 4, the ECA accused Caf of contravening Egyptian competition law – specifically laws surrounding abuse of a dominant position.

It claims Caf's \$1bn (€888m) deal with the Lagardère Sports agency, from 2017 to 2028, for global rights to the Africa Cup of Nations and several other Caf properties has led “to the elimination of competition in the different sectors of the broadcasting market” in Egypt.

A complaint to the ECA is thought to have been made by the Egypt-based Presentation Sports agency, which claims its bid for global Caf rights – made 14 months after the rights were sold to Lagardère in June 2015 – was not fairly considered by Caf.

Experts believe the ECA may have a strong case to bring against Caf should it be able to prove the confederation's 12-year deal with Lagardère has adversely affected Egypt's pay-television market.

Article 5 of Egypt's competition law extends its reach to “acts committed abroad, should these acts result in the prevention, restriction or harm of the freedom of competition in Egypt”.

Angelique Bret, a senior competition lawyer at Pinsent Masons, told *TV Sports Markets* this week that if the ECA can prove Caf's deal with Lagardère has extended beIN's dominance of the pay-television market, beIN's exclusive deal for Caf rights in Egypt could be in jeopardy. BeIN acquired rights to all Caf events across the Middle East and North Africa in a deal with Lagardère, from 2017 to 2024.

“There would have to be an analysis of why it's anticompetitive, and of the deal's impact on the downstream market,” she said. “What struck me here is if they [Lagardère] do give rights to someone else, beIN is going to have a problem with that because they've paid for exclusivity. Ultimately, the parties will renegotiate on price, if anything.

Both Caf and Lagardère have strenuously denied breaking any rules or regulations.

Presentation Sports

Presentation Sports was acquired by Egyptian steel and media tycoon Ahmed Abou Hashima in June 2016. He had also acquired commercial and pay-television broadcaster ONTV in May 2016. ONTV immediately acquired rights to the Egyptian Premier League for the 2016-17 season, while Presentation became the league's title sponsor.

ONTV also acquired rights to Egypt's World Cup qualifying match against Ghana from the B4 Capital agency. Local sources regard this as a watershed moment as these rights are particularly prestigious.

Local experts believe Presentation Sports and ONTV are preparing to challenge beIN, which dominates sports broadcasting across Mena, for sports rights both in Egypt and across the region more widely. BeIN currently holds free-to-air and pay-television rights to all Caf competitions, from 2017 to 2024, via a sublicensing agreement with Lagardère.

The ECA requested that pay-television rights to the 2017 Africa Cup of Nations should be shared in Egypt, though it did not name the broadcaster or broadcasters with which the rights should be shared. As it is, beIN remains the sole and exclusive broadcaster of the event in Egypt. Public-service broadcaster ERTU did not negotiate with beIN for free-to-air rights. ◆

CYCLING

ARD set to renew Tour de France rights for small fee increase

By Robin Jellis

German public-service broadcaster ARD is close to renewing its non-exclusive deal for Tour de France cycling rights at a small fee increase.

The two-year deal – which will cover 2017 and 2018 – will be worth just over €2.5m (\$2.6m) per year, and is being agreed in direct talks between ARD and the Tour's commercial rights-holder, Amaury Sport Organisation. Agreed in principle, the deal is yet to be formally approved.

In January 2015, ARD returned to broadcasting the Tour with a two-year deal, covering 2015 and 2016, worth just under €2.5m per year (*TV Sports Markets* 19:1). ARD did not broadcast the Tour between 2012 and 2014 due to its concerns over doping in the sport.

There is not thought to have been any competition for the rights from other broadcasters. This is mainly because there is already coverage of the Tour in Germany via Eurosport 1, which is available free-to-air.

Sports broadcaster Eurosport holds Tour de France rights across Europe as part of a wider European Broadcasting Union deal, from 2016 to 2019 (*TV Sports Markets* 17:17).

Both parties happy to renew

ASO was happy to renew with ARD due to its wide reach and the quality of its production, as well as the fact it will likely receive greater exposure in a new deal.

For the 2015 and 2016 editions of the Tour, ARD showed a maximum of 90 minutes of coverage per stage. It is understood the broadcaster will show more in the new deal, although the exact details are yet to be finalised.

Talks over a renewal began after the conclusion of last year's Tour, in July, and are now close to completion.

The broadcaster viewed its revived coverage of the Tour as a test, and although its coverage has received relatively high ratings, it was keen to agree to another 'test period'.

ARD received an average audience of 1.2m per stage in 2016, an audience share of close to 10 per cent. This is relatively impressive given the Tour was sometimes up against live Uefa Euro 2016 matches.

The fee paid by ARD is considerably lower than what it paid, together with fellow public-service broadcaster ZDF, in previous deals.

From 2005 to 2008, ARD/ZDF contributed about €8m per year to a wider EBU deal worth just over €20m per year. From 2009 to 2011, ARD/ZDF contributed about €6m per year to an EBU deal worth about €32.5m per year (*TV Sports Markets* 15:6).

There is reasonably strong interest in the performance of German sprinters Marcel Kittel and André Greipel, each of whom won one stage in last year's Tour. Kittel came second and Greipel fourth in the race for the green jersey.

The 2017 edition of the Tour will include two stages in Germany, giving ARD a greater incentive to renew. An individual time trial will be held in Düsseldorf on July 1 as part of the Grand Départ, while the second stage on July 2 will be between Düsseldorf and Liège.

Tour of Germany

It is understood that ASO and ARD also discussed the possibility of including rights to the Tour of Germany in the deal for the Tour de France.

The Tour of Germany, formerly known as the Deutschland Tour, was discontinued after the 2008 edition after several doping cases were revealed. It is set to return to the cycling calendar in 2018.

ASO is yet to secure a domestic broadcast partner and held lengthy talks with ARD about a deal. Although the full schedule is yet to be decided, it is understood that ARD has tentatively agreed to show coverage. ◆

FOOTBALL

Government deal with FEF keeps Ecuador football off the market

By Richard Welbirg

Ecuador's football federation and its government have reached an agreement that will ensure the existing contract for the country's domestic league will run to the end of its term in 2017.

Rights to the Primera Categoría Serie A and Serie B are underwritten by the Ecuadorean government in a five-year deal, from 2013 to 2017, worth an average of about \$18m (€17.2m) per year.

They are exploited on government-controlled channels Ecuador TV, GamaTV and TC Televisión.

But the government has been late in paying instalments to the Federación Ecuatoriana de Fútbol since 2016. With an election pending in 2017, many thought the government likely to pull out of the contract altogether in order to allocate the funds elsewhere.

As a result, the FEF began an ad-hoc search for a new broadcast partner to take over from the forthcoming season, which starts on January 29. This attracted interest from:

- pan-regional pay-television operator DirecTV, which already sublicenses some rights from the free-to-air broadcasters
- Tenfield, the agency owned by Uruguayan businessman Paco Casal. The agency owns pan-regional pay-television channel Go!TV
- and global agencies, including IMG and Lagardère Sports.

Following the resolution of the dispute between the FEF and government, the rights are unlikely to be sold until later in 2017. ◆

HANDBALL

Sky takes up option to renew EHF Champions League rights

By Robin Jellis

German pay-television broadcaster Sky triggered a clause to renew EHF Champions League rights late last year, extending its deal until 2019-20.

Sky's new three-season deal, from 2017-18 to 2019-20, will be worth close to €1.4m (\$1.5m) per season. Its existing three-season deal, from 2014-15 to 2016-17, is worth about €1.2m per season (*TV Sports Markets* 18:17).

The extension was agreed in three-way talks between Sky, the European Handball Federation and the MP & Silva agency. Sky had to trigger the renewal option – which is included in its current contract – by December 31, 2016, which it did.

MP & Silva is the EHF's global media-rights adviser for its club competitions in a seven-season deal, from 2013-14 to 2019-20 (*TV Sports Markets* 17:13). Because Sky took up an option to extend the deal, the rights were never offered to other local broadcasters.

Sky and the EHF are now discussing scheduling options, which may include the possibility of certain EHF Champions League matches being shown on Sky Sport News, which is available free-to-air.

Sky's new deal means the value of Champions League rights has recovered to its previous high. Sports broadcaster Eurosport held the rights in a deal worth €1.4m per season from 2009-10 to 2012-13.

The property complements Sky's other handball rights. Last November, Sky agreed a joint deal with public-service broadcasters ARD and ZDF for live domestic Handball-Bundesliga rights. The deal will run from 2017-18 to 2022-23 and is worth a combined total of about €5m per season (*TV Sports Markets* 20:21).

Sky acquired rights to the 2015 men's IHF World Championship in a deal worth about €250,000, but the broadcaster failed to secure rights to the 2017 edition (see separate story, page 20).

Sky's Champions League rights are exclusive in Germany and Austria, and non-exclusive in Switzerland. Non-exclusive rights in Switzerland will also be held by pay-television broadcaster Teleclub (owned by telco Swisscom) following the take up of a similar option – its new deal will run from 2017-18 to 2019-20, replacing its current three-season deal, from 2014-15 to 2016-17. ♦

FOOTBALL

Globo heads off rival interest to renew Copa do Brasil contract

By Richard Welbirg

An unsolicited Esporte Interativo offer drove media group Globo to more than treble its fee for domestic Copa do Brasil rights in a deal with the Confederação Brasileira de Futebol last month.

Globo will pay about BRL320m (€93m/\$98m) per year for exclusive rights to the club knockout competition over five years, from 2018 to 2022. Its existing deal runs for three years, from 2015 to 2017, and is worth about BRL100m per year.

Free-to-air and pay-television broadcaster Esporte Interativo is thought to have offered just under BRL300m per year for the rights in March 2016. *TV Sports Markets* understands the CBF did not respond to the offer, preferring to renew with Globo in direct talks.

Over the past year, Esporte Interativo has mounted a strong challenge to Globo's dominance of domestic Brazilian football, forcing up the value of top-tier Série A and state championship rights (*TV Sports Markets* 20:22).

Globo shows the Copa do Brasil on its regional free-to-air channels and on the SporTV channels of its pay-television broadcaster Globosat.

Neither pay-television broadcasters ESPN Brasil nor Fox Sports Brasil made an offer for the rights.

Fox and Globo have a wide-ranging rights-swap deal between 2013 and 2018, which includes Fox receiving exclusive rights to two matches from each round of the cup (*TV Sports Markets* 17:2).

Coverage was also available on ESPN during the 2015 and 2016 seasons, as the broadcaster agreed a sublicensing deal with Globo for non-exclusive rights to all matches. Both ESPN and Fox are thought to be in talks with Globo over sublicensing certain rights for the coming seasons.

The 2017 Copa do Brasil will begin on February 8. ◆

BADMINTON

Astro expands investment in domestic badminton association

By Richard Welbirg

Astro's renewed deal with the Badminton Association of Malaysia will see the telco invest much more in promotion but is largely unchanged in cash terms.

Astro announced that the deal, which has been backdated to run for five years from November 2016 until the end of October 2021, is worth MYR66m (€13.8m/\$14.8m).

TV Sports Markets understands that only about MYR10m, or MYR2m per year, of this is a cash rights fee. As such, there is little change in value from the previous four-year deal, which ran from November 2012 to October 2016.

Astro's total commitment includes athlete incentives as well as production, promotion and airtime costs.

The telco's larger investment in the property has been driven by high ratings for its badminton coverage, particularly during the 2016 Rio Olympics. Along with RTM and telco Telekom Malaysia, Astro is thought to have paid \$10m to acquire rights to the 2016 Games, in a deal with the Dentsu agency.

For the first time, Astro will be the exclusive rights-holder and host broadcaster of BAM events in Malaysia and Brunei. Under the previous deal, the association could show select events on public-service broadcaster RTM.

Astro also holds rights in the country to Badminton World Federation events in a four-year deal, from 2014 to 2017, worth \$4.5m per year (*TV Sports Markets* 20:18). ◆

DARTS

PDC trebles rights fees in key Dutch renewal with RTL

By Richard Welbirg

Dutch commercial broadcaster RTL paid close to a three-fold increase to strike a long-term deal for Professional Darts Corporation rights in the Netherlands.

Agreed earlier this month, RTL's new deal will run for three years, from 2017 to 2019, and is worth about €2.5m (\$2.6m) per year. The broadcaster has an option to extend the agreement by two additional years, covering 2020 and 2021. The deal was struck with sports promotion company Matchroom Sport, the majority shareholder in the PDC.

It is an increase of about 194 per cent on the value of RTL's current deal. The new agreement starts immediately, overwriting the two-year extension – for 2017 and 2018 – which RTL had activated on its previous three-year deal, from 2014 to 2016.

That initial deal was worth about €700,000 per year, which rose to about €850,000 per year when the extension was activated (*TV Sports Markets* 20:11).

The huge increase in the new deal was driven by the recent success of Dutch players, particularly 2017 PDC World Championship winner Michael van Gerwen. Van Gerwen's victory over defending champion Gary Anderson on January 2 was seen by 2.2m viewers (a 33-per-cent share) on RTL 7. ♦

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MEDIA RIGHTS DEALS

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FOOTBALL

- ◆ Brazilian Série A club Palmeiras announced a six-year pay-television rights deal with Esporte Interativo, from 2019 to 2024. The deal was reported in *TV Sports Markets* 20:22.
- ◆ Brazilian media company Globo renewed its deal for the Copa do Brasil domestic knockout competition (page 35).
- ◆ Football Federation Australia signed a six-season deal with pay-television broadcaster Fox Sports (page 17).
- ◆ The Fox Sports division of US network Fox signed a local rights deal with Major League Soccer's Sporting Kansas City. The Fox Sports Kansas City regional network will broadcast live coverage of all matches not shown on national television. Selected matches will also be shown on Fox Sports Midwest.
- ◆ The German Football League agreed deals for rights to the top two divisions – the Bundesliga and 2.Bundesliga – covering Austria, Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg and South Tyrol. From 2017-18 to 2020-21, pay-television broadcaster Sky will hold exclusive rights to 572 of the 612 matches per season across the two leagues; sports broadcaster Eurosport will show live matches not on Sky; and OTT sports platform DAZN will hold digital clips rights.
- ◆ US pay-television channel GoTV acquired exclusive live rights for Italian club competition the Supercoppa Italiana, which took place on December 23.
- ◆ Dutch public-service broadcaster NOS acquired rights to the Uefa Euro 2020 national team tournament (page 27).
- ◆ Norwegian commercial and pay-television broadcaster TV2 agreed a two-season deal for rights to English club competition the FA Cup in 2016-17 and 2017-18.
- ◆ DittoTV, the digital arm of pay-television operator Zee Entertainment Enterprises, agreed a deal for digital rights to the I-League, the top football league in India. The deal was struck with pay-television broadcaster Ten Sports, the I-League's domestic rights-holder.
- ◆ Canadian pay-television sports broadcaster TSN extended its deal for English-language rights to North America's Major League Soccer for five years, from 2017 to 2021. But its sister broadcaster RDS lost out on French-language rights to rival TVA Sports, which agreed a deal over the same duration.
- ◆ Mexican Liga MX clubs León and Pachuca signed two-year domestic rights deals – for 2017 and 2018 – with media conglomerate Grupo Imagen. Their matches will be broadcast on new free-to-air channel Imagen Television.
- ◆ Concacaf, the governing body of football in the Caribbean, North America and Central America, selected the Lagardère Sports agency to market the rights for its Gold Cup national team tournament outside the US. The deal covers the 2017 and 2019 Gold Cups.

MEDIA RIGHTS DEALS

DECEMBER 15 TO JANUARY 18

OTHER SPORTS

- ◆ **American Football:** Chinese social network Sina Weibo agreed a deal to stream live NFL games. Sina Weibo will provide coverage in China of the final Sunday night game of the regular-season campaign in Week 17, three play-off games, the Super Bowl, as well as six regular-season games that were streamed over the final two weekends of 2016.
- ◆ **Archery:** World Archery, the sport's global governing body, extended its deal with international sports broadcaster Eurosport for four years, from 2017 to 2020.
- ◆ **Athletics:** The IMG agency agreed a deal to distribute the global media rights for Nitro Athletics, a new sports entertainment series. IMG will work alongside the Athletics Australia governing body and Australian commercial broadcaster Seven. Seven will host broadcast the inaugural event, which takes place across three nights in Melbourne, on February 4, 9 and 11.
- ◆ **Badminton:** Malaysian telco Astro expanded a rights deal with the Badminton Association of Malaysia for five years, until the end of October 2021 (page 36).
- ◆ **Basketball:** New Zealand media company NZME acquired rights to the 2017 domestic National Basketball League men's competition. NZME will stream coverage of at least two regular-season games per week on the website of the *New Zealand Herald* newspaper.
- ◆ **Basketball:** New Zealand free-to-air broadcaster Maori Television acquired rights in 2017 to one NBL game per week, on Sunday afternoons. It will also show delayed coverage of a second game every week on a Saturday.
- ◆ **Basketball:** NBA TV, the pay-television channel operated by the North American league, extended its deal with the Euroleague continental club competition. From January 3, NBA TV will air up to 20 games during the remainder of the 2016-17 Euroleague season.
- ◆ **Boxing:** French pay-television broadcaster SFR Sport signed a four-year deal to cover the World Series of Boxing event. The deal runs from 2017 to 2020 and covers France, Luxembourg, Switzerland and French-speaking Belgium.
- ◆ **Cricket:** UK commercial broadcaster Channel 5 agreed a deal to show live coverage of Australia's Big Bash League Twenty20 competition under a sublicensing deal with UK pay-television broadcaster BT Sport.
- ◆ **Cricket:** Cricket Australia signed a rights deal with Fijian commercial broadcaster Fiji TV for the Big Bash League. Fiji TV signed a two-season deal covering 2016-17 and 2017-18.
- ◆ **Cricket:** Cricket Australia signed deals in Papua New Guinea with public-service broadcaster NBC PNG for men's and women's national team games played in Australia in 2018, and commercial broadcaster EMTV covering the 2016-17 and 2017-18 Big Bash League seasons.
- ◆ **Darts:** Dutch commercial broadcaster RTL extended a rights deal for events operated by the Professional Darts Corporation. The three-year agreement with PDC promoter Matchroom Sport runs from 2017 to 2019 (page 37).

MEDIA RIGHTS DEALS

DECEMBER 15 TO JANUARY 18

- ◆ **Esports:** Major League Gaming, which hosts and streams esports events, agreed a deal for YouTube to carry live coverage of its MLG Vegas contest on December 16-18. Coverage was also available via MLG.tv.
- ◆ **Esports:** Bamtech, the video technology business of Major League Baseball's Advanced Media division, will pay Riot Games a minimum of \$300m (€287m) through to 2023 for exclusive global streaming rights to the company's League of Legends tournaments.
- ◆ **Futsal:** Eurosport acquired rights for the Liga Nacional de Fútbol Sala, the Spanish futsal league, for three years from 2017 to 2019. Coverage will be shown on Eurosport 2.
- ◆ **Golf:** The PGA Tour agreed a new partnership with Twitter under which the social media platform will distribute more than 70 hours of live coverage from 31 tournaments over the remainder of the 2016-17 season.
- ◆ **Handball:** German pay-television broadcaster Sky Deutschland acquired rights to two of the German men's team's warm-up games for the 2017 World Championship. The games against Romania and Austria on January 3 and January 9, respectively, were shown free-to-air via the Sky Sport News HD channel.
- ◆ **Handball:** Sky Deutschland extended an agreement with the European Handball Federation for exclusive rights in Germany and Austria to its Champions League club competition. The three-season deal runs from 2017-18 to 2019-20 (page 34).
- ◆ **Handball:** German banking group Deutsche Kreditbank acquired exclusive rights to the 2017 men's World Championship (page 20).
- ◆ **Handball:** The German handball federation (DHB) acquired public-viewing rights to the 2017 men's World Championship. The DHB said it would pass on the rights to clubs and associations free of charge.
- ◆ **Horse Racing:** UK horse-racing pay-television broadcaster Racing UK showed unencrypted coverage of the New Year's Eve fixture at Newbury racecourse, alongside action from Warwick, after commercial broadcaster Channel 4 withdrew the fixture from its schedule. The Newbury card, plus seven races from Warwick, were available for free on Racing UK and live-streamed on its website.
- ◆ **Horse Racing:** Irish commercial broadcaster TV3 entered into a four-year partnership with Racecourse Media Group, the holding company responsible for media and data rights involving 37 of the UK's premier racecourses. The agreement began with the January 1 meeting at Cheltenham and runs until the end of 2020.
- ◆ **Horse Racing:** Racecourse Media Group acquired all audiovisual rights for events at racecourses in Leicester, Stratford-on-Avon and Taunton from April 1, 2018.
- ◆ **Ice Hockey:** Digital sports news agency SendtoNews signed a distribution deal for NHL short-form digital content over the remainder of the 2016-17 season.

MEDIA RIGHTS DEALS

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- ◆ **Ice Hockey:** Finnish commercial and pay-television broadcaster MTV3 extended rights deals with the Infront Sports & Media agency covering a range of top events. The deals cover the International Ice Hockey Federation's World Championship national team tournament from 2018 to 2023, the Champions Hockey League European club competition from 2017-18 to 2022-23, and this year's Spengler Cup.
- ◆ **Mixed Martial Arts:** Media group Sony Pictures Networks India agreed a deal to broadcast the inaugural edition of Indian promotion the Super Fight League, which runs from January 20 to February 25. The rights cover the Indian subcontinent.
- ◆ **Motorcycling:** The NBC Sports Group division of media company NBCUniversal acquired rights for the 2017 American Flat Track series. The NBCSN pay-television channel will show all 18 rounds in one-hour, tape-delayed broadcasts on Thursday evenings.
- ◆ **Motorsport:** Pay-television broadcaster Fox Sports signed a two-season deal, covering 2017 and 2018, for exclusive rights in Italy to the World Rally Championship.
- ◆ **Olympic Games:** Lithuanian free-to-air broadcaster TV3 acquired rights for the 2018 winter Games in Pyeongchang and the 2020 summer Games in Tokyo. Reports claimed the Lithuanian Olympic Fund had acquired the rights from US media company Discovery Communications and awarded them to TV3.
- ◆ **Rugby Union:** Public-service broadcaster France Télévisions and sports broadcaster Eurosport agreed deals with the Fédération Française de Rugby for the Top 8 women's tournament in France. The deals will run until at least the end of the 2016-17 season.
- ◆ **Rugby Union:** France Télévisions agreed a deal to show the 2017 Women's World Cup, which will take place in Ireland from August 9-27. It was not confirmed whether the broadcaster would show the whole tournament or just matches featuring the French national team.
- ◆ **Taekwondo:** South Korean commercial broadcaster SBS extended its deal with the World Taekwondo Federation for events outside South Korea. The new four-year deal runs from 2017 to 2020. SBS Sport will show the WTF's Grand Prix series, World Championships and World Team Championships to Korean viewers. Rights to events in Korea will be sold in a separate process.
- ◆ **Tennis:** Media company Sony Pictures Networks India acquired live rights for the Chennai Open men's ATP World Tour event, which ran from January 2-8.
- ◆ **Tennis:** UK public-service broadcaster the BBC signed a seven-year deal with Britain's Lawn Tennis Association for rights to the Queen's Club Championship, from 2018 to 2024.
- ◆ **Tennis:** Spanish public-service broadcaster TVE agreed a deal for rights to Women's Tennis Association Premier-level tournaments in 2017.
- ◆ **Tennis:** The United States Tennis Association extended its deal with Japanese pay-television broadcaster Wowow for five years, from 2017 to 2021.

MEDIA RIGHTS DEALS

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◆ **Tennis:** Social media platform Twitter agreed a partnership with Seven for the 2017 Australian Open grand slam. Seven will show exclusive video content through the @7Tennis Twitter handle, with pre-roll ads from sponsors.

◆ **Wrestling:** Spanish commercial broadcaster Atresmedia signed a multi-year extension to its deal with the WWE. Atresmedia will continue to show *Raw* and *SmackDown* on its Neox channel.

MEDIA RIGHTS NEGOTIATIONS

◆ Uruguayan agency Tenfield said it was prepared to discuss a termination of its deal with the Uruguayan Football Association (AUF) after rival agency Euromerics Sports Marketing made a “unique and unrepeatabe” offer for domestic football rights. Euromerics has reportedly presented the AUF with an offer worth a basic \$68m (€63.4m) per year over five years, with the option for an automatic renewal on revised terms. Tenfield’s contract runs until 2025.

◆ The LeSports division of Chinese internet company LeEco reached a compromise over its rights fee for the English Premier League allowing it to continue its coverage. It had been reported that LeSports’s agreement with Super Sports Media Group, which holds Premier League rights in China and Macau from 2013-14 to 2018-19, could have been under threat amid financial problems at LeEco.

◆ Tennis Australia president Steve Healy ordered an independent review into whether a fellow board member had a conflict of interest during talks in 2013 to sell media rights to Seven West Media, according to news agency Fairfax Media.

The rights for the 2015 to 2019 cycle were awarded to Seven in a deal worth about A\$200m (€139m/\$145m) without a competitive bidding process. The existence of the review into an unnamed board member was disclosed in a defamation lawsuit filed in December in the Supreme Court of Victoria against Healy by former Tennis Australia board member Janet Young. Young is not thought to have been the subject of the original investigation. Tennis Australia did not reveal what the review found, but a spokesperson said the body is “very comfortable that no such conflict existed”.

◆ Multiple reports claimed Italian state broadcaster Rai was set to sign a two-year extension to its Giro d’Italia cycling rights.

◆ Multiple reports claimed that US wrestling organisation the WWE has agreed to add content from independent promoters to its WWE Network pay-television channel. UK-based Insane Championship Wrestling is reportedly set to be the first non-WWE promotion featured on WWE Network.

◆ The French football federation opened a tender process for domestic rights to the Coupe de France club knockout tournament. Bids are being sought for four seasons, from 2018-19 to 2021-22. Bids are due by February 10.

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- ◆ US media company 21st Century Fox reached an agreement with Sky over the terms of a recommended pre-conditional cash offer for the share of the pan-European pay-television broadcaster which Fox does not already own. Fox has said it will pursue a Scheme of Arrangement, requiring 75 per cent of Sky's voting independent shareholders to support the deal, which values Sky at £10.75 (€13/\$14) per share, or £18.5bn.
- ◆ Energy group SE acquired digital-terrestrial pay-television operator Boxer from Swedish terrestrial broadcast transmission service company Teracom.
- ◆ Media company Liberty Global and mobile phone operator Vodafone finalised an agreement to combine their operations in the Netherlands through a new joint venture. VodafoneZiggo will combine Ziggo's television and broadband activities with Vodafone Netherlands' mobile operations. It will have a combined revenue of more than €4bn (\$4.2bn).
- ◆ German media group ProSiebenSat.1 joined with French and Italian counterparts TF1 and Mediaset to form a partnership in the online video sector. Mediaset and TF1 invested in ProSiebenSat.1's premium multi-channel network Studio71, taking 5.5-per-cent and 6.1-per-cent stakes respectively. The investment values Studio71 at about €400m (\$419m).
- ◆ The OpenTV software subsidiary of digital security company Kudelski Group filed a lawsuit against the NFL for patent infringement. It alleges the NFL's streaming services and interactive video content infringed seven US patents owned by OpenTV.
- ◆ The International Olympic Committee, United States Olympic Committee and US media company NBCUniversal agreed to launch a US television channel under the 'Olympic Channel: Home of Team USA' brand in the second half of 2017. US telco AT&T and its satellite operator DirecTV have agreed to carry the channel, which will be distributed by NBCUniversal.
- ◆ US OTT streaming service fuboTV is to add more sports channels to its offering. From January, subscribers will have access to Fox Sports 1, NBCSN and NBA TV.
- ◆ NBA Digital partnered with daily fantasy sports operator FanDuel to develop a mobile game that seeks to provide fans with a second-screen experience during television broadcasts of games. NBA InPlay synchronises with live national broadcasts of NBA games.
- ◆ The NFL's 2016-17 regular-season suffered an eight-per-cent year-on-year drop in US television viewership, according to data obtained by ESPN.com. The average audience for a regular-season game was 16.5m, down 1.4m on 17.9m in the previous season. Total viewership for *Monday Night Football* on US sports broadcaster ESPN was down 12 per cent and *Sunday Night Football* on the NBC network fell 10 per cent.
- ◆ US media company Turner launched Turner Ignite Sports, a new sports marketing agency. The agency will develop intellectual property associated with Turner's sport media rights.
- ◆ US subscription video-on-demand service Hulu signed a carriage deal with the CBS network for channels including CBS Sports Network.

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- ◆ Christine McCarthy, chief financial officer of the Walt Disney media company, said US sports broadcaster ESPN's new sport subscription streaming service will launch this year.
- ◆ NBC Sports Group and Turner signed a long-term agreement to collaborate on sports-focused OTT streaming. NBC Sports will combine its Playmaker Media streaming service with Turner's iStreamPlanet platform.
- ◆ Virtual-reality company Mandt VR partnered with NFL team the Pittsburgh Steelers to deliver a VR video service for Steelers home games.
- ◆ US organisation TNA Wrestling launched an app for fans in the UK and Ireland. Total Access TNA Wrestling is available online and on mobile devices for £4.99 (€5.70/\$6.05) per month and will feature new weekly episodes of *Impact Wrestling*, as well as the *Inside Impact* weekly recap series, library content, pay-per-view events and *One Night Only* specials.
- ◆ UK pay-television broadcaster BT Sport simulcast the January 12 NBA clash in London between the Denver Nuggets and Indiana Pacers on social media platform Facebook, and provided free-to-air coverage via its BT Sport Showcase channel.
- ◆ David Clementi, the new chair of UK public-service broadcaster the BBC, called for a review of the 'crown jewels' list of sporting events reserved for free-to-air television in the country. He suggested golf's Open Championship ought to have been considered such an event and that its rights should not have been sold to pay-television broadcaster Sky.
- ◆ BeIN Sports France president Yousef Al-Obaidly said the pay-television broadcaster was on course for profitability despite a report by magazine *Capital* claiming beIN has lost a cumulative €1.033bn (\$1.072bn) since it launched in June 2012. Al-Obaidly said the broadcaster had enjoyed a "record year across every metric", with subscribers, revenues, distribution and viewership increasing.
- ◆ French media company Vivendi, the Alisports division of Chinese e-commerce giant Alibaba, Chinese conglomerate Dalian Wanda and US media group Liberty Media are reportedly among 10 entities bidding for a stake in Spanish agency Mediapro. Bidders are seeking to secure a stake of either 30 or 51 per cent in Imagina, the operator of Mediapro. Chinese conglomerate HNA Group, and venture capital funds Advent International and Pamplona Capital Management are also said to be interested.
- ◆ German media company Constantin Medien formed a new consulting unit. Simon Trägner, formerly managing director of German sponsorship agency akzio!, will join the Constantin Medien group as managing director of the new department. Matthias Reichert, currently director of media sales clients at German media group Sport1 Media, will join as managing director.
- ◆ Telco Telefónica signed a partnership with ESL through which its commercial brand in Spain, Movistar, will showcase content from the esports organisation. Telefónica will create a professional esports club, Movistar Riders, and a Movistar eSports channel, which will show

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events such as ESL One, ESL Intel Extreme and ESL Masters Series.

- ◆ The Fédération Française de Rugby and Ligue Nationale de Rugby agreed to shift the weekly Sunday afternoon Top 14 French rugby union match shown by pay-television broadcaster Canal Plus to 5pm local time. The new kick-off time will be introduced in February.
- ◆ Telco Telenet acquired rival Altice's businesses in Belgium and Luxembourg for €400m (\$418m).
- ◆ The European Broadcasting Union consortium of public-service broadcasters made a final call for national authorities to come to the aid of its member, Bosnia and Herzegovinian Radio and Television, amid the operator's ongoing funding struggles. The EBU's appeal to the Bosnian government was sent after BHRT was placed on sanctions due to mounting debts.
- ◆ Bulgarian telco Mtel launched three new sports channels. Mtel Sport 1, Mtel Sport 2 and EDGEsport will be available in high definition, with the launch dates staggered over the first quarter of 2017.
- ◆ Media company CSI Sports agreed carriage deals in: Estonia, with cable operator Starman; Latvia, with telco Lattelcom; and Lithuania, with cable operator Cgates.
- ◆ China Media Capital led a "multi-million-dollar" investment in Haiqiu Sports, the sports technology company co-founded by former China national team footballer Sun Jihai. Investment also came from media company Tencent and the Yuan Xun Fund.
- ◆ Chinese search giant Baidu announced plans to launch an initial public offering for its iQiyi video-streaming platform.
- ◆ Chinese internet company LeEco, whose subsidiaries include media platform LeSports, secured CNY16.8bn (€2.31bn/\$2.42bn) in strategic investment, chiefly from property developer Sunac China Holdings.
- ◆ International sports broadcaster Eleven Sports introduced a new subscription package in Singapore. Eleven Sports Pass will be available at SGD\$0.99 (€0.65/\$0.70) per week or SGD\$39.90 annually.
- ◆ The NBA streamed the January 8 game between the Sacramento Kings and the Golden State Warriors via Facebook in India. The game was available in the country through the official NBA, Kings and Warriors Facebook pages.
- ◆ Chivas TV, the in-house streaming platform of Mexican Liga MX football team Guadalajara, agreed a commercial partnership with Mexican OTT service Claro Video. Under the agreement, Claro Video will carry Chivas TV, offering the club's home matches on a pay-per-view basis. The deal covers the 2017 Clausura campaign.
- ◆ Latin American media platform Claro Sports partnered with Spanish sports media group Marca to set up new sports news and video sites in the region. The first is marcaclaro.com in Mexico. Further market-specific sites will launch throughout 2017.
- ◆ Telco Econet acquired the free-to-air broadcasting and production businesses of

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multi-territory commercial and pay-television broadcaster Modern Times Group in Ghana and Nigeria. The deal includes MTG's Ghanaian free-to-air terrestrial channel Viasat 1 and the operations of Modern African Productions in both countries. Econet will rebrand Viasat 1 as its Kwesé Free Sports channel.

◆ Econet launched its Kwesé Free Sports channel in Nigeria. Audiences will receive access to Kwesé on digital-terrestrial television in Abuja and on a free-to-air analogue basis in Lagos.

◆ Econet launched Kwesé Free Sports in Uganda. The channel will be available on a free-to-air basis through any set-top box.

◆ Boom.tv, a 3D live-streaming platform for esports, announced its beta launch and revealed it had raised \$3.5m (€3.3m) in funding from investors including First Round Capital, Tandem Capital, Crosscut Ventures, Betaworks, Boost VC and Bitkraft eSports Ventures.

◆ US virtual-reality company LiveLike partnered with sports media and technology company Deltatre to deliver VR solutions for a range of sporting events.

◆ Uefa research found the total cumulative live audience for Uefa Euro 2016 tournament was almost 5bn, with 600m viewers having watched part of Portugal's 1-0 extra-time victory against host France in the final.

◆ The International Ski Federation launched a new official mobile application carrying near-live clips, highlights and behind-the-scenes content.

◆ Vivendi chief executive Arnaud de Puyfontaine was reportedly scheduled to meet Italian financial markets regulator Consob in Rome on December 23 following complaints over the French media group's interest in Italian broadcaster Mediaset.

◆ The International Air Sports Federation, World Bowling and the World Flying Disc Federation agreed content partnerships with the International Olympic Committee's Olympic Channel.

◆ Jay Monahan, commissioner of golf's PGA Tour, said the organisation would seek to secure partial ownership of a network as part of its next set of broadcast rights agreements.

◆ Virtual reality technology company NextVR struck a deal for its sports content with Daydream, Google's platform for mobile VR. The deal covers the US, Canada, the UK, Germany and Australia.

◆ NextVR expanded its partnership with North American basketball league the NBA to offer video-on-demand games and highlights in virtual reality internationally, excluding China.

◆ The US Federal Communications Commission granted approval for increased foreign investment in Univision. The move will allow Mexican media company Televisa to raise its stake in the Spanish-language broadcaster from 25 to 49 per cent. Televisa can hold up to 40 per cent of the voting interests of Univision.

◆ Courtside Ventures, a sports-focused early-stage venture capital fund that invests in media

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and technology companies, unveiled its portfolio of inaugural investments. The investments included leading the \$2.3m (€2.2m) seed financing for subscription sports media company The Athletic and an early investment in the interactive live-streaming platform Beam. Other investments included the Drone Racing League and LiveLike.

◆ The International Modern Pentathlon Union appointed UK-based production company Pro-Active Broadcast to distribute its coverage. The two-year deal covers all World Cup and World Championship events.

◆ The International Paralympic Committee will live stream the 2017 World Para Alpine Skiing Championships in Tarvisio, Italy, via its official website.

◆ The Extreme Sailing Series appointed production company Red Handed TV as its host broadcaster. The series also appointed the IMG agency as its rights distribution partner. Both deals cover the eight global events in 2017.

◆ The WESA esports organisation agreed a streaming partnership with video-sharing website YouTube for its Pro League competition. YouTube will stream English-language coverage of the fifth and sixth seasons of the league.

◆ The Brazilian Football Confederation made broadcast rights for the January 25 friendly match between Brazil and Colombia, which is designed to benefit Série A club Chapecoense, freely available on a global basis. Nineteen of Chapecoense's players were killed in a plane crash in November.

INDUSTRY MOVES

◆ The Fox Networks Group division of media company 21st Century Fox appointed Italo Zanzi as its new executive vice-president and managing director for sport in Asia.

◆ The Pro12 pan-European rugby union club competition appointed Dermot Rigley as its new commercial director.

◆ The International Tennis Federation appointed Tim Stemp as its new executive director (commercial).

◆ The MP & Silva agency appointed Wu Swee Sin as its managing director in the Asia-Pacific region, excluding China, Japan and South Korea.

◆ Konstantinos Filippas, managing director of Europe at MP & Silva, was promoted to the role of group executive director of content.

◆ Roland Nikolaou, vice-president of sales at MP & Silva, was promoted to group executive director of commercial.

◆ The IMG agency promoted Adam Kelly to head of global sales for its IMG Media division.

◆ Discovery Communications appointed Alex Kaplan as executive vice-president, commercial, for the Eurosport Digital division of international sports broadcaster Eurosport.

◆ Econet appointed Jeroen Oerlemans as the new chief executive of the Kwesé Sports division of African pay-television broadcaster Kwesé TV.