

# TVSportsMarkets

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CYCLING

# EBU’s 20% ASO fee increase driven by Eurosport and ITV

By Robin Jellis

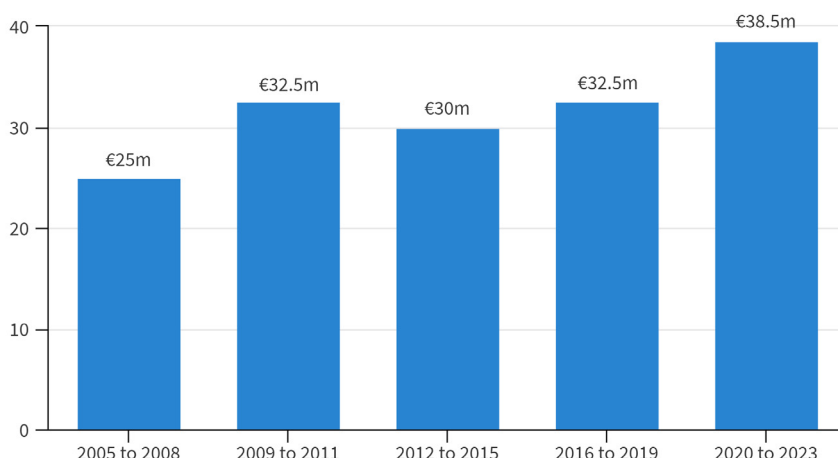
- EBU renews deal with ASO across Europe, from 2020 to 2023, for €38m to €39m per year
- The current EBU deal across Europe, from 2016 to 2019, is worth about €32.5m per year
- Both Eurosport and ITV have significantly increased their contribution to the EBU deal

**Amaury Sport Organisation has increased the value of its Tour de France media rights across Europe by just under 20 per cent following a renewal with the European Broadcasting Union this month.**

The EBU – Europe’s consortium of public-service broadcasters – agreed a four-year deal, from 2020 to 2023, worth between €38m (\$43.3m) and €39m per year across Europe, excluding France.

The deal was struck with ASO, the Tour’s commercial rights-holder. A tender was sent out in May, with bids due in June. ASO’s current deal with the EBU, from 2016 to 2019, is worth about €32.5m per year (*TV Sports Markets* 17:17).

### Amaury Sport Organisation deals with the European Broadcasting Union



Source: TV Sports Markets Rights Tracker

Note: 2020 to 2023 value is mid-point of €38m to €39m per year range

Note: 2012 to 2015 value includes ITV contribution via separate deal with ASO

The increase in the new agreement is understood to have been driven by two main factors. First, sports broadcaster Eurosport’s desire to increase its level of exclusive Tour content across Europe.

Second, the increasing value of the rights in the UK, where commercial broadcaster ITV has paid the price for British success.

More hours will also be broadcast in the new deal, although most of the additional content will only attract a small number of viewers. In 2016, 80 hours of live Tour content was shown. This will increase to 105 hours for 2017, as every stage is now shown in full. Additional coverage comes mainly from the early part of each stage.

*TV Sports Markets* understands there was serious interest in the rights, once again, from pay-television broadcasters and agencies, prompting the early deal.

BT Sport and Sky seriously studied an offer for Tour rights in the UK; Modern Times Group was keen on buying rights across Scandinavia; and the MP & Silva agency enquired as to the availability of rights across Europe.

However, ASO is understood to have been keen to renew with the EBU due to the wide exposure it can guarantee on its main free-to-air member broadcasters.

Free-to-air coverage is vital as the teams which take part in the Tour do not receive a cut of ASO's media-rights revenue. As such, they request wide, free-to-air exposure to help them agree sponsorship deals.

The free-to-air coverage also helps ASO agree lucrative central sponsorship deals. This is a significant income stream for ASO, as is the money it receives from local tourist boards in France. These boards must pay for the Tour to go through their town. Increasing the number of hours of live coverage has meant ASO can earn more from tourist boards as additional locations are showcased on its broadcast.

As well as the Tour de France, the EBU deal covers other road races: Paris-Nice, Paris-Roubaix, Paris-Tours, the Flèche Wallonne, Liège-Bastogne-Liège, the Critérium du Dauphiné and Eschborn-Frankfurt.

The addition of Eschborn-Frankfurt is the only change from the EBU's current deal. It replaces the Critérium International, which has been discontinued following the 2016 event.

## Eurosport increases exclusivity

As an EBU guarantor, Eurosport will hold exclusive rights in 38 European territories in the new deal, up from five in the current agreement.

Eurosport will have exclusive rights in: Albania; Armenia; Austria; Azerbaijan; Belarus; Bosnia and Herzegovina; Bulgaria; Croatia; Cyprus; Czech Republic; Estonia; Finland; Georgia; Greece; Hungary; Iceland; Ireland; Israel; Kazakhstan; Kosovo; Kyrgyzstan; Latvia; Liechtenstein; Lithuania; Macedonia; Malta; Moldova; Montenegro; Poland; Romania; Russia; Serbia; Sweden; Tajikistan; Turkey; Turkmenistan; Ukraine; and Uzbekistan. It will retain non-exclusive rights in the rest of Europe.

The new deal will also give the sports broadcaster a window of exclusive coverage covering the first 75 minutes of each stage in most territories across Europe.

Eurosport was keen to acquire more exclusive Tour content as this will increase the revenue it can earn from carriage deals, but also advertising and sponsorship of its coverage.

Eurosport chief executive Peter Hutton told *TV Sports Markets* this week: “We are turning it from something we couldn’t really monetise to something that has genuine value.” Hutton added that affiliates would have been reluctant to pay for carriage of the Eurosport channels for its Tour coverage if it were shared non-exclusively with free-to-air broadcasters.

The deal means that each July, Eurosport will have exclusive rights to both the Tour and the Wimbledon tennis grand slam in most European territories.

Until November 2014, Eurosport had automatic access to EBU content, but since its purchase by US media company Discovery Communications it must negotiate separately to be part of EBU deals (*TV Sports Markets* 18:22).

Eurosport pays roughly 30 per cent of the overall EBU fee in the 2016-2019 cycle, or about €10m per year. Its contribution will increase to between €13m and €14m per year in the 2020-2023 deal, about 35 per cent of the overall total.

Eurosport has a strong relationship with ASO, thanks in part to its other deals for Tour rights. It holds pay-television rights in France in a five-year deal, from 2016 to 2020, worth about €3m per year (*TV Sports Markets* 18:16).

The broadcaster also holds exclusive rights in the Asia-Pacific region in a five-year deal, from 2017 to 2021. The deal excludes China, Japan and New Zealand. Its rights are non-exclusive in Australia.

## British success helps ASO in the UK

ITV is understood to have almost doubled the fee it contributes to the EBU deal. From 2020 to 2023 it will pay between €7m and €8m per year. From 2016 to 2019 it pays between €3.5m and €4m per year.

The increase is mainly driven by the success of British riders: four of the last five Tours have been won by a Briton – Bradley Wiggins won in 2012, and Chris Froome won in 2013, 2015 and 2016. At the time of writing, Froome was also leading the general classification for 2017.

There has been a strong growth of interest in cycling in recent years, leading to BT and Sky studying an offer. ITV is also thought to have been pushed to pay more as it feared Eurosport could add exclusive rights in the UK to its wider deal.

ITV was also keen to retain the rights as the Tour is understood to generate a reasonable level of advertising income.

## EBU deal guarantors

Eurosport and ITV are two of the bigger guarantors of the EBU deal.

Other guarantors include:

- Public-service broadcasters RTBF and VRT in Belgium
- Public-service broadcaster NOS in the Netherlands
- Public-service broadcaster SRG in Switzerland (the Swiss contribution is thought to be between €200,000 and €300,000 per year)
- Public-service broadcaster TVE in Spain
- Public-service broadcaster Rai in Italy
- Commercial and pay-television broadcaster TV2 in Denmark
- Commercial and pay-television broadcaster TV2 in Norway
- Commercial broadcaster RTL in Luxembourg
- Public-service broadcaster RTP in Portugal
- Public-service broadcaster RTVS in Slovakia
- Slovenian public-service broadcaster RTV Slovenija.

The EBU and ASO are long-term partners, and any move away from the consortium would have been a major surprise. But EBU members have lost some of their grip on Tour rights, given Eurosport's increased exclusivity.

The EBU guarantors feel this is a reasonable concession given Eurosport contributes a significant amount to the overall deal, and that the members' respective contributions have stayed relatively steady.

Interest from pay-television broadcasters is not new. It was present when the 2016-2019 deal was agreed, and also for the 2012-2015 deal, when Sky Deutschland and NTV Plus sought rights in Germany and Russia respectively (*TV Sports Markets* 15:6).

One guarantor of the new EBU deal said: "The overall value has gone up as there are more hours. Clearly, the Tour is one of the few driver properties for free-to-air broadcasters. It works for everyone. It's getting more and more popular, it's in a very healthy state in Europe."

## ARD/ZDF exclusion continues

*TV Sports Markets* understands Eurosport will retain free-to-air rights in Germany as part of the EBU deal, which it will exploit on its Eurosport 1 channel. But ASO has retained the right to agree a separate non-exclusive free-to-air deal in the country, as it does at present.

German public-service broadcasters ARD and ZDF did not broadcast the Tour between 2012 and 2014 due to their concerns over doping in the sport. Both ARD and ZDF had previously been two of the bigger guarantors of EBU deals.

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. It has since agreed a new deal, covering 2017 and 2018, worth just over €2.5m per year (*TV Sports Markets* 19:1; 21:1).

It is understood ARD chose not to be part of the new EBU deal when it was made aware the consortium was preparing an offer. ARD is very likely to prolong its agreement in a separate deal with ASO from 2019 onward.

## Change in European fortunes for ASO

The latest EBU deal represents a second consecutive solid increase across Europe for ASO after the fee declined in the 2012 to 2015 cycle.

From 2009 to 2011, ASO earned about €34m per year: €32.5m per year from the EBU and €1.5m per year from a separate deal with ITV.

Its total earnings from deals with ITV and the EBU dropped to €30m per year in the 2012-2015 cycle, due to ARD and ZDF's withdrawal from the EBU agreement.

## Domestic deal

The international signal for all ASO events is produced by French public-service broadcaster France Télévisions, other than Flèche Wallonne and Liège-Bastogne-Liège, whose signal is provided by RTBF.

France Télévisions holds domestic Tour de France rights in a five-year deal, from 2016 to 2020, worth close to €30m per year. In October 2016, France Télévisions extended its deal for five more years, from 2021 to 2025, for about €32m per year (*TV Sports Markets* 17:8; 20:19). ◆

## FOOTBALL

# Uefa continues growth trend in new Finnish and Swiss deals

By Robin Jellis

- Uefa increases value of club competitions in Finland and Switzerland by more than 200%
- In Finland, MTV3 acquired UCL and UEL rights for about €6m per season
- In Switzerland, Teleclub and SRG will pay about €18m per season for both competitions

## **Uefa last month recorded huge fee increases for its Champions League and Europa League media rights in Finland and Switzerland.**

In Finland, Champions League and Europa League rights were acquired exclusively by commercial and pay-television broadcaster MTV3. The broadcaster is expected to show coverage on its C More pay-television channels. It has the right to sublicense coverage, but is unlikely to do so.

The deal is for three seasons, from 2018-19 to 2020-21, and is worth close to €6m (\$6.8m) per season. This is an increase of about 275 per cent on the €1.6m per season these rights are worth in the current cycle, from 2015-16 to 2017-18.

In Switzerland, Champions League and Europa League rights will be shown by public-service broadcaster SRG and pay-television broadcaster Teleclub.

Both deals are for the same three seasons, from 2018-2021, and are worth about €18m per season combined. This is about 215 per cent more than the €5.7m per season the two competitions are worth in the current 2015-2018 cycle.

All deals were agreed on behalf of Uefa – football’s European governing body – by Team Marketing, Uefa’s exclusive sales agent for its club competitions.

The deals in Finland and Switzerland follow increases of at least 50 per cent in new deals covering France, Hungary, Israel, Japan, Poland, Spain and the US.

Uefa is targeting income of €3.2bn per season from Champions League and Europa League media and marketing rights in the 2018-2021 cycle. This would represent an increase of 28 per cent on the €2.5bn per season it earns in the 2015-2018 cycle (*TV Sports Markets* 20:22).



## MTV3 comes back to the table

Champions League rights in Finland are currently held by public-service broadcaster YLE and commercial and pay-television broadcaster Modern Times Group. YLE pays about €400,000 per season; MTG pays about €1.1m per season (*TV Sports Markets* 19:8).

Europa League rights in the country are currently held by commercial and pay-television broadcaster Nelonen over the same three seasons in a deal worth just over €100,000 per season.

### Champions League and Europa League deals in Finland

Cycle	Buyer	Content	Per-season fee (€m)	Total
2018-19 to 2020-21	MTV3	Champions League and Europa League rights	6	6
2015-16 to 2017-18	Modern Times Group	Pay-television Champions League rights	1.1	1.6
	YLE	Free-to-air Champions League rights	0.4	
	Nelonen	Europa League rights	0.1	
2012-13 to 2014-15	MTV3	Pay-television Champions League rights	0.9	1.4
	YLE	Free-to-air Champions League rights	0.4	
	Nelonen	Europa League rights	0.1	

Source: *TV Sports Markets Rights Tracker*

The tender for Champions League and Europa League rights in the new cycle was issued on April 10, with bids due on May 8. There were two rounds of bidding.

YLE is understood to have bid in both rounds to retain the Champions League rights it currently holds – first-pick matches on Tuesdays, the final and the Super Cup. Nelonen is understood to have bid in both rounds for all Champions League and Europa League rights. MTG is also thought to have bid.

Local sources were undecided as to whether telco Telia made an offer. In May, Telia acquired rights to the SM-Liiga, the top ice hockey league in the country, in a deal worth about €24m per season from 2018-19 to 2023-24 – its first sports-rights deal in Finland (*TV Sports Markets* 21:8).

The deal represents a change in fortune for MTV3. The broadcaster had agreed a deal in principle with Uefa for exclusive rights to both competitions in late 2014 for the 2015-2018 cycle, but pulled out of the deal because its owner, media group Bonnier, felt the €2m-per-season agreement was too high.

This is understood to have frustrated Uefa and is thought to be part of the reason why MTV3 has had to pay such a high fee to secure rights in the new cycle.

MTV3 was prepared to pay an increase to secure the rights as it was keen to have some top-tier football in its portfolio. The deal also solidifies its wider sports-rights portfolio: it now holds rights to most of the top properties in the country, apart from the SM-Liiga, the most popular property in the country.

MTV3 will hold International Ice Hockey Federation World Championship rights from 2018 to 2023 and Formula One rights from 2016 to 2018 (*TV Sports Markets* 19:20; 21:2).

## Teleclub replaces Sky but SRG remains

Champions League and Europa League rights in Switzerland are currently split between SRG and pay-television broadcaster Sky Deutschland. Sky's coverage is available to Teleclub subscribers via a carriage deal. Champions League rights are currently worth a total of €4.1m per season: €3.1m per season from SRG and €1m per season from Sky. The Europa League is worth a total of €1.6m per season: €1.3m per season from SRG and €300,000 per season from Sky.

### Champions League and Europa League rights in Switzerland

Cycle	Buyer	Content	Per-season fee (€m)	Total
2018-19 to 2020-21	Teleclub	All Champions League and Europa League matches	14	18
	SRG	First-pick Champions League match on Wednesdays, second-pick Europa League match (free-to-air)	4	
2015-16 to 2017-18	SRG	First-pick Champions League matches on Tuesdays and Wednesdays (free-to-air)	3.1	5.7
	Sky	All Champions League matches (pay-television)	1	
	SRG	First-pick Europa League matches (free-to-air)	1.3	
	Sky	All Europa League matches (pay-television)	0.3	

Source: TV Sports Markets Rights Tracker

The tender for Champions League and Europa League rights in the new cycle was issued on March 6, with bids due on April 3. A deal for the Champions League is thought to have been agreed after one round of bidding, while there were two rounds of bidding for the Europa League.

The increase in value was primarily driven by competition for the pay-television rights. As well as Teleclub, there are understood to have been three other bidders: Sky, telco UPC, and OTT platform DAZN – owned by digital media company Perform.

Teleclub decided against acquiring fully exclusive rights to both Uefa club competitions as it feared a potential political backlash. It also preferred Uefa to have a direct deal with SRG, rather than acting as a gatekeeper and having to agree a sublicensing deal with a free-to-air broadcaster.

There was limited interest from other free-to-air broadcasters. Commercial broadcaster 3+, which attempted to acquire Swiss national team rights earlier this year, did not bid (*TV Sports Markets* 21:3).

## Uefa coverage in Switzerland

Teleclub will show all its matches on pay-television, other than the Champions League final, which it will show on its soon-to-launch Teleclub Zoom free-to-air channel. The channel is due to launch on July 22 and will be exclusively available to Swisscom TV subscribers.

As reported by *TV Sports Markets* in October, Swisscom planned to launch a free-to-air channel on which it could show one live second-tier domestic Challenge League match per week on Mondays as part of its deal with the Swiss Football League from 2017-18 (*TV Sports Markets* 20:18).

SRG will show the first-pick Champions League match per round each Wednesday and the second-pick Europa League match per round each Thursday. The latter will become a first-pick should only one Swiss team remain in the competition. The public-service broadcaster is understood to have preferred to have a Champions League match on a Wednesday rather than Tuesday as it fits its schedule better.

In the current cycle, SRG has the first-pick Champions League match per round on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. It is also able to show three different matches across its three channels: SRF (German-language), RTS (French-language), and RSI (Italian-language). In the new deal it will only be able to choose one match to show across its channels. The public-service broadcaster will continue to hold highlights rights to all matches, as in the current deal.

## Carriage battles

Teleclub and UPC have been involved in a bitter battle for sports rights over the past year. Last July, UPC acquired rights to the majority of Swiss top-tier ice hockey league matches – previously held by Teleclub. The latter responded in October by extending its deal for SFL rights (*TV Sports Markets* 20:13).

A sub-plot to the direct competition for sports rights between Teleclub – and its owner, telco Swisscom – and UPC is their access to other sports channels.

Late last month, Swisscom renewed its carriage deal with US media company Discovery Communications, and expanded the agreement to include coverage of Germany's Bundesliga. The deal is for the same four seasons as Discovery's Bundesliga deal, from 2017-18 to 2020-21. Discovery's 40 Bundesliga matches per season will be available exclusively via Swisscom. The deal also includes OTT service Eurosport Player which Swisscom is marketing in Switzerland. Swisscom subscribers will get preferential rates.

The agreement between Swisscom and Discovery came as UPC and Sky agreed a similar carriage deal. UPC will have exclusive access to the 266 Bundesliga matches per season shown by Sky in Switzerland. This deal also runs for four seasons, from 2017-18 to 2020-21.

UPC is understood to be paying Sky up to CHF10m (€9.1m/\$10.4m) per season for its Bundesliga coverage. This is roughly the same fee Swisscom will pay Discovery for its coverage of Bundesliga matches and access to Eurosport Player.

Swisscom is understood to have been surprised by Sky's decision to agree a deal with UPC given Swisscom and Sky have a long-term relationship. The carriage deal between the two will continue to exist – the UPC deal only covers Sky's coverage of the Bundesliga. There was a clause in the Swisscom/Sky contract which stated that if Sky renewed its Bundesliga deal there would have to be a separate negotiation for this content.

Meanwhile, Sky is set to launch its own OTT service in Switzerland next month. The platform is expected to include Bundesliga coverage. Its respective carriage deals with Swisscom and UPC cover only linear television and IPTV – not OTT. ◆

## OLYMPIC GAMES

# ARD/ZDF return to Olympics talks amid mounting pressure

By Robin Jellis and Frank Dunne

- ARD/ZDF set to sublicense rights to the 2018, 2020, 2022 and 2024 Games from Discovery
- Deal is expected to be worth about €230m, but Discovery will retain some exclusive content
- Initial talks over a sublicensing deal broke down in November last year over price

**ARD and ZDF are close to a sublicensing deal with Discovery Communications for Olympic Games rights in Germany about nine months after negotiations between the parties broke down.**

*TV Sports Markets* understands ARD and ZDF – Germany’s public-service broadcasters – are in the final stage of negotiations for rights to the 2018 and 2022 winter Games and the 2020 and 2024 summer Games. An agreement is thought to be highly likely. Representatives from ARD/ZDF were this week visiting Olympic venues in Pyeongchang, host of the 2018 Games.

The deal is expected to be worth about €230m (\$262m). US media company Discovery is likely to hold back certain rights. These are yet to be defined, but one source close to the talks suggested about 30 per cent of the content would be exclusively available on Discovery channels. Discovery will also retain non-exclusive rights to all other content.

In November 2016, Discovery broke off negotiations with ARD/ZDF after the public-service broadcasters failed to match their asking price. In talks for the 2018 and 2020 Games, ARD/ZDF offered €100m against Discovery’s request of €150m. At the last meeting of the two sides, the difference had narrowed to an offer of just over €120m and a request of about €130m (*TV Sports Markets* 20:21).

Discussions had also covered a possible four-Games deal, from 2018 to 2024. The broadcasters are thought to have offered up to about €250m, but Discovery was holding out for about €275m.

The fee for the four Games will be lower than what was discussed due to Discovery retaining exclusive rights to certain events.

ARD/ZDF’s stance to negotiations has changed following recent events.

ZDF has come under significant pressure after its failure to renew Uefa Champions League rights in the country. ZDF holds rights to 18 Champions League matches per season in the current cycle, from 2015-16 to 2017-18, in a deal worth about €60m per season. Last month Uefa opted to sell exclusive rights to all matches to pay-television broadcaster Sky Deutschland, from 2018-19 to 2020-21 (*TV Sports Markets* 21:11).

The fact a deal is nearing completion will be a relief for Discovery, which is now likely to come close to earning a profit on its pan-European Olympics deal. Discovery is aiming to recover about 70 per cent of its investment on the Olympics rights from sublicensing deals, but also from other forms of revenue in territories where it will show the rights exclusively.

In June 2015, Discovery agreed a deal with the International Olympic Committee for rights to the four Games between 2018 and 2024 for €1.3bn in 50 European territories (*TV Sports Markets* 19:13).

Not having a sublicensing deal in Germany was set to be a huge hole in Discovery's revenue projections. Its main source of income from Olympic rights in the country was set to be via advertising revenue from free-to-air channels Eurosport 1 and Dmax.

## Three other big markets live

Discovery is also currently in talks with broadcasters in three other key European markets: France, Italy and Spain.

Of these, France is the least pressing as Discovery's deal with the IOC does not include 2018 and 2020 rights in the country. These were part of public-service broadcaster France Télévisions' four-Games deal, from 2014 to 2020, worth a total of €171m (*TV Sports Markets* 15:13).

France Télévisions sublicensed pay-television rights to the 2016 and 2020 Games to Canal Plus in a deal worth a total of about €30m (*TV Sports Markets* 19:12).

This made it difficult for Discovery to agree a similar deal to the one it struck in the UK, where it sublicensed to public-service broadcaster the BBC free-to-air rights to the 2022 and 2024 Games in return for pay-television rights to the 2018 and 2020 Games. The BBC had acquired rights to the latter as part of a deal with the IOC for the 2014, 2016, 2018 and 2020 Games worth just over £130m (€147m/\$167m) (*TV Sports Markets* 16:14).

France Télévisions is facing competition from commercial broadcasters M6 and TF1 to sublicense Discovery's rights to the 2022 and 2024 Games. Interest is particularly high as Paris looks set to host the 2024 Games.

In Spain, a sublicensing deal looks unlikely as public-service broadcaster TVE is not close to meeting Discovery's asking price. Discovery is expected to exploit Olympics coverage on its own channels. TVE paid just over €70m for rights to the 2014 and 2016 Games.

In Italy, Discovery is likely to agree a sublicensing deal with public-service broadcaster Rai. Rights to the 2014 and 2016 Games were acquired by pay-television broadcaster Sky Italia for €152m (€62m for 2014; €90m for 2016) (*TV Sports Markets* 12:19).

## TIM mobile deal

Exclusive content deals with mobile operators look set to create a substantial additional revenue

stream for Discovery, following its deal last month with TIM, the mobile division of Telecom Italia.

TIM became the official mobile broadcaster of the Olympics in the country for 2018 and 2020.

The company's TIMvision subscription streaming service will carry a bespoke Olympic channel with news and highlights targeted at an Italian audience, although it will have no live content.

As part of the same deal, TIMvision will carry OTT service Eurosport Player, which includes access to the Eurosport 1 and Eurosport 2 channels.

The deal is thought to be worth about €15m over a period of just over three years, or just under €5m per year. It is likely to become operative in October and will run through to the end of 2020.

Oxana Yanushkovskaya, Discovery's senior vice president of Eurosport affiliate strategy and business transformation, said talks were under way with Europe's major mobile operators to roll out similar deals across the continent. She said some deals were "close" to being finalised but declined to say in which markets.

Yanushkovskaya said the deals reflected the commitment Discovery made to the IOC to secure the widest possible exposure for the Games and ensure all audience segments were catered for.

TIMvision currently has about 1m subscribers. Telecom Italia chief executive Flavio Cattaneo is understood to be targeting 5m subscribers by the end of 2020.

The rollout of TIMvision is part of the telco's wider strategy of driving revenue through quad-play: fixed line telephony, internet, television and mobile telephony services.

Cattaneo, a former director general of Rai, has identified sport as a key driver of the streaming service. TIM had been expected to bid for OTT rights in the recent Serie A tender but in the end baulked at the reserve price of €100m per season for non-exclusive rights to four teams (*TV Sports Markets* 21:10).

As part of its designation as official mobile broadcaster, it will be able to use the Olympic rings in all its marketing and promotions for the entire period of the agreement.

Along with highlights adapted from the main Olympic television feed, Discovery will create bespoke short-form content, such as athlete interviews and features, which will be unique to TIMvision. The production of the channel will be handled by Discovery, but TIM will be closely involved in editorial decisions. ◆

## ESPORTS

# Exclusivity the battleground as Twitch and YouTube fight it out

By Callum McCarthy

**Twitch's deal with game developer Activision Blizzard last month is the latest indication the live-streaming platform and its rivals are now seeking esports rights on an exclusive basis.**

Amazon-owned Twitch's dominance of esports live-streaming has been diluted by competition from rival platforms like YouTube Gaming (owned by Google), Facebook and Twitter.

Industry experts believe demands for exclusivity – for now a fledgling trend in esports – will become the norm in the coming years as these platforms seek to define their offerings against their rivals.

Twitch's deal with Activision Blizzard, which runs from June 2017 to the end of 2018, is for partly-exclusive streaming rights to over 20 one-off events and series spanning five games: World of Warcraft, Overwatch, StarCraft II, Hearthstone and Heroes of the Storm. Activision Blizzard has retained some rights to exploit on MLG.tv, its own esports streaming site, despite Twitch's desire for total exclusivity.

It is thought Twitch will pay Activision Blizzard a total of between \$3m (€2.6m) and \$4m for the package. Industry experts believe the deal could have been worth between \$5m and \$6m should Twitch have acquired fully exclusive rights.

The deal includes rights to prestigious tournaments such as the StarCraft II World Championship Series, the Heroes of the Storm Global Championship, and the Overwatch Apex League. Each of these multi-event competitions has a large prize pool available to participating teams. Tournaments with larger prize pools tend to attract better teams, and thus larger audiences.

## Twitch shaping the model

Streaming platforms paying fees this high for almost fully exclusive rights is a new development in esports – a sector where sponsorship revenue has historically been larger than media-rights revenue.

As a result, game developers and event organisers have generally preferred non-exclusive deals, enabling events to be streamed on as many platforms as possible.

Twitch's push for exclusivity with Activision Blizzard is seen by experts as a direct response to rival YouTube Gaming's exclusive streaming deal with competition organiser Facelt.

YouTube's deal, struck in March, is for exclusive rights to Facelt's Esports Championship Series, a

popular Counter Strike: Global Offensive league. CS:GO, a first-person shooter game, is consistently one of the world's most-watched esports. The deal is thought to run until the end of 2018.

YouTube's insistence on acquiring exclusive rights – for which it paid a minimum guarantee – was its first direct attempt to take esports audience share from Twitch.

One source at a major esports company said: "It's a chess game. Entering 2017, we heard Twitch and YouTube were never going to pay big money up front for content. Their attitude was that they provide reach and eyeballs, and it's up to you to make money from that. Then YouTube paid big money for ECS. It was a major move that changed everything."

Another rights-holder said: "Now that Twitch have come in for Activision Blizzard rights, everything is up for grabs. Things are changing within a month. One month there will be a strategy set in stone, and then Twitch picks something up and everything changes. Then, a traditional broadcaster picks something up and it changes again. There are no rules right now."

## Developing franchise leagues

The emerging trend of Twitch and YouTube acquiring at least partly-exclusive rights to esports events is mostly driven by the platforms' desire to secure a guaranteed audience. But the exclusive media-rights model will also be forced into play by another emerging trend in esports: revenue sharing.

Esports competitions are mostly private leagues, where teams pay participation fees and earn prize money and revenue from their own sponsorship deals.

However, newer competitions such as the Esports Championship Series offer participating teams a stake in the league. At least 15 teams are thought to have equity in the league, with the teams taking between 40 and 50 per cent of the league's total revenue.

A 50:50 revenue-sharing system will also be put in place for super leagues organised by Activision Blizzard and rival games developer Riot Games. These leagues will be comprised of permanent franchises, much like traditional US sports leagues.

Activision Blizzard is demanding as much as \$20m over five years for the right to own a franchise in the Overwatch League, set to be the top-tier competition for the developer's first-person shooter Overwatch. Riot's North American League of Legends Championship Series will operate similarly, charging a minimum of \$10m for prospective franchisees.

As these fees can only be afforded by a select few existing esports teams, companies and individuals outside the esports world are being courted to buy in.

With buy-in fees so high, and with each league predicted to command large audiences, franchises are expected to lobby the respective developers to sell rights on a non-exclusive basis.



## Exclusivity vs non-exclusivity

While Facelt and Activision Blizzard felt the time was right to sell on an exclusive basis, other esports rights-holders for now prefer the tried and tested non-exclusive model, where all major streaming platforms – including platforms run by the rights-holder – can acquire live rights to their tournaments.

Esports events and competition organiser ESL had an exclusive two-year deal with Twitch in 2014 and 2015, when Twitch was the dominant player in the marketplace. It now has deals with Facebook (which receives 1,500 hours of exclusive content), Twitch, YouTube Gaming and Twitter.

Senior vice president of sales at ESL, Nik Adams, told *TV Sports Markets* that alternating between exclusive and non-exclusive deals in each cycle can stimulate demand for exclusivity in the marketplace.

“This is what regular sport does too,” Adams said. “Looking at what other sports properties are doing has helped us to find the right strategy for esports, but we will continue to invest in finding the best practice for content distribution.”

An executive at another rights-holder said: “We don’t know if it’s too early. The danger of exclusivity at this stage is it might restrict the audience. We’re going to sell our rights soon and we’re looking to get the most reach. We want a partner that grows exposure as opposed to direct revenues for the next year. Reach is more important than money right now.”

Adams added: “Picking the right partner for exclusive or non-exclusive content distribution is always a puzzle – you have to make sure you will accommodate the audience, but that might mean going with a smaller platform, which isn’t always desirable. It may seem like having live content exclusive to one platform is more profitable, but ESL’s mission is to bring esports to as many screens as we possible, so the choice of distribution strategy will always reflect that for us.” ◆

## FOOTBALL

# BeIN set to test international interest in Turkish Süper Lig

By Callum McCarthy

**BeIN Media Group is making its final preparations for selling Turkish Süper Lig international rights over the coming weeks, after more than a decade of the rights being warehoused by Digiturk.**

BeIN, which acquired Turkish pay-television operator Digiturk in August 2016, holds domestic and international rights to the Süper Lig in a five-season deal worth \$500m (€439m) per season, from 2017-18 to 2021-22 (*TV Sports Markets* 20:20).

Süper Lig rights have not been sold internationally before now. From 2017-18 onward, beIN will sell a package of up to four Süper Lig matches per week to international broadcasters, plus highlights and ancillary content. It is thought deal durations will depend almost entirely on demand in each market.

The four matches made available will start between 7pm and 8pm Turkish time, with one match played on each of Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday. All rights will either be local-language or English-language – Turkish-language rights will be withheld and deliberately unsold in all markets.

Matches involving two of the top three Istanbul teams – Beşiktaş, Fenerbahçe and Galatasaray – will be made available. It is understood the matches of all three clubs will only be available on a single weekend should two of the clubs play each other.

## Packages and carve-outs

Until its takeover by beIN, Digiturk warehoused Süper Lig international rights in order to protect its own international pay-television operations. In addition to its 2.5m subscribers in Turkey, the operator has another 800,000 outside the country via satellite, IPTV and its OTT Digiturk Play service.

Digiturk was concerned that selling rights outside Turkey would lead to it losing international subscribers, and make it easier for fans in Turkey to pirate the coverage. The Süper Lig is its primary driver of international subscriptions. BeIN has softened this position, within limits.

Süper Lig rights will not be sold in Germany, Austria and Switzerland, disappointing local broadcasters who had hoped at least German-language rights would be sold. Given the strength of Digiturk's business in Germany, broadcasters and streaming operators were not expecting Turkish-language rights to be made available. About 2.7m ethnic Turks live in Germany.

Local experts believe a German-language package including one match per week, plus a highlights show, could have been worth between €300,000 and €400,000 per season.

In Azerbaijan, the Netherlands and the Nordics, beIN will sell only one match per week. Whether this is a first, second- or third-pick match will depend on the offers received and the number of Digiturk subscribers in each market.

BeIN has retained the rights for its own channels in Australia, Canada, France, the Middle East and North Africa, Spain and the US. The rights have particular value in France and Mena, the former of which is thought to be home to anywhere between 350,000 and 1m people of Turkish origin.

The only other market with a large Turkish population that may receive a full package of rights is the UK, but beIN may decide to sell fewer than four matches per weekend. Digiturk has a strong business in the UK, thought to be home to between 400,000 and 500,000 ethnic Turks.

## Key markets and strategy

Agencies will be permitted to bid for rights. *TV Sports Markets* understands agency bids are particularly welcome in Latin America, China and Central Asia. The Saran Media agency is favourite to acquire rights in Central Asia.

BeIN also views sub-Saharan Africa as a key market due to the relatively large number of talented African players playing in the league. However, this was also the thinking of the MP & Silva agency when it sold Belgian Pro League rights; and the thinking of the Chinese Super League when it sold rights in the region last year.

The CSL is worth about \$300,000 per season in a two-season deal with pan-African pay-television operator StarTimes, covering 2016-17 and 2017-18 (*TV Sports Markets* 20:5). The Pro League is worth about \$80,000 per season in a multi-season deal between MP & Silva and pay-television broadcaster Fox Sports Africa. Both leagues boasted a strong quota of African players, but earned less than expected when selling the rights.

To help drive the league's value, beIN will consider packaging the Süper Lig with rights to the French top-tier, Ligue 1. This is for two main reasons.

First, to boost the value of the Süper Lig which, as a standalone property, is not mature enough to command rights fees in many markets. Second, to ensure the Süper Lig receives coverage in markets where the rights have little appeal.

BeIN holds Ligue 1 international rights until the end of the 2023-24 season. Its current six-season deal, from 2012-13 to 2017-18, is worth €32.5m per season. A six-season extension, from 2018-19 to 2023-24, is worth €80m per season (*TV Sports Markets* 18:11). As most of beIN's sublicensing deals for Ligue 1 expire at the end of 2017-18, it will likely be packaged with the Süper Lig from 2018-19 onward. ◆

## BASKETBALL

# Lega Basket to earn nearly 80% more from new deals by 2018-19

By Callum McCarthy

- Discovery acquires domestic Lega Basket pay-television rights for about €1.5m per season
- Rai renews domestic Lega Basket free-to-air rights for about €500,000 per season
- International Lega Basket rights also bought by Discovery for about €800,000 per season

**Italy's Lega Basket has seen the value of its domestic and international rights almost double in new deals with Rai and Discovery Communications.**

US media company Discovery will pay about €1.5m (\$1.7m) per season in a three-season deal, from 2017-18 to 2019-20, for exclusive domestic pay-television rights to Lega Basket properties.

This is just over 140 per cent more than pay-television operator Sky Italia paid in its two-season deal covering 2015-16 and 2016-17, worth €620,000 per season.

Discovery will exploit the rights on its Eurosport pay-television channels – it will create an Italian feed from 2017-18 – and on the Eurosport Player OTT service. Two live top-tier Serie A games per week will be shown on its linear channels, with another six live games per week available on Eurosport Player.

Discovery has also acquired Lega Basket's international rights in a separate two-season deal, covering 2018-19 and 2019-20, worth about €800,000 per season.

This is double the fee the MP & Silva agency will pay in 2017-18. The agency's two-season deal, covering 2016-17 and 2017-18, was worth €350,000 in 2016-17 and will be worth €400,000 in 2017-18.

Domestic free-to-air rights were renewed by public-service broadcaster Rai, which will pay about €500,000 per season for one live game per week. The deal is for three seasons, from 2017-18 to 2019-20.

The fee is about 17 per cent less than the €600,000 per season Rai paid in its previous deal covering 2015-16 and 2016-17. Discovery will have the right to show Rai's game non-exclusively.

Overall, Lega Basket's total income for domestic and international rights will increase by 53 per cent from 2016-17 to 2017-18 – from €1.57m to €2.4m – before increasing by a further 17 per cent to €2.8m in each of 2018-19 and 2019-20.

Once all new domestic and international rights deals become active in 2018-19, Lega Basket will be earning 78 per cent more than it did in 2016-17.

The league's total income from 2018-19 will be less than the high watermark set by Sky in the 2008-09 to 2010-11 cycle, when the operator paid €3.2m per season for exclusive domestic rights to the league.

But the new deals represent a fantastic result for a property that was in danger of a sharp decrease given a lack of interest from Sky.

## Tender and bidding

Lega Basket released three tender documents covering domestic pay-television rights, domestic free-to-air rights and platform-neutral international rights. Competition was strongest for pay-television rights, which were opened to OTT bidders for the first time.

Discovery met competition in the first round of bidding for pay-television rights from digital media company Perform, which operates OTT service DAZN. It is thought only Discovery bid in the second round.

Perform has been looking for a property with which to enter the Italian market. It bid a total of €50m per season for two packages of OTT rights to Serie A football, and held extensive talks with the Team Marketing agency about the possibility of acquiring Champions League and Europa League rights (*TV Sports Markets* 21:11).

Lega Basket incumbent Sky decided not to bid to renew its rights for two main reasons.

First, the requirement to produce at least five games per week, which would have resulted in a huge rise in production costs. Second, the increase rights fee expected by the league at a time when ratings for Serie A have declined from 2015-16 to 2016-17.

Rai is not thought to have faced any competition for the free-to-air rights. MP & Silva bid to renew its international rights, but was beaten by Discovery. Most of the value in the rights outside Italy is in the betting rights: Discovery is expected to sell these on to an agency.

## Production and delivery

Discovery will produce all games, including the Sunday-night game shown by Rai, at a cost of between €1.5m and €2m per season, on top of its rights fee. In 2015-16 and 2016-17, Rai produced its own game at a cost of about €400,000 per season.

Two different production standards will be enforced from 2017-18 onward. For games appearing on linear television, Discovery will have to produce coverage with at least seven cameras. This is up from five in the 2016-17 season. For games appearing on Eurosport Player only, Discovery must produce coverage with at least four cameras.

It has not yet been decided how Discovery will exploit the rights on Eurosport Player. It is understood Discovery will discuss how the rights are packaged with the league.

These discussions will mainly be centred around whether Lega Basket games will be an additional package on top of a Eurosport Player subscription, or whether a regular Eurosport Player subscription will provide access to games. The possibility of providing daily, weekly and monthly passes for Lega Basket fans will also be discussed.

## Euroleague discussions ongoing

It is understood the IMG agency's sales process for Euroleague rights in Italy, from 2017-18 onward, will conclude early next week. Italy's top club, Olimpia Milano, plays in the Euroleague, and four other Italian clubs participated in the second-tier Eurocup in the 2016-17 season.

One source close to the negotiations told *TV Sports Markets* that Euroleague rights will not be packaged with the Eurocup in 2017-18, despite Euroleague Ventures – the joint venture between IMG and Euroleague – promising a centralisation of Eurocup rights before next season.

*TV Sports Markets* understands broadcasters are preparing bids of at least double the €980,000-per-season currently paid by pay-television broadcaster Fox Sports in a four-season deal, from 2013-14 to 2016-17 (*TV Sports Markets* 21:9). ◆

## TENNIS

# Wimbledon value decreases in China as market levels out

By David Cook

- Tencent buys digital rights to Wimbledon in 2017 and 2018 for about \$1m per year
- A previous digital rights deal with LeSports, since terminated, was worth \$3m per year
- CCTV also has a package of linear and digital rights in China worth about \$1m per year

**Online streaming platform Tencent agreed a late deal for non-exclusive live digital Wimbledon rights in China for around a third of the price paid by LeSports before its deal was terminated.**

*TV Sports Markets* understands Tencent will pay about \$1m (€877,000) per year to the All England Lawn Tennis Club, the event organiser and commercial rights-holder, in a two-year deal covering 2017 and 2018. The deal covered this year's championships, which ended last Sunday.

Online streaming platform LeSports had agreed a three-year deal for the rights, from 2016 to 2018, worth \$3m per year (*TV Sports Markets* 20:11). But the deal was terminated earlier this year when LeSports missed a scheduled payment for the 2017 championships.

In June, *TV Sports Markets* reported that IMG, the agency which advises the AELTC on the sale of Wimbledon media rights, was considering legal action against LeSports for missed payments (*TV Sports Markets* 21:10). A source close to the AELTC said legal proceedings are ongoing.

There is no difference in content between Tencent's deal – which covers live streaming, score data, official movies and match previews – and the rights held by LeSports.

Chinese state broadcaster CCTV holds linear and digital Wimbledon rights in the country in a three year-deal, from 2016 to 2018, worth about \$1m per year. This is roughly the same fee CCTV paid for rights in the previous cycle, from 2013 to 2015 (*TV Sports Markets* 19:13).

CCTV has the right to stream matches online, but cannot stream any other content, such as highlights or clips. Digital highlights rights were picked up in June by online streaming platform Sina Sports.

## Timing of the deal affected value

The rights fee has decreased for two main reasons. First, the LeSports deal collapsed relatively close to the start of this year's tournament, leaving the AELTC with little time to find another buyer, thus weakening its negotiating position.

The AELTC considered going into this year's championships without re-selling the rights, but accepted the 66-per-cent cut in fee. A source close to the deal stressed this was a strategic decision.

Second, LeSports was known for its aggression in acquiring rights, and it was unlikely another buyer would be prepared to match its fee. LeSports has lost many key sports rights as financial problems at its parent company, LeEco, forced it to miss or delay payments.

These included Asian Football Confederation events and the Chinese Super League in China, and English FA Cup rights in Hong Kong (*TV Sports Markets* 21:4).

Industry experts say a rationalisation in the market is likely to take place. That such an aggressive player has withdrawn from the market will make it increasingly difficult for rights-holders to retain their media-rights value.

## AELTC wanted a short-term buyer

IMG and the AELTC solicited bids from Chinese buyers but did not run a formal tender. Streaming platform iQiyi was interested in the rights, but for a longer term than the AELTC was willing to sell.

One reason for choosing not to strike a longer deal is that Tencent's agreement will end at the same time as CCTV's deal. This will leave the AELTC with a blank sheet of paper ahead of a new rights cycle, beginning in 2019.

The AELTC has a general policy against agreeing deals that run for longer than three years in China, as it is seen as a market in which viewing habits are changing rapidly.

Tencent was an appealing partner for the AELTC as its streaming platform is supported by the company's enormous social media reach.

Tencent's parent company is also the owner of mobile messaging app WeChat, which had 768m daily logged in users as of September 2016. Tencent also owns instant messaging platform QQ, which had 861m monthly active users in the first quarter of 2017.

## Tencent grows its tennis portfolio

Tencent's Wimbledon deal follows its agreement with the Fédération Française de Tennis for French Open rights in June. Its five-year deal, from 2017 to 2021, is worth between \$500,000 and \$560,000 per year (*TV Sports Markets* 21:11).

Tencent also holds rights to one other tennis grand slam: the US Open. Its deal is for three years, from 2017 to 2019, and is worth about \$900,000 per year. ◆



## IN-FLIGHT/IN-SHIP

# Fifa the latest to benefit from dynamic in-flight/in-ship sector

By Robin Jellis

- IMG renews Fifa in-flight/in-ship rights for a minimum guarantee of close to \$5m
- In the previous deal, for the 2014 World Cup only, IMG paid a guarantee of about \$2.5m
- The new deal covers the Confederations Cup and the men's and women's World Cups

**Stiff competition for Fifa's in-flight and in-ship rights drove incumbent partner IMG to double its guaranteed fee in a new deal last month.**

The agency will pay a minimum guarantee of close to \$5m (€4.4m) for live and highlights rights to the 2017 Confederations Cup, the 2018 men's World Cup and the 2019 women's World Cup. Most of the value of the deal lies in the men's World Cup.

The previous deal – the first time Fifa had sold live in-flight rights – covered only the 2014 men's World Cup, for which IMG paid a minimum guarantee of about \$2.5m. Fifa's earnings were higher than this once revenue above the guarantee was shared between the two.

IMG is understood to have been keen on the Fifa rights as marquee events such as the World Cup and the Olympic Games appeal to a wider audience than traditional sports fans. They also help attract advertising and sponsorship partners for its Sport 24 and Sport 24 Extra in-flight/in-ship channels.

The agency will sublicense rights to airlines and ships which are unable to carry its channels. Only those which have hardware supplied by Panasonic are able to access the channels. Sport 24 is available across 13 airlines and nine cruise lines.

Fifa – football's global governing body – tendered the in-flight/in-ship rights in April. There are thought to have been two rounds of bidding.

The governing body was reluctant to sell its rights for more than one cycle. The in-flight/in-ship sector is fast-changing and Fifa wanted to maximise its revenue.

Fifa's addition of the Confederations Cup and the women's World Cup to the men's World Cup is understood to have largely been due to the timing of the deal – struck during the ongoing Confederations Cup. The deal was signed in late June, missing the early stages of the Confederations Cup, which ran from June 17 to July 2.

## Rationale behind fee increase

IMG has long been the dominant player in the in-flight/in-ship sector, but faces growing competition from Global Eagle Entertainment and the Pitch International agency. The latter plans to create an in-flight offering (*TV Sports Markets* 20:13).

Pitch is understood to have bid in both the first and second round for Fifa rights. GEE is also thought to have bid.

Fifa's preference is understood to have been to agree a deal with an established player. Pitch is yet to launch its in-flight offering, with some industry experts predicting it will take another 12 months until it is ready.

Another reason behind the increase is more content is included in the new deal. IMG will also be able to show all matches live following the launch of Sport 24 Extra on June 1 last year. For the 2014 World Cup, some matches had to be shown delayed as it could not show all matches live on Sport 24.

*TV Sports Markets* understands in-ship rights are more valuable than in-flight rights in this specific deal, but also generally in other agreements.

## Fifa not the only rights-holder to benefit

Fifa is not the only rights-holder to take advantage of the competitive environment in the in-flight/in-ship sector over the last 12 months.

In March, Germany's Bundesliga also more than doubled the value of its rights in a three-season renewal with IMG, from 2017-18 to 2019-20, worth about €1m per season (*TV Sports Markets* 21:5).

In February, the NFL increased the value of its rights by close to 60 per cent in a four-season renewal with IMG, from 2017 to 2020.

This followed a 200-per-cent increase in the value of Formula One in-flight and in-ship rights last summer. These were acquired by Pitch in a three-year deal, from 2017 to 2019, worth just over \$1.5m per year.

And in June 2016, IMG acquired Euro 2016 in-flight and in-ship rights for about €2.7m, an increase of about 80 per cent on the value of its deal for Euro 2012 (*TV Sports Markets* 20:11). ♦

## BASKETBALL

# Eleven pays small fee for new-look Fiba events in Taiwan

By David Cook

**Pay-television broadcaster Eleven Sports Network will pay a small fee to show Fiba events in Taiwan in an exclusive five-year deal agreed last month.**

Eleven will show the 2017 and 2021 men's and women's Asia Cups, as well as the 2018 women's and 2019 men's World Cups. The deal also includes rights to men's qualifiers.

*TV Sports Markets* understands the deal is worth slightly less than \$200,000 (€175,400) per year. A reason given for the fee being low is that only a small number of games will draw a high amount of interest, and ratings are heavily dependent on the success of the Taiwanese teams.

Fiba rights are not as highly sought-after as NBA rights in Taiwan. Eleven paid \$750,000 for OTT NBA rights in the 2016-17 season (*TV Sports Markets* 20:21). OTT rights in a new deal are expected to be offered to the market in the coming weeks.

Fiba's global media rights are sold by Fiba Media, the joint venture between Fiba and digital media company Perform. The 17-year deal, from 2017 to 2033, is worth about €500m (*TV Sports Markets* 20:3).

Rights in the country were previously held by pay-television broadcaster Fox Networks Group in a three-year deal, from 2013 to 2015. The deal did not include qualifiers.

Eleven will show content on its linear channels and via its OTT streaming service. The deal includes digital highlights and clip rights. Fiba prefers not to carve up its rights, choosing to sell all its content to one buyer.

The rights were not formally tendered. *TV Sports Markets* understands there were other interested parties and that Eleven came into the process at a later stage. It is not thought that any other interested parties bid for the rights.

## New deal for new competitions

This deal is a first of its kind in Taiwan, as the new cycle coincides with the new formats to Fiba's competitions (*TV Sports Markets* 19:18).

The 2019 Fiba men's World Cup will be the first in five years. There has been an extended gap between 2014 and 2019 to bring the tournament out of line with other major sporting events, such as the Fifa

World Cup. The event will revert to being held every four years after 2019.

Eleven will produce the three home World Cup qualifiers played by Taiwan's men's team in the first stage of qualifying. This could extend to more home games should Taiwan progress through the first phase of qualifying.

## What's the appeal for Eleven?

There are three main reasons Eleven acquired the Fiba package in Taiwan.

First, Eleven has built its Taiwanese strategy around acquiring, wherever possible, baseball and basketball rights – these are the most popular sports in the country. Eleven held rights in Taiwan for this year's World Baseball Classic, Chinese Basketball Association rights in the 2016-17 season and the aforementioned NBA OTT rights.

Second, the success of Taiwan's national teams. Both the men's and women's teams have qualified for this year's Asia Cup. By qualifying for the Asia Cup, the men's team has reached the Fiba qualifiers. The women's team does not play any qualifier matches – reaching the semi-finals of the Asia Cup secures qualification to the World Cup.

Third, China's hosting of the 2019 Fiba World Cup. This influenced Eleven's decision to bid as it means there will be no issue of time zone differences negatively affecting viewing figures. ◆

## MOTORSPORT

# Eleven renews F1 for small increase in once-potent Poland

By Callum McCarthy

- Eleven will pay just over €1.1m per year for Polish Formula One rights in 2018 and 2019
- Eleven's current deal, for the 2016 and 2017 seasons, is worth just over €1m per year
- NC Plus picked up WRC rights for the remainder of 2017 and 2018 for about €300,000

**Eleven Sports Network has paid a marginal increase to renew Formula One rights in Poland in a deal with the MP & Silva agency.**

Pay-television broadcaster Eleven will pay just over €1.1m (\$1.3m) per year in a two-year deal covering 2018 and 2019. In its current two-year deal, covering 2016 and 2017, it pays just over €1m per year (*TV Sports Markets* 20:3).

Eleven will continue to show every practice, qualifying session and race live. It will continue to send a camera crew and presenter to each race.

The value of Formula One rights in the country has never recovered after the departure from the sport of Polish driver Robert Kubica in 2011. At their peak, commercial and pay-television broadcaster Polsat was paying \$7.5m per year in a three-year deal, from 2011 to 2013 (*TV Sports Markets* 18:6).

Rumours have circulated about Kubica's possible return to Formula One after he was hired last month by Renault as a test driver. One source said Eleven's new deal contained a 'Kubica clause', whereby the broadcaster would have to pay significantly more should he return to the sport. Eleven and MP & Silva did not comment on the deal's structure.

In December 2013, MP & Silva acquired Formula One rights in the Middle East and North Africa, Poland, Romania and Bulgaria in a six-year deal, from 2014 to 2019, worth more than \$40m per year (*TV Sports Markets* 18:1).

## WRC strikes Polish deal

The World Rally Championship has secured a deal with pay-television operator NC Plus for the remainder of the 2017 season and the entirety of 2018. The deal was struck in time for the Rally of Poland, held from June 29 to July 2.

The Rally of Poland was reintroduced to the WRC in 2014. It had featured only once before, in WRC's inaugural 1973 season.

The deal with NC Plus is worth a total of just under €300,000, or an average of just under €200,000 per year. The operator has committed to show live coverage of each rally's Power Stage – the final stage of each rally that takes place on a short, closed circuit.

The WRC had no pay-television deal in place for the first six rallies of the season, after its two-year deal with Polsat, covering 2015 and 2016, expired without renewal. That deal is thought to have been worth about €400,000, or about €200,000 per year.

The WRC also has a separate year-on-year rolling deal with Polski Związek Motorowy, Poland's motorsport association, covering free-to-air rights to the Rally of Poland. This deal is thought to have no cash value.

PZM sublicenses these rights to Polish public-service broadcaster TVP. It is thought the deal between PZM and TVP is based on value-in-kind, whereby PZM sponsors gain airtime on TVP.

WRC does not demand a fee for the free-to-air rights because the coverage pleases its car manufacturers, which enter the championship mostly for marketing purposes, and demand free-to-air exposure to help drive car sales. ◆

## FOOTBALL

# FEF not worried about GolTV missing payments in Venezuela

By Mónica Villar

**Ecuador's football federation says it is unconcerned about its recent deal with GolTV, despite the pay-television broadcaster delaying payments in its equivalent agreement with the Venezuelan football federation.**

The Federación Ecuatoriana de Fútbol agreed a 10-year deal in principle for its club football rights with GolTV in March, although the agreement was only announced last month. It will be worth a minimum of \$276m (€242m) over the period from 2018 to 2027, or an average of \$27.6m per year (*TV Sports Markets* 21:5).

GolTV, owned by the Tenfield agency, also holds rights to Venezuelan top-tier club football in a two-year deal with the Federación Venezolana de Fútbol. The deal covers 2016 and 2017 and is worth about \$20m per year.

One industry insider confirmed GolTV had stopped payments to the FVF as the broadcaster is struggling amid the tricky economic situation in Venezuela.

FEF head of marketing Diego Palma told *TV Sports Markets* that to his knowledge the associations and leagues that work with GolTV are being paid on time.

However, he said the FEF's contract with GolTV includes a "guarantee clause" for payments that is enforceable should the broadcaster miss any payments. He added: "We are sure that GolTV is the right partner to help develop Ecuadorian football and that such problems won't exist."

## Ecuadorian deal

GolTV's deal with the FEF is based on a minimum guarantee, starting at \$22m in 2018 and rising by five per cent each year.

However, there are two revenue mechanisms to the deal. The FEF will earn either: the minimum of \$22m in 2018, rising five per cent year; or 75 per cent of GolTV's earnings from the rights, whichever is higher.

The FEF's current deals – with state-controlled channels Ecuador TV, GamaTV and TC Televisión – run from 2014 to 2017 and are worth about \$18m per year.

Palma said GoTV made such a lucrative long-term offer because the broadcaster sees very high potential in Ecuadorian football.

He said: “Currently, about 25 per cent of all Ecuadorian households are subscribed to cable TV services. The growth projections are very high therefore we expect to receive more than the guaranteed \$276m.”

GoTV has committed to broadcasting all six weekly Serie A and at least two weekly Serie B matches live. It also plans to show Ecuadorian football in other Latin American countries in which it operates, and may sublicense rights to other broadcasters elsewhere.

Pay-television broadcasters DirecTV and Fox Sports late last month accused the FEF of running an insufficiently transparent tender. DirecTV was a backer of Win Sports, one of the losing bidders in the FEF’s tender. OTT service Servisky and the Lagardère Sports agency also bid unsuccessfully in the FEF tender – Lagardère bid for international rights.

Palma strongly denied the accusation, saying: “DirecTV were fully aware and part of the tender process. We have all the documentation to support our position.”

An informed source told *TV Sports Markets* that Fox had not bid during the defined tender process. ◆



*For the full interview with Diego Palma, visit*  
[www.sportbusiness.com](http://www.sportbusiness.com)



## FOOTBALL

# Latin American broadcasters await Club World Cup outcome

By Mónica Villar

**Weak offers from broadcasters focused on other properties have delayed the award of 2017 Fifa Club World Cup rights in Latin America.**

Rights are being sold in two tenders: one covering Latin America and another covering Brazil. The two ran concurrently, with first-round bids due on June 16 and a second round ending on July 7.

Though there is not expected to be a third round of bidding, no winner had been declared in either tender as *TV Sports Markets* went to press.

Fifa – football’s global governing body – is hoping to earn \$2m (€1.7m) in each tender, but local sources suggest initial bids have been lower than hoped (*TV Sports Markets* 21:12).

For rights in Brazil there were bids from media groups Globo and Turner, and from pay-television broadcasters ESPN Brasil and Fox Sports.

Pay-television broadcasters ESPN Latin America and Fox Sports Latin America bid for the rights across the region, as did pay-television operator DirecTV. Publishing group Claro also bid for rights across Latin America.

Low bidding – despite the breadth of interest – is thought to be due to regional players keeping their powder dry for the upcoming tender for Copa Libertadores and Copa Sudamericana rights.

These competitions, Conmebol’s equivalent to Uefa’s Champions League and Europa League, are expected on the market next month. They are among the most important properties in the region.

A secondary reason is the change in the calendar of this year’s Copa Libertadores, meaning bidders for the Club World Cup do not know which club will represent Conmebol in the tournament.

Until 2017, the Copa Libertadores final – the winner of which automatically qualifies for the Club World Cup semi-finals – was played in late July or early August. But the year-round format introduced this year means the final will be played in November.

The 2017 Club World Cup will be held from December 6-16 in the United Arab Emirates. ◆



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# DEALS ROUND-UP

## JULY 6 TO 19

### FOOTBALL

- ◆ BeIN Media Group allocated rights to the Süper Lig, the top division of club football in Turkey, to its pay-television broadcaster beIN Sports in France for at least the 2017-18 season (page 18).
- ◆ Cypriot telco PrimeTel acquired rights for Germany's top tier, the Bundesliga. The exclusive deal will run for four seasons, from 2017-18 to 2020-21.
- ◆ Swiss telco UPC agreed an exclusive deal to show all German Bundesliga matches broadcast by pay-television operator Sky Deutschland (page 8).
- ◆ BeIN Sports announced an extension of its deal for Bundesliga rights in France. The deal, which was first reported in *TV Sports Markets* 20:11, will run for four seasons, from 2017-18 to 2020-21.
- ◆ Swiss public-service broadcaster SRG extended its deal for Champions League and Europa League rights from 2018-19 to 2020-21 (page 8).
- ◆ State-owned sports broadcaster Match TV acquired rights in Russia for the 2017 Uefa women's European Championship, which runs from July 16 to August 6. Match TV will show coverage of Russia's games.
- ◆ Pay-television broadcaster Fox Sports Asia signed a deal with Tottenham Hotspur to broadcast the English Premier League club's Spurs TV international programming block. The exclusive deal will cover two seasons, 2017-18 and 2018-19. Spurs TV's weekly highlights programme will be broadcast in Brunei, Cambodia, East Timor, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Laos, Macau, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand and Vietnam.
- ◆ Russian Premier League club FC Ufa assigned rights for the 2017-18 season to local broadcaster BCT.
- ◆ Russian Premier League club Rubin Kazan assigned rights for the 2017-18 season to local channel THB.
- ◆ UK free-to-air digital-terrestrial channel Quest acquired exclusive rights for the 2017 Emirates Cup pre-season tournament, which takes place on July 29-30, and is hosted by English Premier League club Arsenal. Also playing in this year's tournament are Portuguese Primeira Liga club Benfica, German Bundesliga club RB Leipzig and Sevilla of Spain's Primera División.
- ◆ International sports broadcaster Eurosport acquired rights in Poland for the DFB-Pokal, the top domestic knockout competition in Germany. The exclusive deal will run for four seasons, from 2018-19 to 2021-22.
- ◆ Chilean state broadcaster TVN acquired rights to Liga MX, Mexico's top-tier club competition.

### OTHER SPORTS

- ◆ **Basketball:** Social media platform Twitter signed a live-streaming partnership with Liga Nacional de Básquetbol, the organising body of club basketball in Argentina, for the La Liga finals

# DEALS ROUND-UP

## JULY 6 TO 19

between San Lorenzo and Regatas. Games were played on July 6 and 10.

◆ **Basketball:** Italy's Lega Basket sold domestic free-to-air rights to state broadcaster Rai; and both domestic pay-television and international rights to US media company Discovery Communications (page 20).

◆ **Basketball:** German sports broadcaster Sport1 acquired free-to-air rights to the national team's games in the Supercup tournament, plus a friendly against France, from the Lagardère Sports agency. The Supercup will be held in Hamburg from August 18-20; the friendly against France will take place on August 27 in Berlin.

◆ **Boxing:** UKTV, the UK multi-channel broadcaster, signed a rights deal with Hayemaker Ringstar, the joint venture between heavyweight boxer David Haye and promoter Richard Schaefer. The exclusive three-year deal will include coverage of five fight nights in Britain and Ireland. The rights will be exploited on UKTV's free-to-air entertainment channel, Dave.

◆ **Boxing:** Multi-territory commercial and pay-television broadcaster Modern Times Group acquired rights for the August 26 fight between Floyd Mayweather Jr. and Conor McGregor. Coverage will be available on the Viasat pay-television platform and the Viaplay video-streaming service in Scandinavia.

◆ **Cricket:** UK pay-television broadcaster BT Sport acquired rights to this year's Caribbean Premier League Twenty20 tournament. BT will

broadcast all 34 matches from the competition, which runs from August 4 to September 9.

◆ **Formula One:** International sports broadcaster Eleven Sports Network will continue to show live and exclusive F1 coverage in Poland for the 2018 and 2019 seasons (page 29).

◆ **Golf:** French pay-television broadcaster Canal Plus signed a multi-year renewal of its PGA Tour rights deal.

◆ **Golf:** Indian pay-television broadcaster DSport acquired live rights to the Open Championship on a "long-term" basis.

◆ **Kickboxing:** The Glory promotion appointed the MP & Silva agency to distribute its media rights in North and South America.

◆ **Mixed Martial Arts:** US sports broadcaster ESPN acquired rights to Hispanic series Combate Americas' Combate Clásico event, which takes place in Miami on July 27.

◆ **Multi-sport:** Italian DTT sports broadcaster Sportitalia acquired rights for the 2017 World Games, which will take place in the Polish city of Wrocław from July 20-30.

◆ **Olympic Games:** The International Olympic Committee awarded rights to the 2018, 2020, 2022 and 2024 Games across sub-Saharan Africa to three companies. DSTV, the pay-television operator owned by Multichoice, acquired exclusive pay-television rights in South Africa and non-exclusive pay-television rights across the rest of the region. Telco Econet secured exclusive free-to-air and non-exclusive pay-television rights across sub-Saharan Africa,

## DEALS ROUND-UP

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excluding South Africa. South African public-service broadcaster SABC acquired free-to-air rights. These deals were first reported in *TV Sports Markets* 21:8.

◆ **Para Athletics:** Brazilian pay-television broadcaster Globosat acquired rights to the 2017 World Para Athletics Championships, which take place in London from July 14-23. The deal with the Brazilian Paralympic Committee also includes the 2017 World Para Swimming Championships in Mexico City.

◆ **Rugby League:** Eleven acquired rights in the US to the games played by Canadian team Toronto Wolfpack, which plays in England's third-tier League 1 competition.

◆ **US College Sport:** The Learfield Sports agency agreed a multimedia rights partnership with the athletics department of Northern Arizona University. The 10-year deal will run from 2017-18 to the end of 2026-27. Learfield will manage all television and digital coverage of the university's sports teams.

◆ **US College Sport:** Sports streaming specialist FloSports agreed a multi-year deal with Basketball Travelers Inc., which organises events featuring top US basketball universities.

◆ **Volleyball:** German sports broadcaster Sport1 signed a long-term extension to its rights deal for the European Volleyball Confederation's showpiece national team events. The contract includes the men's and women's volleyball European Championships in 2017, 2019 and 2021, along with the beach volleyball European Championships for both sexes through to 2021.

### MEDIA RIGHTS NEGOTIATIONS

◆ Mediaset vice-president Pier Silvio Berlusconi said the Italian broadcaster would be interested in a partnership with pay-television rival Sky Italia covering the final season of its Uefa Champions League rights deal.

◆ Ecuadorian government-controlled channels GamaTV and TC Televisión agreed to pay debts related to their deals for the Primera Categoría Serie A and Serie B, the top tiers of domestic football, according to the Ecuadorian football federation. The debts accumulated by GamaTV and TC Televisión are said to amount to \$3.6m (€3m).

◆ Football-focused digital video platform Copa90 said it has acquired rights to three friendly matches. Copa90 did not confirm which matches it had acquired rights to but said the first match would be shown within six weeks and involved a 'top 10' English Premier League club.

◆ Australian commercial broadcaster Nine's head of sport, Tom Malone, said it would push for an early renewal of rights to events operated by Cricket Australia, despite plans by the governing body to delay the sales process until next year. Cricket Australia reportedly plans to postpone any rights auction until a dispute with the Australian Cricketers' Association over a new pay deal is resolved.

◆ The PGA of America said it would not extend its UK rights deal with pay-television broadcaster Sky for the PGA Championship, one of golf's four majors. The *Financial Times* reported that social media platform Twitter was in negotiations to

## DEALS ROUND-UP

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acquire UK rights to the 2017 championship. There were also reports that public-service broadcaster the BBC has acquired free-to-air rights under a multi-year agreement.

◆ The Russian Premier League, the top division of domestic football, is targeting a 50-per-cent increase in the value of its next broadcast contract. The Premier League this month entered the final season of its current deal with broadcaster Match TV.

◆ The New York State Supreme Court Appellate Division ruled that a committee of Major League Baseball team owners and executives should be able to decide how much money regional cable-television broadcaster MASN owes the Washington Nationals for broadcasting the team's games. In November 2015, a New York State Supreme Court justice rejected an arbitration decision from the MLB panel that said MASN owes the Nationals \$298m (€262m) for the team's television rights between 2012 and 2016. The arbitration decision will now revert to the MLB panel.

◆ Lega Serie A, the organising body of the top division of Italian club football, said bidders for its international rights for the 2018-19 to 2020-21 seasons could make offers for continents, regions, individual countries or by language. The rights will be offered on a platform-neutral basis, and any party can bid for any package.

◆ Talks resumed over a sublicensing deal for the Olympic Games between US media company Discovery Communications and German state broadcasters ARD and ZDF (page 12).

◆ The Board of Control for Cricket in India will launch a new tender for media rights to the Indian Premier League Twenty20 competition on July 21. Bid submissions are due on August 28, with the results of the tender expected to be announced on the same day. India's Supreme Court had said it was considering a submission from Bharatiya Janata Party member Subramanian Swamy for an early hearing of his plea concerning the tender process. Swamy had called for an e-auctioning process to gain maximum value from the tender and ensure its transparency. The tender is due to cover five editions of the IPL, from 2018 to 2022.

## INDUSTRY NEWS IN BRIEF

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- ◆ Action sports competition the X Games agreed a partnership with South Korean consumer electronics company Samsung to be broadcast in virtual reality for the first time. Selected live events at the 2017 X Games, held from July 13-16, were broadcast in VR.
- ◆ UK pay-television broadcaster Sky confirmed details of its revamped 10-channel sports offering. Sky will offer dedicated channels for football, the Premier League, golf and cricket, alongside the existing Sky Sports F1 channel. New channels include Sky Sports Action and Sky Sports Arena, which will showcase a range of sports, and Sky Sports Main Event, which will serve as the home of Sky's biggest events. The Sky Sports News and Sky Sports Mix channels will be retained and will be available to all Sky customers.
- ◆ The Hong Kong division of Chinese sports and entertainment company Wuhan DDMC Culture Co agreed a deal to acquire Super Sports Media Group. The takeover is reportedly valued at \$500m (€437m).
- ◆ Spanish agency Mediapro hailed its latest court victory against media company Prisa in the long-running 'football war' over rights to the top tier of domestic football. The Court of First Instance No. 37 of Barcelona dismissed Prisa's attempt to sue Mediapro for €85m (\$97m) in compensation for the rights of several clubs exploited by Mediapro during the 2007-08 and 2008-09 seasons. The Spanish Supreme Court had ruled, in January 2015, that the model of football rights exploitation used by Prisa breached fair competition rules.
- ◆ German media companies Axel Springer and Constantin Medien entered exclusive talks over the former's acquisition of sports broadcaster Sport1, according to multiple reports. The Reuters news agency reported Axel Springer had offered more than €80m (\$96m).
- ◆ English Premier League football club Manchester United made its in-house television channel, MUTV, available to supporters in the UK and Ireland through a new streaming service at mutv.com. The service costs £4.99 (€5.63/\$6.42) per month.
- ◆ French telco Orange expanded a partnership with pay-television broadcaster Canal Plus. The enhanced partnership will include premium sports, movies and other programming. A new Canal Plus 'Essentiel' package featuring the broadcaster's French channels will be offered to Orange fibre broadband customers in the coming months.
- ◆ Swiss telco UPC will press ahead with plans to launch new sports broadcast platform MySports on September 8 after the Swiss Competition Commission (COMCO) decided against precautionary measures concerning the broadcasting of ice hockey on the new channel. COMCO in May opened an investigation into the pay-television market for ice hockey in the country, stating there had been "indications" of antitrust violations by UPC.
- ◆ Sky Deutschland is to launch an OTT sports service in Switzerland next month. The platform will include coverage of the Bundesliga, the top division of football in Germany.

## INDUSTRY NEWS IN BRIEF

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- ◆ Dutch competition authority the Autoriteit Consument en Markt dropped a preliminary investigation into the dedicated Eredivisie football channel operated by pay-television broadcaster Fox Sports. Cable operator Caiway had requested that the ACM consider whether changes in the terms of conditions for carriage of the channel violated the Dutch Competition Act. The authority ruled there was insufficient evidence that consumers are negatively impacted by the changes imposed by Fox.
- ◆ The ACM approved the takeover of commercial broadcaster SBS by Talpa Holding. Talpa acquired a 67-per-cent stake in SBS from majority shareholder Sanoma Media. The deal grants Talpa full ownership of the SBS6, NET5, Veronica and SBS9 television stations. Talpa's stake in television guide business Veronica Uitgeverij will be sold to Sanoma.
- ◆ Games from this year's Netball Youth World Cup were streamed live on Facebook and Twitter as part of a global agreement between the International Netball Federation and Botswanan online portal Tsena.
- ◆ Indian pay-television broadcaster Star Sports launched Star Sports First, a free-to-air channel. The channel will debut on July 21 and will be available via direct-to-home service DD Freedish. Star Sports First will show coverage of India's Pro Kabaddi League, as well as cricket and football.
- ◆ Media group Sony Pictures Networks India launched the Sony Ten 2 HD and Sony Ten 3 HD channels, which will sit among 11 channels under the Sony Pictures Sports Network banner.
- ◆ BeIN Media Group hit out angrily at media reports its beIN Sports channels were being blacked out in the Middle East and North Africa as a consequence of the Saudi Arabia-led economic blockade of Qatar. In an exclusive interview with *SportBusiness International*, the company also dismissed concerns about its continued existence, both in its core Mena market and other territories in which it operates around the world.
- ◆ Mexican football club Chivas Guadalajara plans to offer its in-house OTT platform, Chivas TV, on a global basis after sealing a partnership with streaming services provider Playmaker Media. The platform will show domestic Liga MX and Copa MX matches, as well as U-20 and U-17 matches.
- ◆ Several major broadcasters from around the world complained to Fifa, football's global governing body, over plans to stage the final of the 2018 football World Cup at the same time as the men's singles final from next year's Wimbledon tennis tournament. UK public-service broadcaster the BBC and Japanese public-service broadcaster NHK, which both hold rights for the two events in their respective markets, were reportedly among those to have expressed their concerns.
- ◆ Telco Altice sealed an agreement to acquire Spanish media group Prisa's stake in Media Capital. Portuguese media group Media Capital owns commercial broadcaster TVI, a major broadcaster of sport in the country, and the largest Portuguese content producer, Plural. The deal values the group at €440m (\$501m).



## INDUSTRY NEWS IN BRIEF

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◆ The International World Games Association said the 2017 edition of its showpiece event would receive record levels of exposure. The event runs from July 20-30 in Wrocław, Poland, and will be shown by digital-terrestrial broadcaster L'Équipe in France, Match TV in Russia and commercial broadcaster TBS in Japan. Pay-television operator Kwesé TV will show the event in sub-Saharan Africa. The International Olympic Committee's Olympic Channel will present 235 hours of coverage of the World Games through a 24/7 online channel dedicated to the event on its global digital platform. The Games will also be broadcast on The World Games Channel, hosted by the IWGA.

◆ Fina, the global governing body of aquatic sports, partnered with sports media and technology company deltatv to launch a new OTT subscription service, FINAtv, carrying live and on-demand coverage of Fina's leading events. It was launched to coincide with the 2017 World Aquatics Championships in Budapest, which began on July 14. An annual pass will be available for \$39.99 (€35) and a World Championships pass for \$19.99. After the World Championships, a monthly pass will cost \$7.99.

◆ The International Paralympic Committee revealed that this year's World Para Athletics Championships would be shown by more than 30 broadcasters – a record for the event.

◆ The Formula One motor-racing series agreed a global partnership with social media platform Snapchat. The deal with Snapchat's parent company Snap Inc. represents Formula One's first commercial collaboration with a major

digital platform. The deal commenced with coverage of the British Grand Prix on July 16.

◆ Media companies Discovery Communications and Viacom held separate merger talks with Scripps Networks Interactive, according to the Bloomberg news agency.

### INDUSTRY MOVES

◆ World Rugby, the global governing body for rugby union, appointed Tom Hill as its new chief commercial officer. Hill will be responsible for driving World Rugby's broadcast, commercial and marketing strategies. He will join World Rugby in September from Manchester United, where he has been serving as global head of partnerships and operations.

◆ Stuart Turner, a former commercial director at the English Football Association, joined World Street Soccer Championships as a commercial consultant.

◆ North American stock car-racing series Nascar appointed Evan Parker as its managing director of content strategy.

◆ Scott Warfield was named as Nascar's managing director of digital and social content.

◆ Jeff Wohlschlaeger was appointed as Nascar's managing director of series marketing.

◆ Brandon Igdalsky joined Nascar as managing director of event marketing and promotion.

◆ Günter Netzer, a founding member of Infront Sports & Media, announced his retirement as an executive director of the agency.