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FOOTBALL

More Uefa national team gains in France, Ireland and Romania

By Robin Jellis

- Uefa to earn €26m for third-party European Qualifier and Nations League rights in France
- RTÉ to pay €14m for rights to Euro 2020 and all Ireland European Qualifier matches
- Pro TV will pay €12.5m for Euro 2020 and rights to all Romania national team matches

Uefa secured increases for various national-team media rights in recent deals covering France, Ireland and Romania totalling about €42.5m (\$50.7m).

Uefa, football's European governing body, is currently selling European Qualifiers from 2018-19 to 2021-22, the Nations League tournaments in 2018-19 and 2020-21, and the European Championship in 2020.

In France, digital-terrestrial broadcaster L'Équipe was the surprise buyer of the remaining package of third-party European Qualifier and Nations League matches – those not involving France – in a deal worth about €16m. *TV Sports Markets* understands a package of first-pick third-party international matches has been acquired by commercial broadcasters M6 and TF1.

In Ireland, Uefa struck a deal with public-service broadcaster RTÉ for rights to Euro 2020 and all European Qualifier matches involving the Irish national team worth about €14m.

In Romania, commercial broadcaster Pro TV acquired rights to Euro 2020 as well as all of Romania's European Qualifier and Nations League matches. The deal will be worth about €12.5m.

Uefa is advised on the sale of its national team rights by the CAA Eleven agency. The addition of the Nations League from 2018-19 onward makes a direct comparison to the current cycle difficult, but Uefa has increased its earnings in each of the three territories.

Uefa almost done in France

Uefa originally offered rights to its national team competitions to French broadcasters on April 25 last year, with bids due on May 30.

The governing body made available five packages of rights:

- A: 12 matches of the French national team in the Nations League, including the Final Four should France qualify

- B1: half of the 28 matches of the French national team in qualifying for Euro 2020 and the 2022 Fifa World Cup
- B2: the other half of the 28 matches of the French national team in qualifying for Euro 2020 and the 2022 Fifa World Cup
- C: The 40 first-pick matches of national teams excluding France from 2018-2022
- D: All other matches live plus matches from the other packages on a delayed basis.

M6 and TF1 jointly acquired all matches of the France national team from 2018-2022 (packages A, B1 and B2) in a deal worth about €140m (*TV Sports Markets* 20:18). The deal is thought to have been struck in principle in June last year, but all parties are still finalising long-form agreements.

In the current cycle, from 2014-15 to 2017-18, pay-television broadcaster Canal Plus holds rights to all third-party European Qualifier matches – effectively packages C and D in the new cycle, although the Nations League is a new addition from 2018-19. Canal Plus pays €16m in total for these rights (*TV Sports Markets* 18:14).

TV Sports Markets understands M6 and TF1 have acquired rights to package C, effectively a first-pick, third-party match each match-week. The two will jointly pay a total of about €10m. This deal was agreed as part of the M6/TF1 deal for France matches. The broadcasters will show matches on their secondary channels, W9 and TMC respectively.

M6 was keen to acquire rights to these matches ahead of the loss of its Uefa Europa League rights from 2018-19. In May, pay-television broadcaster SFR Sport acquired exclusive Champions League and Europa League rights in France in a deal worth about €350m per season, from 2018-19 to 2020-21 (*TV Sports Markets* 21:8).

Uefa's deals with M6, TF1 and L'Équipe means third-party matches will command a total of about €26m from 2018-2022, or an average of about €6.5m per season. This is an increase of about 62.5 per cent on the value of these rights in the current cycle.

Uefa is yet to offer Euro 2020 rights to broadcasters in the country.

Latest Uefa national team rights deals in France

Cycle	Broadcaster	Duration	Fee (€m)	Inventory
New cycle	M6/TF1	2018-19 to 2021-22	140	All France European Qualifier and Nations League matches
	M6/TF1	2018-19 to 2021-22	10	First-pick third-party matches
	L'Équipe	2018-19 to 2021-22	16	All third-party matches excluding the first pick
Current cycle	TF1	2014-15 to 2017-18	135	All France European Qualifier and friendly matches
	Canal Plus	2014-15 to 2017-18	16	All third-party matches

Source: *TV Sports Markets Rights Tracker*

L'Équipe surprises with third-party move

The acquisition of the majority of third-party European Qualifier and Nations League matches (package D) is a surprisingly aggressive move from L'Équipe. Until now, the broadcaster has generally spent only small fees on sports rights.

A source close to L'Équipe said it was particularly keen to acquire this package of Uefa rights to round off its portfolio. These matches will generally provide content during the autumn while L'Équipe already holds rights to the Giro d'Italia cycling race (May) and International Biathlon Union World Championship and World Cup events (December to March).

L'Équipe acquired Giro rights from the IMG agency in a four-year deal, from 2017 to 2020, worth between €3m per year and €4.5m per year (*TV Sports Markets* 21:2).

The broadcaster currently holds IBU rights until the end of 2017-18 and has renewed for the four seasons from 2018-19 to 2021-22. Its rights were sublicensed from the European Broadcasting Union, the consortium of Europe's public-service broadcasters, which will hold global IBU rights over the period in a deal worth about €22.5m per season (*TV Sports Markets* 20:9).

L'Équipe's main competition for package D is said to have come from Canal Plus. Pay-television broadcaster beIN Sports is thought to have bid, but only at a low level. SFR Sport did not bid.

M6 and TF1 are said to be unhappy that Uefa awarded the majority of third-party matches to a rival free-to-air broadcaster – L'Équipe will show matches at the same time as M6 and TF1.

Uefa was persuaded to accept L'Équipe's offer given its ability to promote Uefa national team competitions via its freely-available channel and its eponymous daily sports newspaper. In June, L'Équipe sold an average of just over 226,000 copies per day.

L'Équipe will broadcast 11 matches per match-week, including seven in primetime at 8.45pm CET. Its four other matches per match-week will be shown at weekends. The broadcaster will also be able to show all matches on a delayed basis, including those of the French national team.

L'Équipe will show Uefa content in international match-weeks on its daily football chat show, *L'Équipe du soir*, which usually airs from 10.30pm to 12am. A source close to the broadcaster said this programme generally attracts audiences of between 500,000 and 800,000.

One informed source said: "The promotion aspect and the news aspect is unique. If Uefa had gone with Canal Plus or beIN, these rights would be housed among lots of premium rights. They would not get the same coverage as what L'Équipe will provide."

The acquisition is seen as an aggressive move to further increase L'Équipe's audience share. In August 2015, its audience share was 0.6 per cent. By August 2017, this had risen to 1.3 per cent.

RTÉ retains Ireland matches

In Ireland, RTÉ paid an increase of about 27 per cent to maintain its grip on the Ireland national team's European Qualifiers as well as the European Championship.

In the current 2014-2018 cycle, RTÉ holds rights to Ireland's European Qualifier matches via its membership of the EBU. The EBU has a 30-territory deal with Uefa worth a total of about €80m. RTÉ contributes about €5m to the deal.

RTÉ held rights to Euro 2016, also via the EBU. The 26-territory EBU deal with Uefa was worth about €80m (*TV Sports Markets* 21:3). RTÉ contributed about €6m to this deal.

In the new 2018-2022 cycle, RTÉ will continue to broadcast these matches. Its total fee of about €14m is understood to split about €7.5m for Ireland European Qualifier matches, and €6.5m for Euro 2020.

Latest Uefa national team rights deals in Ireland

Cycle	Broadcaster	Duration	Fee (€m)	Inventory
New cycle	RTÉ	2018-19 to 2021-22	7.5	All Ireland European Qualifier matches
	RTÉ	2020	6.5	Euro 2020
Current cycle	RTÉ	2014-15 to 2017-18	5	All Ireland European Qualifier matches (via EBU)
	RTÉ	2016	6	Euro 2016 (via EBU)

Source: *TV Sports Markets Rights Tracker*

Uefa tendered its rights in Ireland on April 11, with bids due on May 9.

RTÉ is thought to have faced limited competition. Commercial broadcaster TV3 is thought to have been put off bidding due to the hefty host-broadcast commitments.

RTÉ will continue to cover the cost of producing Ireland home matches. It will also cover the cost of producing the four Euro 2020 matches played in Dublin. The Aviva Stadium will host three group-stage matches and one round of 16 match.

Gaelic-language channel TG4 is not thought to have the budget to compete with RTÉ for these rights. And there is understood to have been little interest from pay-television broadcaster Eir Sport.

RTÉ is thought to have been desperate to retain its hold on rights to matches of the Irish national team, especially following its loss of Six Nations rights to TV3 in November 2015. TV3 will pay €5m per year, from 2018 to 2021, for these rights. This is double the €2.5m per year paid by RTÉ, from 2014 to 2017 (*TV Sports Markets* 19:21).

RTÉ's interest was also driven by the recent success of the Irish national football team, which reached the round of 16 at Euro 2016. Ireland has qualified via the play-offs for the last two Euros, in 2012 and 2016. It also has a chance of qualifying for the 2018 World Cup.

However, RTÉ chose not to acquire Nations League rights. This is thought to be for three reasons.

First, its priority was to retain rights it currently holds or previously held. Second, the Nations League is an unproven media-rights product. Third, pay-television broadcaster Sky holds non-exclusive Nations League rights in Ireland as part of its deal for exclusive UK rights. That deal will be worth just under £100m (€109m/\$129m) across the period (*TV Sports Markets* 21:2).

Uefa and CAA Eleven are understood to have received offers for Nations League rights, but rejected them as it felt they were low. Sky is thought to have bid in order to have full exclusivity in the country.

Direct discussions will now be held with broadcasters. Uefa is keen to secure some free-to-air coverage for the Nations League in the country, although any deal would not be struck until early next year.

Irish sublicensing agreements

In March last year, RTÉ agreed to sublicense certain Euro 2016 matches to commercial broadcaster TV3 in a deal worth about €2m. TV3 showed 21 matches from the tournament on an exclusive basis, while the final was shown by both broadcasters. RTÉ retained rights to the better and more relevant matches, including all Ireland group-stage matches.

Local rights experts expect RTÉ to seek a similar sublicensing agreement for rights to Euro 2020 in order to recoup some of its investment in Uefa rights in the new cycle.

In March, TV3 agreed a sublicensing deal with Sky to show England's European Qualifier matches until the end of 2017-18.

TV3 is likely to agree a separate deal with Sky to show some third-party European Qualifier and Nations League matches in Ireland from 2018-19 to 2021-22. Sky will hold third-party European Qualifier rights non-exclusively in Ireland as part of its £40m deal from 2018-19 to 2021-22 covering the UK. Its current deal, from 2014-15 to 2017-18, is worth about £32m.

Pro TV holds off TVR

Pro TV beat a strong bid from Romanian public-service broadcaster TVR to secure rights to all Romania matches over the next four years, as well as Euro 2020. TVR is thought to have offered about €12m, while general entertainment channel Antena 1 also bid. Matches of the Romanian national football team must be shown free-to-air in accordance with local listed events legislation.

Uefa tendered its rights in Romania on June 23, with bids due on July 20. A second round was called on July 21, with bids due on July 25. This was only two working days later, making it difficult for TVR to submit another bid – it generally takes TVR two weeks to get revised or increased offers from its board.

TVR holds rights to Romania European Qualifier matches in the current 2014-2018 cycle via its membership of the EBU. TVR contributed between €4m and €5m toward the 30-territory EBU deal (*TV Sports Markets* 18:6).

Euro 2016 rights in the country were worth a total of about €6m across two deals. Telco Telekom Romania paid about €3.8m for rights to all 51 matches – 28 of which were on an exclusive basis.

The remaining 23 matches were acquired on a non-exclusive basis by Pro TV in a deal agreed shortly before the tournament worth about €2.2m (*TV Sports Markets* 20:11).

Latest Uefa national team rights deals in Romania

Cycle	Broadcaster	Duration	Fee (€m)	Inventory
New cycle	Pro TV	2018-19 to 2021-22	12.5	Euro 2020, all Romania European Qualifier and Nations League matches
Current cycle	TVR	2014-15 to 2017-18	4.5	All Romania European Qualifier matches (via EBU)
	Telekom Romania	2016	3.8	All Euro 2016 matches (23 non-exclusive)
	Pro TV	2016	2.2	23 non-exclusive Euro 2016 matches

Source: *TV Sports Markets Rights Tracker*

This deal was contested by TVR and Antena 1, who argued that Pro TV is not a free-to-air channel according to the criteria laid down by the Romanian Audiovisual Council. The council ruled that TVR1 was the only channel which qualified as free-to-air as it is the only channel that has universal penetration and is accessible without the payment of any fees.

Pro TV had been freely available until 2013, at which point it began to charge carriage fees from cable operators to supplement its advertising income. One local expert estimated that Pro TV earns about €4m per month from its cable operator carriage fees. The broadcaster is understood to have a penetration rate of between 94 and 95 per cent in the country.

TVR is no longer funded by a licence fee – this was abolished late last year. TVR now receives a specific budget each year from the government. For 2017 this is €147m. TVR also generates revenue from advertising. It is limited to eight minutes of advertising per hour, of which just under half is used to promote TVR's own content.

An informed source said TVR would not have been able to come close to monetising an investment in Uefa national team rights. The source said TVR would only have earned about 30 per cent of the eventual rights fee from advertising.

A source close to Uefa said the governing body did not envisage any legal difficulties following the award of the rights in a new cycle to Pro TV. Uefa is content that Pro TV reaches a significant proportion of the country.

TV Sports Markets understands Pro TV was also Uefa's preferred choice due to TVR's financial difficulties. In April last year, TVR lost its EBU membership privileges after failing to pay debts of €14.5m to the consortium.

Third-party European Qualifier matches in the current 2014-2018 cycle are held by telco RCS-RDS, which owns pay-television broadcaster Digi Sport, in a deal worth a total of about €500,000. Uefa and CAA Eleven are yet to agree a deal for third-party European Qualifier and Nations League matches in the new cycle.

ProTV's Uefa rationale

Pro TV is understood to have been prepared to pay an increase on the current value of the rights as the sales process presented a good opportunity to acquire a large chunk of national team content in one deal.

Pro TV will cover the cost of producing Romania's home European Qualifier and Nations League matches. It will also cover the production cost of the four Euro 2020 matches played in Bucharest. The Arena Națională will host three group-stage matches and one round of 16 match.

The broadcaster's current major football rights deals are for the Uefa Champions League and Europa League. Both run from 2015-16 to 2017-18. Pro TV pays just under €3m per season for the first-pick Champions League match each Tuesday. Together with Telekom Romania it pays just under €3.5m per season for all Europa League rights (*TV Sports Markets* 19:1). Uefa will not look to sell its club competition rights in Romania from 2018-19 onward until next year.

Pro TV is also one of three broadcasters to hold Romanian Cup rights in the country. RCS-RDS (which owns pay-television broadcaster Digi Sport) and Telekom Romania (which owns pay-television broadcaster Telekom Sport, formerly Dolce Sport) have the right to show all matches while Pro TV can show up to two matches per match-week. All deals are for three seasons, from 2015-16 to 2017-18, and were struck with the Romanian football federation.

Big Uefa deals to come

Uefa currently has tenders out in two potentially lucrative European markets: Italy and Spain.

Rights in Spain were tendered on August 8, with bids due on September 26. Rights in Italy were tendered on September 5, with bids due on October 3.

The governing body will also soon receive bids for its national team rights in Oceania and Mongolia. Tenders in both were issued on August 21, with bids for Oceania due on September 19 and September 20 for Mongolia. ♦

CRICKET

Star's monster IPL global rights deal is “game-defining” for BCCI

By David Cook

Board of Control for Cricket in India chief executive Rahul Johri told *TV Sports Markets* selling global Indian Premier League media rights to Star India for \$2.55bn (€2.14bn) was a “game-defining moment”.

Pay-television broadcaster Star acquired platform-neutral IPL rights for INR16.3475bn at the IPL's auction on September 4. The five-year deal, from 2018 to 2022, will be worth an average of about \$510m per year. The vast majority of the value of the deal is for rights in the Indian subcontinent.

This is a 558-per-cent increase on the value of media group Sony Pictures Networks' 10-year deal for IPL rights, from 2008 to 2017, for \$77.5m per year (*TV Sports Markets* 12:2). This deal covered the Indian subcontinent only.

Speaking exclusively to *TV Sports Markets* this week, Johri said: “It was a game-defining moment. If you look at the interests of Sony and Star and ultimately the final number, this is by far the highest number that has been put on cricket.

“It is testimony to the fact that, for any company which wants to target a growing economy like India, there's nothing better than cricket; the sheer confidence of a company to put this kind of amount on the table proves it.”

How the deals/bids compare

An invitation to tender was sent out by the BCCI on July 21. The deadline to buy the tender was August 24. A total of 24 companies bought the tender, with 14 deciding to bid. Only Star bid for global rights.

Among the 10 companies to buy the tender without bidding were: internet company Amazon, social media platform Twitter, web service provider Yahoo, UK pay-television broadcasters BT Sport and Sky, and Indian pay-television broadcaster DSport. A source close to DSport said the high cost of the rights meant it chose not to bid.

Star's winning bid was about 48 per cent higher than Sony's bid for rights in the Indian subcontinent only. Star sought global rights as it did not see enough value in picking up a portion of the rights, as it did in the previous cycle.

In the previous cycle, Star held digital rights only in the Indian subcontinent in a three-year deal, from 2015 to 2017, worth \$16.2m per year (*TV Sports Markets* 19:4). Star exploited these rights via its OTT platform, Hotstar.

The per-year value of Star's global deal is up 456 per cent on the value of the nine-year global rights deal the IPL agreed with WSG in 2008, which was worth \$91.8m per year, although this was later terminated (*TV Sports Markets* 14:12).

Bidders for Indian Premier League media-rights in 2018 to 2022 cycle

Package	Bidder 1	Bidder 2	Bidder 3	Bidder 4	Bidder 5
Global	Star - \$2.55bn				
Indian subcontinent TV	Sony - \$1.72bn	Star - \$968m			
Indian subcontinent digital	Facebook - \$609.2m	Airtel - \$512.4m	Jio - \$480.5m	TIL - \$279.3m	Star - \$225.4m
ROW - A (Australia, New Zealand and Rest of the World)	Followon - \$10.9m	TIL - \$8.3m	Star - \$2.8m		
ROW - B (Middle East and North Africa)	BeIN Media Group - \$60.9m	OSN - \$33m	Yupp - \$15.6m	Star - \$10.2m	
ROW - C (Sub-Saharan Africa)	SuperSport - \$18.7m	Econet - \$13.2m	Star - \$9.6m		
ROW - D (UK)	Star - \$7.6m				
ROW - E (North America)	Perform - \$37.6m	Yupp - \$36.7m	TIL - \$28.9m	Star - \$7.7m	

Source: *TV Sports Markets*

Why the BCCI chose Star

The BCCI was always likely to agree a deal with the highest bidder to prove the transparency of the auction process and avoid any suggestion of corrupt activity.

IPL founder Lalit Modi was expelled from the BCCI board and banned from involvement in Indian cricket in 2013 after being accused of various financial improprieties.

The deal with Star also allows the BCCI to distance itself from future sublicensing deals. It is widely believed the BCCI wished to partner with one company rather than have multiple deals.

Star has a track record in buying and distributing global rights for major cricket properties. It holds global BCCI rights in a six-season deal worth \$751m, from 2012-13 to 2017-18, and global rights to International Cricket Council events over eight years for \$2.1bn, from 2015-16 to 2022-23 (*TV Sports Markets* 16:7; 18:19).

What next for IPL rights outside India?

Several industry experts feel it is likely Star will sublicense IPL rights to pay-television broadcasters Sky and Fox Networks Group wherever possible, as all three fall under the Rupert Murdoch umbrella. Star India is owned by News Corp.

TV Sports Markets understands Sky is set to sublicense IPL rights in the UK from Star for about \$6m per year for the duration of Star's new deal. Sky paid between \$4m and \$5m per year for IPL rights for three years, from 2015 to 2017 (*TV Sports Markets* 18:19).

Star recently launched Hotstar in the US and *TV Sports Markets* understands a future launch in the Middle East is possible.

Digital players miss out this time

Social network platform Facebook was the highest bidder for digital rights in the Indian subcontinent, offering INR3.9bn, or about \$600m.

Despite being unsuccessful, the fact Facebook bid for top-tier rights in the Indian subcontinent is significant. As of July, Facebook says it has 201m active monthly users in India, making the country its second-largest market behind the US.

Johri said: “Facebook did bid aggressively for the digital rights. But as per the bidding process companies could form a consortium, and if its consolidated global bid happened to be greater than the sum of all individual bids – as was the case with Star India – they would have won the rights.”

One North American rights expert said he was not surprised about the number of bids for the rights in package E, covering the US and Canada, due to the growth in popularity of the IPL in the region. Digital media company Perform was the highest bidder for rights in this region and may still agree a sublicensing deal with Star in the two territories to show coverage on its OTT service DAZN.

What next for Sony?

There are conflicting views as to whether Sony can now mount any realistic challenge to Star’s powerful position in the market, having lost its grip on one of Indian sport’s crown jewel properties.

Sony still wields considerable power in the Indian cricket-rights market. The broadcaster has existing deals with several international cricket rights-holders: Cricket South Africa, Sri Lanka Cricket, the Pakistan Cricket Board, Cricket West Indies and Zimbabwe Cricket.

Football properties also form a key part of Sony’s portfolio, as it holds rights for the Fifa World Cup, Spanish LaLiga and Italian Serie A (*TV Sports Markets* 18:2, 19:15, 19:19).

Consultant Arunava Chaudhuri told *TV Sports Markets*: “Sony’s sports business was built around the IPL. I think they will now have to make more of a marketing push with their football rights.

“Even if Star does not make a profit from these rights, even if they take a small hit financially, it will have been worth it to prevent their competitor from acquiring the rights.” ♦



For the full interview with Rahul Johri, visit
www.sportbusiness.com

FOOTBALL

Sky's EFL streaming concession creates Premier League dilemma

By Frank Dunne

- Sky to pay average of £120m per season in five-season deal from 2019-20 to 2023-24
- Represents 36-per-cent increase on the £88m per season Sky currently pays
- Separately, EFL will earn an average of \$32m per season for its international rights

Media commentators will debate whether the 36-per-cent increase the English Football League secured for its rights from Sky is a great result, a disappointment, or something in between.

But to focus purely on the value of the linear television rights would be to underestimate an important breakthrough by the league: pushing Sky to allow live streaming of matches by clubs in the UK and Ireland.

Sky outbid rival pay-television broadcaster BT Sport to hold on to the domestic live rights to the league, for which it will pay an average of £120m (€130m/\$155m) per season over five seasons, from 2019-20 to 2023-24.

Sky's current deal is worth about £88m per season. It was originally for three seasons, from 2015-16 to 2017-18, and was extended for an additional season. The league had an option to renew for the 2019-20 season but chose not to, following market research conducted by the Oliver & Ohlbaum consultancy and rights expert Phil Lines (*TV Sports Markets* 21:4).

Sky and BT bid knowing the league wanted to carve out some digital rights for club use, but without knowing exactly what those rights would be. This meant the league, having accepted the Sky bid, had to push for the widest possible carve-out without Sky pushing for a discount in its fee.

It is understood that Sky was initially reluctant to agree to the league's demands but eventually accepted – without demanding a discount – for two reasons.

First, the number of matches streamed by the clubs will be relatively limited. It will not include matches shown by Sky or those that kick off at 3pm on Saturdays. In practice, this will be midweek matches of mostly secondary importance. The league said this week it was still unclear exactly how many matches this would entail.

The potential buyers will also be limited to fans who are prepared to pay to subscribe to the iFollow OTT service created by the league this year. This is currently available only outside the UK and Ireland and costs the local equivalent of £110 per season. The league has not said how much the service will cost in the UK and Ireland from 2019-20.

These factors mean the erosion of Sky's exclusivity will be modest.

Second, Sky will be able to stream the same matches the clubs will stream on its own digital platforms. This gives the broadcaster live football content midweek, at a time when BT has exclusive Uefa Champions League and Europa League rights.

The EFL includes 72 clubs across the three tiers of professional football below the Premier League: the Championship, League One and League Two.

Under the new deal, Sky will have the right to show a maximum of 150 matches per season, including:

- 16 Championship matches on Tuesday and Wednesday evenings
- a minimum of 20 League One and League Two matches
- the 15 EFL play-off matches including all three finals
- 15 matches from the League Cup (which also features Premier League teams) including the final
- the semi-finals and final of the EFL Trophy (open only to League One and League Two teams).

The league has yet to agree a deal for its highlights rights. These are currently held by commercial broadcaster Channel 5 in a three-season deal, from 2015-16 to 2017-18, worth just under £700,000 per season. The league is due to meet broadcasters, including public-service broadcaster the BBC, next week.

The EFL has already sold its international rights well into the future. They are held by the Pitch International agency in a five-season deal, from 2017-18 to 2021-22. Pitch is paying the EFL a minimum guarantee of \$160m, an average of \$32m per season. This is a 68-per-cent increase on the \$19m per season Pitch paid in its previous deal, from 2012-13 to 2016-17.

The Sky/EFL deal raises a number of other questions, including:

- why was BT not more aggressive?
- was the league right to agree a five-season deal when the market is considered to be on the cusp of significant OTT developments which could push up rights prices?
- to what extent will the EFL mixed model of centrally-sold linear rights and club streaming rights be followed by other leagues, including the Premier League?

BT caution after fall in profits

The league spoke to several interested parties about the rights, including internet company Amazon and social media platform Twitter. But in the end, the bidding was a head-to-head battle between BT and Sky. The process is said to have been competitive but BT blinked first. There are several reasons why it was not prepared to match Sky.

The most important reason is that in March, BT invested heavily in holding on to its sporting crown jewels – the two Uefa club competitions, for which BT will pay €456m per season in a three-season deal, from 2018-19 to 2020-21. This is a 27-per-cent increase on the €358.7m per season it pays in the 2015-16 to 2017-18 cycle (*TV Sports Markets* 21:5).

The second-most important factor was the impact of an accounting scandal in BT's Italian division, BT Italia. The scandal cost BT £225m which resulted in first-quarter profits falling by 42 per cent to £418m. This led to BT cutting costs, including reducing senior management salaries and laying off 4,000 staff.

UK industry sources also point to changes in senior management as a possible factor. Delia Bushell, managing director of BT TV and BT Sport, resigned in May. John Petter, chief executive of BT's consumer business, resigned in July. Both were hugely influential figures in BT's sports-rights strategy.

Finally, both BT and Sky are considered by most analysts to be taking a more cautious approach to rights acquisitions, more rooted in what drives subscription numbers, and less based on the payment of strategic premiums.

Take five

The league invited offers for a contract period of three or five seasons. Some industry experts argued this week that, at the fee Sky was offering, it would have made more sense to agree a three-season deal. The market is likely to become more competitive as digital giants like Amazon step up their investments in premium media content.

The long-expected platform wars between internet companies and legacy media companies are slowly becoming a reality, as evidenced by Facebook's \$600m bid for Indian Premier League cricket rights this month (see story, page 10).

It is understood the contract duration was debated at length by the EFL's commercial management committee. A period of five seasons was eventually chosen for two reasons. First, the committee felt there were as many signs of the UK rights market cooling as there were signs of continued inflation. Second, it was felt three seasons was not a sufficiently long time to be able to assess the performance of iFollow.

Five seasons would allow iFollow to mature and provide reliable data about annual take-up. This would be critical to the league understanding the value of its rights the next time it comes to market.

There was widespread backing for the deal – including its duration – by the clubs. The EFL’s commercial committee recommended it unanimously to the EFL board, which in turn approved it. Both bodies are made up of representatives of the three divisions.

Who will follow?

The iFollow OTT service was created this year by the league with video technology company NeuLion and UK-based digital agency Realise.

For the 2017-18 season, live streaming of matches is only available to fans outside the UK and Ireland. Clubs can stream any matches not chosen for live linear coverage by the league’s international broadcast partners. Live streaming in the UK and Ireland will begin from the 2019-20 season.

All matches are filmed in HD but the numbers of cameras used are decided by the individual clubs, which bear the costs of production and the transmission of the match feed.

The launch of the product was largely in response to the bigger clubs’ demands for greater control over the exploitation of their digital rights. However, at present, 12 clubs – including many of the biggest in the EFL – have still not signed up to the service. The 12 clubs are: Leeds United, Aston Villa, Derby County, Charlton Athletic, Birmingham City, Middlesbrough, Queens Park Rangers, Sunderland, Wolverhampton Wanderers, Bristol City, Forest Green Rovers and Accrington Stanley.

It is impossible to put a financial value on the streaming rights because no club can accurately forecast take-up. But some experts say that in having a global direct-to-consumer product which includes live matches, EFL clubs will be in a position that will be envied by many top clubs around the world. As one UK football insider put it this week, “you can be sure that the likes of Manchester United and Liverpool will be studying this very carefully”.

The question is whether the model can be replicated elsewhere. Most major football leagues make all matches available for live broadcast in their domestic market. It is highly unlikely they would reduce the number or open up live coverage to individual clubs.

The Premier League – which makes only 168 of its 380 matches per season available for domestic live broadcast – is the obvious exception. However, to effect any change to the league’s broadcasting policy, 14 clubs would need to vote in favour.

A new revenue stream would benefit all clubs, provided it didn’t hit the value of the main broadcast deal. But the concern of the small and medium-sized clubs would be that their financial position relative to the top five or six clubs would deteriorate. As such, it is likely they would oppose any such plan. ◆

BOXING

Super Series banks on ITV deal succeeding for first-season target

By Callum McCarthy

The World Boxing Super Series has focused on exposure and promotional commitments from broadcasters during its first season, as it banks on core boxing markets to provide most of its revenue.

Tournament operator Comosa and its appointed agency MP & Silva is hoping to earn a minimum of \$20m (€16.8m) in media-rights and pay-per-view revenue in 2017-18, with almost all of this expected to come from deals in Germany, the Nordics, the UK and the US (*TV Sports Markets* 21:10).

The WBSS is a new competition made up of two eight-man knockout tournaments at the super-middleweight and cruiserweight classes. There are a total of 14 events in 2017-18, with quarter-finals staged in September and October, semi-finals in January and February, and the finals in May.

MP & Silva chief executive Jochen Lösch told *TV Sports Markets* this week: "It's an ongoing process. Of course, in non-traditional boxing markets you need to make more effort to convince people to buy into it. Sometimes you get there and sometimes you don't."

The agency is understood to be paying a low, eight-figure-per-season dollar fee for WBSS rights outside the Nordics and the US, from 2017-18 to 2019-20, with the aim of making a return on its investment over the course of 2018-19 and 2019-20.

Deals in Europe, such as with commercial broadcaster RTL in the Netherlands, are only for one season and are understood to be based on either low six-figure or five-figure dollar rights fees, with added commitments to advertise and promote the tournament.

"We want one-season deals. We want to prove to everyone this is a fantastic product for which you should pay more money in the coming years," Lösch said. "We deliver something new, something broadcasters always wanted but never got from boxing: consistent programming and a fixed calendar, so they can build an audience."

The agency will only seek longer-term deals should rights fees reflect Comosa and MP & Silva's expectations for year-on-year growth.

In much of Asia and Latin America, MP & Silva has packaged WBSS rights alongside other properties in its portfolio to guarantee the tournament earns rights fees, as well as ensuring, wherever possible, that it is shown by broadcasters with high reach.

Comosa is less likely to make a profit in the first three seasons. It is expected to spend about \$100m on prize money, marketing, production and operational costs in 2017-18.

Kalle Sauerland, Comosa's chief boxing officer, told *TV Sports Markets*: "The investment model is clearly one where there is patience from the investor. It is about growing the brand in the right way and making certain business decisions that focus on long-term revenue."

ITV signs on in the UK

The WBSS's deal with commercial broadcaster ITV in the UK is based on a low minimum guarantee – thought to be in the high six figures – and a pay-per-view revenue share earned from events involving British fighters in the super-middleweight tournament: Chris Eubank Jr., George Groves and, should he progress to the final, Callum Smith.

Events involving Eubank Jr. and Groves will be shown on pay-per-view service ITV Box Office. Quarter-final and semi-final events involving Smith and fellow British super-middleweight Jamie Cox – who are less established – are likely to be shown on ITV's digital-terrestrial channel ITV4, or made available for free on ITV Box Office.

ITV will price each pay-per-view event on an ad-hoc basis, but prices are expected to begin at £12.95 (€14.06/\$16.76). Both parties hope the deal will yield five or six pay-per-view events, but this will depend on the performance of British fighters. Should British fighters perform badly, it is likely the deal will only yield three pay-per-view events.

Experts believe Comosa could earn anywhere between \$6m and \$10m from the deal, while sources close to Comosa are expecting more. It is thought MP & Silva initially wanted to receive an up-front rights fee of well in excess of £10m from the UK, but eventually settled on a hybrid revenue-share/minimum guarantee deal.

ITV began acquiring live boxing events at the end of 2016 after almost 10 years away from the sport, buying rights to two Eubank Jr. events in 2017.

Eubank's bout against Australian fighter Renold Quinlan in February earned just under £700,000 from pay-per-view, while a second bout against Germany's Arthur Abraham in July earned roughly double this. Comosa and MP & Silva are seeking strong growth on these amounts.

The WBSS deal represents good value for ITV at a time where it is seeking to become a major player in the UK's pay-per-view business, alongside pay-television broadcasters Sky and BoxNation. The deal provides ITV with 14 well-produced events as well as an opportunity to sign Groves and Smith to contracts after the tournament.

Deals in other core markets

Multi-territory commercial and pay-television broadcaster Modern Times Group is a shareholder in Comosa, and has been allocated rights in the Nordics for three seasons, from 2017-18 to 2019-20.

Sources close to Comosa have insisted MTG will pay market value for the rights, which experts believe to be between €2m and €3m per season. There is significant interest in Swedish super-middleweight Erik Skoglund.

In Germany, media group ProSiebenSat.1 has acquired rights in a deal structured similarly to ITV's deal in the UK – a combination of rights fee and pay-per-view revenue share – but with greater emphasis on the rights fee. The one-season deal covering 2017-18 is expected to yield at least €3m.

There is strong German interest in Jürgen Brähmer and Turkish super-middleweight Avni Yildirim. German cruiserweight Marco Huck is also very popular, but was eliminated in a quarter-final bout against Ukrainian Oleksandr Usyk on September 9.

A deal in the US has yet to be agreed, but a stop-gap agreement covering the quarter-finals is expected to be completed in the next two weeks. Pay-television broadcaster Showtime is the likely destination for the semi-finals and final of at least the super-middleweight tournament, but the broadcaster is not thought to be keen on the WBSS's focus on European fighters and events.

Comosa's original plan to stage seven events in both Europe and the US was to entice Showtime into a deal covering the entire 2017-18 season. Boxing insiders believe Showtime's reluctance to agree a deal for all 14 events has made Comosa reconsider its plans. It is now thinking about holding more events in Europe. ◆

FOOTBALL

New deals grow Europa League value in Germany and Austria

By Robin Jellis

- Europa League rights in Germany to be worth €28m per season; €4.2m per season in Austria
- In Germany, deals struck with RTL for €13m per season and DAZN for €15m per season
- In Austria, deals agreed with Puls 4 for €2.2m per season and DAZN for €2m per season

The value of Uefa Europa League media rights will grow by about 24 per cent in Germany and 20 per cent in Austria when new deals kick in from 2018-19.

In Germany, Uefa – football’s European governing body – will earn a total of about €28m per season from deals with commercial broadcaster RTL and OTT service DAZN. In Austria, Uefa will earn a total of about €4.2m per season from deals with commercial broadcaster Puls 4 and DAZN. All four new deals will run for three seasons, from 2018-19 to 2020-21.

In the current cycle, from 2015-16 to 2017-18, Uefa earns a total of about €22.5m per season for its Europa League rights in Germany, and about €3.5m per season in Austria.

Uefa tendered Champions League and Europa League rights in Germany and Austria on March 6, with bids due on April 3. Uefa is advised on the sale of its club competition rights by the Team Marketing agency.

Champions League rights in Germany and Austria have already been acquired by pay-television broadcaster Sky in deals worth a total of about €200m per season. Sky subsequently agreed a sublicensing agreement to share coverage of the Champions League in both territories with DAZN, worth about €80m per season (*TV Sports Markets* 21:11).

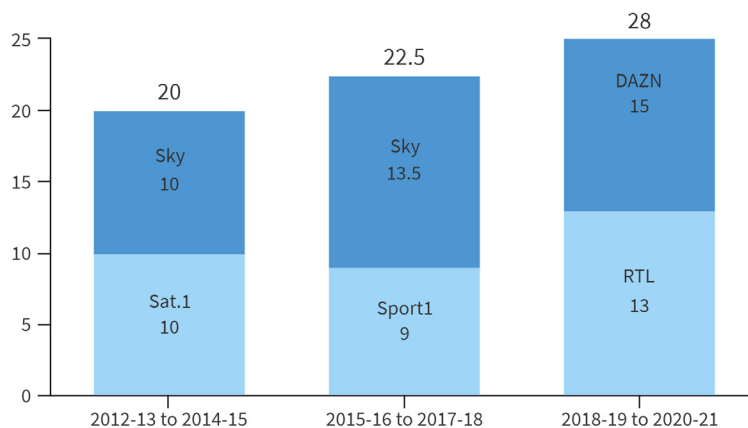
All change in new German deals

Free-to-air Europa League rights in Germany have been acquired by RTL in a deal worth about €13m per season. RTL will show the first-pick match each match-week – 15 live matches per season – and highlights. This is the same set of rights held in the current cycle by sports broadcaster Sport1 in a deal worth about €9m per season (*TV Sports Markets* 19:1).

OTT platform DAZN has acquired pay-television Europa League rights in Germany in a deal worth about €15m per season, an increase of just over 10 per cent on the present value of the rights. DAZN’s deal will cover live and highlights rights to all matches.

Pay-television rights in the current cycle are held by pay-television broadcaster Sky in a deal worth about €13.5m per season.

Europa League media rights deals in Germany, 2012 to 2021



Source: TV Sports Markets Rights Tracker

The value of the free-to-air rights in Germany will increase strongly, by about 44 per cent. This growth has been driven predominantly by strong competition between incumbent Sport1 and RTL. RTL sought the rights to add to the portfolio of basic-tier channel RTL Nitro.

Sky was happy to drop Europa League rights in both Germany and Austria as it feels Champions League rights are sufficient.

DAZN was keen to add to its portfolio of European club football which includes the English Premier League, Spanish LaLiga, Italian Serie A and French Ligue 1. The service currently has little live content on Thursdays. A source close to the OTT platform said the Europa League provided good-quality content at a relatively low cost.

Puls 4 retains free-to-air coverage

Puls 4 paid an increase of about 10 per cent to retain free-to-air Europa League rights in Austria. Its fee will rise from about €2m per season in the current deal to about €2.2m per season.

DAZN has acquired pay-television rights in the country in a deal worth close to €2m per season. This is an increase of about 33 per cent on the €1.5m per season Sky currently pays.

There was little competition for either free-to-air or pay-television rights in Austria. Public-service broadcaster ORF – which will lose Champions League rights from 2018-19 when Sky's exclusive deal begins – is understood to have bid, contrary to local media reports.

Commercial broadcaster ATV, which bid together with ORF the last time Europa League rights were sold in the country, did not bid. In April, ATV was bought by media group ProSiebenSat.1, which owns Puls 4.

There is relatively strong local interest in the Europa League as up to four Austrian clubs can qualify for the competition. Two Austrian clubs have reached the group stages of this season's competition: Red Bull Salzburg and Austria Wien.

Under its deal, Puls 4 will show one live match per match-week – 15 matches per season – plus highlights. Some Europa League coverage will also be available via RTL as the channel is unencrypted in Austria. However, RTL is expected to show most matches on RTL Nitro, with only high-profile matches on the main RTL channel.

Bundesliga resolution draws near

Austria's top-tier football league, the Bundesliga, is currently in the process of agreeing new domestic media-rights deals. Bids for rights in a new cycle were submitted in July. A decision over the award of the rights is expected in the coming weeks.

Bundesliga rights are currently split between ORF and Sky in deals worth a total of about €22m per season. Both deals will expire at the end of the 2017-18 season.

Sky is widely reported to have offered the league €30m per season for fully exclusive rights in a new cycle from 2018-19 onward. ORF has also bid, although its offer is lower. DAZN is not thought to be keen on the rights as it deems them to be too expensive.

The league is now deciding with its clubs whether to accept the greater media-rights revenue on offer from Sky. This would be at the expense of a likely dip in clubs' sponsorship revenue due to the potential decreased exposure from an exclusive pay-television deal. About 50 per cent of Austrian clubs' revenue is derived from sponsorship.

The league is understood to be willing to forsake live free-to-air coverage of matches, but is likely to push for highlights to remain freely available.

ORF's current deal is for five seasons, from 2013-14 to 2017-18. The league had the option to end the deal after the first three seasons, but chose not to. ORF is thought to pay about €10m per season.

Sky's deal was for three seasons, from 2013-14 to 2015-16, and it was later extended to cover 2016-17 and 2017-18. Sky is thought to pay about €12m per season.

Both ORF and Sky are thought to contribute about €2m per season toward production costs. ◆

FOOTBALL

Eurosport boycott hampers sale of Bundesliga rights in Europe

By Callum McCarthy

The MP & Silva and Pragosport agencies are struggling to sell German Bundesliga rights in their respective European territories, leaving the league without a broadcast partner in a number of markets.

As *TV Sports Markets* went to press, the Bundesliga is entering the fourth match-week of the 2017-18 season with no broadcaster in the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Norway, Romania, Sweden, Turkey or Ukraine.

It has failed to sell a package of 38 top-pick matches per season in Poland, where the bulk of the pay-television rights are held by sports broadcaster Eleven Sports Network (*TV Sports Markets* 21:4). It also has no pay-television broadcast deal in Slovakia where the 38 top-pick matches per season are held by commercial broadcaster Markíza.

Both MP & Silva and Pragosport were banking on interest from international sports broadcaster Eurosport in most, if not all, of the markets where the league is without a broadcast deal. However, sources say Discovery Communications-owned Eurosport has withdrawn from all negotiations with both agencies, and will not add Bundesliga rights in any other territories for the current four-season cycle, from 2017-18 to 2020-21.

Media rights experts believe the reason for Eurosport's boycott is due to its loss of rights in Poland where the German football league, the Deutsche Fußball Liga, sold rights to Eleven. It is understood Eurosport is upset with the league's decision as it believed its offer was higher.

Before it missed out on rights in Poland, Eurosport completed: a four-season deal in the Baltics with the DFL, from 2017-18 to 2020-21; a four-season deal in the Balkans with MP & Silva, from 2017-18 to 2020-21; and a one-season deal in Hungary with Pragosport, covering 2017-18 only.

Eleven pays €7m (\$8.3m) per season for pay-television rights only in Poland, in a four-season deal from 2017-18 to 2020-21. The league was hoping to earn up to €3m per season from a secondary deal in Poland, but these hopes have since faded.

Eurosport held pay-television rights in Poland as part of a two-season, 22-territory deal across Europe worth €25m per season. The deal covered 2015-16 and 2016-17 (*TV Sports Markets* 19:16). It is thought between €4m and €5m per season of this amount was allocated to Poland.

Eurosport also had a separate deal in Turkey, covering the same two seasons, worth just over €4m per season (*TV Sports Markets* 18:22).

Bundesliga risk could backfire

The DFL tendered its media rights in Europe last summer with a focus on increasing revenue. It sold its rights directly to pay-television broadcasters in the UK and Ireland (BT Sport), France (beIN Sports), Spain (Telefónica), Italy (Fox), Poland (Eleven), the Netherlands (Fox), the Baltics (Eurosport) and later Israel (Charlton) (*TV Sports Markets* 20:11; 20:21).

It agreed agency deals with: IMG in Belgium; Pragosport in Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia; and MP & Silva in the rest of Europe and Central Asia. The agencies each had about 12 months to complete sales ahead of the 2017-18 season.

MP & Silva's deal, struck in July 2016, covered 31 territories, including the Nordics, Romania, Turkey and Ukraine. Its four-season deal is worth about €40m per season, from 2017-18 to 2020-21 (*TV Sports Markets* 20:14).

Pragosport is paying about €2m per season for rights in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, and €4m per season for rights in Hungary. Both deals are for four seasons, from 2017-18 to 2020-21.

IMG is paying about €2.5m per season for rights in Belgium over the same period. The agency has agreed one-season deals with telcos Telenet and Voo, although it is not thought to be recouping its rights fee from these agreements.

The Bundesliga's strategy to take the highest offer meant it more than doubled its European rights income to about €130m per season, but put pressure on agencies to extract fees higher than broadcasters were willing to pay when the rights were originally offered to them.

Many experts believe the league employed this strategy of maximising international rights revenue one or two cycles too soon. Sources at broadcasters across Europe agree that, in terms of quality, the Bundesliga is comfortably among the top four leagues in the world. But these sources say its popularity still lags behind European rival leagues such as the English Premier League, Spanish LaLiga, Italian Serie A and, in some markets, the French Ligue 1.

The three agencies are now struggling to make any profit on the rights, as broadcasters in these territories are reserving their budgets for rights to the Uefa Champions League and Europa League, as well as the other top European football leagues.

The Bundesliga is understood to be holding discussions with each agency on how best to act. Each agency must meet minimum broadcast requirements as part of their deals.

In August 2016, several experts believed MP & Silva was close to a four-season deal in the Nordics with multi-territory commercial and pay-television broadcaster Modern Times Group worth about €17m per season, but this never materialised. One informed source said Eurosport's poor Bundesliga ratings

in the region during 2015-16 and 2016-17 influenced MTG's decision to abandon the deal.

With MTG unwilling to meet the asking price and Eurosport uninterested, MP & Silva must either lower its asking price or focus its attention on a sale from 2018-19 onward. One source said the agency may look to acquire LaLiga and Serie A rights with a view to completing a package deal from 2018-19.

In Turkey, MP & Silva is thought to have wanted to maintain the €4m-per-season fee paid by Eurosport in 2015-16 and 2016-17. Offers have been made by pay-television operators Tivibu and D-Smart but neither has come close to the asking price.

In Romania, MP & Silva is looking for about €1m per season. Telcos RCS-RDS and Telekom Romania, which own pay-television broadcasters Digi Sport and Telekom Sport respectively, have shown little interest.

One local source described market conditions in Romania as "sterile", and said research undertaken by the telcos had shown little impact on pay-television subscriber numbers when football rights are acquired or lost. In addition, each telco is reserving budget for Serie A rights from 2018-19, as it is much more popular in the country.

Without interest from Eurosport in Czech Republic, Pragosport will struggle to make a return on its investment. ♦

FOOTBALL

Lega Pro on track for overall increase after host of new deals

By Frank Dunne

- Rai to pay €650,000 per season for Monday Lega Pro matches from 2017-18 to 2019-20
- Sportitalia to pay average of €175,000 per season for Friday matches over the same period
- League to earn additional revenue from local deals and pay-per-view buys

Italy's third-tier professional football league, Lega Pro, is heading for a substantial increase in the value of its domestic media rights after holding its first formal tender processes for both national and local broadcast rights.

The league – formerly known as Serie C – issued a tender for its national live broadcast rights on August 8 with bids due on August 21. The rights cover three seasons, from 2017-18 to 2019-20.

It received bids from four companies: state broadcaster Rai; free-to-air sports broadcaster Sportitalia; US media group Discovery Communications; and the B4 Capital agency.

The league negotiated with all parties before agreeing deals with Rai and Sportitalia late last month. The two deals are worth a total of €825,000 (\$983,000) per season.

Lega Pro initially published a tender with a single package covering all national broadcast rights with a reserve price of €950,000 per season, but it received no bids.

In the 2016-17 season, the league had only one national broadcast deal, with Rai, which is thought to have been worth in the low-to-mid hundreds of thousands of euros.

The league has yet to conclude local rights deals, which will add between €200,000 and €300,000 per season to its total income. It also formalised the process for local rights sales, issuing tender documents on August 24 with a reserve price for each region.

Until this year, the league agreed deals for national and regional broadcast coverage on a rolling one-season basis following informal negotiations.

The league's director general, Mario De Luca, said the outcome was very positive for the league. He said its switch to formal tender processes had been an important factor in generating competition.

De Luca told *TV Sports Markets* this week: “The Rai and Sportitalia deals are important for two reasons. First, they double the number of national broadcast partners we have, both of which are major players. Sportitalia is a broadcaster that invests heavily in the quality of its product.

“Second, it is the first time we have concluded multi-year deals. This allows the league and the clubs to plan for the medium term and guarantees them a certain level of visibility for that period.”

The league’s media-rights income comes from three sources: national broadcast deals; local and regional broadcast deals; and a joint venture OTT pay-per-view service operated by Sportube.

The league does not publish its income from Sportube but local sources estimate the league’s total media-rights income will end up somewhere between €1.2m and €1.5m for the 2017-18 season.

Lega Pro comprises 57 teams across three divisions of equal standing, each of which has 19 teams.

National deals

Rai retained rights to one live match per match-week, on Monday nights, paying €650,000 per season. Matches must be filmed with a minimum of five HD cameras.

Sportitalia acquired rights to one live match per match-week, on Friday nights, paying an average of €175,000 per season. The fees will be staggered, with payments of €150,000 in season one, €175,000 in season two and €200,000 in season three. Matches must be filmed with at least three HD cameras.

Both deals also include the rights to one match per match-day in the end-of-season play-offs for promotion to Serie B. The play-off final will be shown only by Rai.

Sportitalia will also have rights to the Supercup – between the winners of the Lega Pro play-off final and the Coppa Italia Serie C (which is open only to Lega Pro clubs) – plus one play-out match, to avoid relegation from Lega Pro.

Both deals also include one match per match-week from the Coppa Italia Serie C and delayed rights to the final.

All rights are platform-neutral and can be exploited on free-to-air platforms or on pay-television. Production costs for the basic match feed are covered by the league. Rai and Sportitalia would have to cover the cost of any enhanced coverage, such as additional cameras and interview positions.

Local deals

Local free-to-air rights were offered to the market in packages covering single regions or groups of regions. The price of each package varied according to the number of competing Lega Pro teams in each region. The rights include one live match per week on the condition that no single team can be shown more than seven times per season. The rights were available for the 2017-18 season only.

Only two such deals were agreed. Telenorba acquired the rights for Puglia (€120,000), Calabria (€70,000) and Basilicata (€18,000). Ultima TV acquired the rights for Sicily (€70,000).

On September 12, the league asked for expressions of interest in the home and away matches of 50 clubs not covered by the regional deals, with a bid deadline of September 15.

Lege Pro local media rights packages 2017-18 with reserve prices, €000s

Package	Macro area	Regions	Reserve price
A	Lombardy, Piedmont, Aosta Valley	Lombardy	60
		Piedmont	40
		Aosta Valley	6
B	Trentino Alto Adige, Friuli Venezia Giulia, Veneto	Trentino Alto Adige	18
		Friuli Venezia Giulia	40
		Veneto	60
C	Tuscany, Liguria	Tuscany	70
		Liguria	6
D	Emilia Romagna, Le Marche	Emilia Romagna	55
		Le Marche	25
E	Campania, Lazio, Abruzzo, Umbria	Campania	40
		Lazio	25
		Abruzzo	18
		Umbria	18
F	Apulia, Calabria, Basilicata, Molise	Apulia	120
		Calabria	70
		Basilicata	18
		Molise	6
G	Sicily, Sardinia	Sicily	70
		Sardinia	25

Source: TV Sports Markets

Sportube relationship

Sportube is the joint venture OTT service run by the league and Andrea Radrizzani's Eleven Sports Network, which acquired its 50-per-cent stake in May (*TV Sports Markets* 21:9).

The company has renewed its deal with the league for next season, with an option for a further four seasons until the end of the 2021-22 season. The league and Sportube share costs – including production costs for 1,200 matches per season – and split revenues.

The service shows every Lega Pro match live, including those broadcast by national and regional broadcasters.

Packages include: all away matches of a single team at €19.90 per month; the home and away matches of a single team at €29.90 per month; or single matches at €2.90 each. ◆

FOOTBALL

Conmebol seeks Libertadores and Sudamericana fee increase

By Mónica Villar

Conmebol, the governing body for South American football, is hoping for a solid increase in the value of its global Copa Libertadores and Copa Sudamericana commercial rights.

The confederation is looking for offers of at least \$200m (€168m) per year for its media and sponsorship rights for the four years from 2019 to 2022.

In the current three-year cycle, from 2016 to 2018, the media rights to both competitions in Latin America are held by pan-regional pay-television operator Fox in a deal worth \$150m per year (*TV Sports Markets* 20:19).

Copa Libertadores sponsorship rights are held by the IMG agency. Sales for 2016 brought in between \$20m and \$25m, according to *Sports Sponsorship Insider*. Experts predict IMG will push sales to above \$35m per year by the end of its contract term, in 2018.

The less valuable sponsorship rights to the Copa Sudamericana are sold by the Synergy Sports agency in a two-year deal, covering 2017 and 2018.

Conmebol's tender document, obtained by *TV Sports Markets*, makes clear it is seeking proposals with a revenue target of at least \$200m per year. Privately, the confederation is confident that competition between agencies will push the value well above this amount.

Conmebol has shortlisted four bidders: digital media company Perform together with IMG's Trans World Sport division; Synergy Football, a joint venture between the Infront Sport & Media and Patrick Murphy's Synergy Sport agencies; the MP & Silva agency; and Brazilian sports marketing agency Sport Promotion.

The winning bidder will have an advisory role in the sales process and will be involved in after-sales support for licensees. It will not be a buyout deal.

The Conmebol package includes media and sponsorship rights to: the Copa Libertadores and Copa Sudamericana, equivalent to Uefa's Champions League and Europa League competitions; the Recopa, which features the winners of each competition; the women's Copa Libertadores; and the Futsal and beach football versions of the Copa Libertadores.

Commission structure

Along with an income projection or minimum guarantee, each agency has to propose the commission rate it wants to earn. If selected, Conmebol will apply a fixed formula to that commission rate which will determine the agency's final income.

For sales of less than \$200m per year, the agency will only earn half of its proposed commission rate, up to a maximum of \$3m per year. For sales of between \$200m and \$300m per year, it will earn the full rate.

For sales above \$299m there will be two components to the earnings: the full commission on the total sales, plus a 50-per-cent bonus on the basic commission rate applied to the difference between \$300m and the amount brought in.

Other factors

The rights will not automatically be awarded to the agency which makes the highest revenue projection. The technical aspects and distribution strategy will be scored out of 70 while the financial commitments will be scored out of 30.

The technical/distribution element includes a bidder's previous experience in selling media rights, with agencies which have experience of selling major football rights receiving a higher score.

One of the requirements for the winning agency is to have carried out a tender process – within the last three years – in which rights were sold for at least \$600m. It also must have experience of producing major international events in at least three different countries.

The bid deadline is September 25. Conmebol will announce the winner on September 27.

Five other agencies requested the ITT document but declined to bid: Mediapro; Brazilian sports management company Golden Goal, owned by Chime Sports Marketing; Lagardère Sports; B4 Capital; and Paraguayan agency MVA.

Any companies or people involved in the Fifa scandal and its related court cases were automatically disqualified from the process. ◆

BASKETBALL

SFR pays up for Euroleague and Eurocup media rights in France

By Callum McCarthy

- SFR will pay an average of up to €2.5m per season for the Euroleague and Eurocup in France
- The current beIN Sports deal, from 2013-14 to 2016-17, is worth an average of €1m per season
- The SFR fee will depend on the involvement and success of French clubs in the Euroleague

IMG's packaging of Euroleague and Eurocup basketball rights has led to another big increase, this time in France from a deal with SFR Sport.

Pay-television broadcaster SFR Sport will pay up to €10m (\$11.9m) over the next four seasons, from 2017-18 to 2020-21, for a package of rights that includes the top-tier Euroleague and second-tier Eurocup, the rights to which have been centralised by Euroleague and the IMG agency from 2017-18 onward.

A like-for-like comparison with the previous cycle is difficult.

Prior to 2017-18, rights to individual Eurocup games were held by the respective home team. Sports broadcaster Eurosport held non-exclusive rights to two matches per week on a pan-European basis, in a two-season deal covering 2015-16 and 2016-17.

Pay-television broadcaster beIN Sports held exclusive Euroleague rights only over four seasons, from 2013-14 to 2016-17, in a deal worth an average of about €1m per season (*TV Sports Markets* 17:18).

It is understood SFR's fee will largely depend on when French clubs enter the Euroleague, and on whether French clubs progress to its post-season. As a result, experts believe the annual fee will be significantly higher from 2018-19, when the Euroleague is slated to expand from its current 16-team format.

In 2016-17, French clubs played in world governing body Fiba's Basketball Champions League after the French basketball federation, the Fédération Française de BasketBall, pledged its clubs' allegiance to the competition. The BCL is widely regarded as European club basketball's third-tier.

After a year of negotiations between Euroleague, IMG, French clubs and the federation, three French clubs will participate in the second-tier Eurocup in 2017-18 – Paris-Levallois, Asvel and Limoges. One of these clubs is expected to play in the 2018-19 Euroleague.

The fee increase will come as a relief to IMG as France was identified by experts as a problematic market given the French's federation's prior commitment to Fiba competitions.

IMG will invest a minimum of €630m into a 10-season joint-venture with Euroleague, from 2016-17 to 2025-26 (*TV Sports Markets* 19:21).

The involvement of French clubs in Euroleague-owned competitions was essential for an increase. A source at one French broadcaster said the rights would have been worth "almost zero" should French clubs have continued to eschew Euroleague competitions in favour of Fiba competitions.

With national interest in the competitions restored, SFR saw an opportunity to acquire exclusive rights to all French club basketball. The broadcaster, owned by telco Altice, holds rights to the Pro A – the top-tier of French club basketball – as well as friendly matches of the French national team in a five-season deal, from 2015-16 to 2019-20, worth €10m per season (*TV Sports Markets* 19:15). ♦

AMERICAN FOOTBALL

NFL renews German deals early, increasing revenue almost 70%

By Robin Jellis

The NFL has increased the value of its free-to-air deal in Germany with ProSiebenSat.1 by about 20 per cent, and looks set to double the value of its pay-television deal with DAZN.

Earlier this month the NFL agreed a new three-year deal with media group ProSiebenSat.1, from 2017 to 2019, thought to be worth about \$1.2m (€1m) per year. The deal is a renegotiation of the previous three-year Sat.1 deal, set to run from 2015 to 2017, worth just under \$1m per year (*TV Sports Markets* 19:17).

The deal was renegotiated early after OTT service DAZN sought additional NFL rights in the country. DAZN's current three-year NFL deal, from 2016 to 2018, is worth just over \$2m per year (*TV Sports Markets* 21:7).

The new DAZN deal will also run for three years, from 2017 to 2019, and will replace the current deal. DAZN is expected to pay close to \$4m per year in its new deal.

The decision to renegotiate both deals now, rather than waiting for both agreements to end, suited the NFL and both its broadcast partners. The NFL will receive greater revenue from its rights in Germany – about \$5.2m per year instead of just over \$3m per year – while both its partners will increase their NFL content and extend their deals. The deals will also bring the two contracts into line with each other. ◆

BASKETBALL

Fiba adds media-rights revenue in Australia with new Fox deal

By David Cook

The International Basketball Federation (Fiba) has secured a small fee from Fox Sports Australia for rights to its national-team competitions.

Pay-television broadcaster Fox will pay Fiba, basketball's global governing body, between \$70,000 (€58,800) and \$80,000 per year in a five-year deal, from 2017 to 2021.

The deal covers rights to: the 2017 men's Asia Cup, played in August; the 2021 men's and women's Asia Cups; the 2018 women's World Cup; and the 2019 men's World Cup. Qualifiers for the men's World Cup, the 2020 summer Olympic Games and both the men's and women's Asia Cups are also included. Fox will produce Australia's qualifying matches.

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

Fox the top bidder

Discussions between Fiba and Fox began at the Sportel Monaco trade fair last October. There was one round of bidding before Fox held further talks with Fiba in Australia.

There is understood to have been interest in the rights from free-to-air and pay-television broadcasters, but Fox made the best proposal in terms of promotion, exposure and rights fee.

While the fee is relatively low, Fiba is primarily concerned with growing the sport's popularity. Fiba believes a more significant rights fee will be achievable in the coming cycles.

It is difficult to compare the new deal to previous agreements, as rights in Australia were sold on an ad-hoc basis, sometimes for single competitions and sometimes for multiple competitions packaged together. Public-service broadcaster ABC held rights to the 2014 men's World Cup.

Fiba and Fox hope to grow interest

Fox was interested in the rights because the new format of Fiba events will allow it to show more Australia matches than previous agreements in the country.

Australia and New Zealand joined the Asia qualifying zone for the Asia Cup and World Cup as part of the revamp of Fiba events (*TV Sports Markets* 19:18). It is hoped this will create greater interest in matches involving these national teams.

Fox has other basketball rights in its portfolio. It has deals to show the Australian National Basketball League for five seasons, from 2015-16 to 2019-20, and the Women's National Basketball League for three seasons, from 2017-18 to 2019-20.

Fox has previously covered Fiba events, including both the men's and women's editions of the 2006 and 2010 World Championships, various Asia Championships, Oceania Championships, Continental Cups and 3x3 events. It has also broadcast *Fiba World Basketball*, a weekly magazine show, since 2007.

Australia won this year's Asia Cup, which was shown on Fox shortly after the deal was announced. While the event did not generate a substantial amount of interest in Australia, both Fiba and Fox believe this will have a positive impact on basketball's popularity in the country. ◆



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DEALS ROUND-UP

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FOOTBALL

- ◆ French digital-terrestrial broadcaster L'Équipe agreed a deal with European governing body Uefa for rights to third-party European Qualifier and Nations League matches (page 3).
- ◆ Southeast Asian OTT service Sportsfix acquired rights for the K League Classic, South Korea's top tier.
- ◆ The English Football League, which operates the three divisions below the top-tier Premier League, signed a five-season extension to its rights deal with Sky (page 13).

OTHER SPORTS

- ◆ **American Football:** UK public-service broadcaster the BBC renewed its deal with the NFL. The BBC will hold exclusive live rights to New Orleans Saints vs. Miami Dolphins at Wembley Stadium on October 1, as well as Minnesota Vikings vs. Cleveland Browns at Twickenham on October 29. The BBC will also show highlights of the two other games played in London this season: Baltimore Ravens vs. Jacksonville Jaguars at Wembley on September 24, and Arizona Cardinals vs. Los Angeles Rams at Twickenham on October 22. Live coverage of the season-ending Super Bowl LII will be shown on February 4.
- ◆ **American Football:** German media group ProSiebenSat.1 agreed a new deal for NFL rights in the country (page 33).
- ◆ **American Football:** WBZ-TV, a regional affiliate of US network CBS, extended a local rights deal with NFL team the New England

Patriots. The deal lasts until the end of the 2022 season. WBZ-TV will broadcast all pre-season games and post-season programming.

- ◆ **Baseball:** Mexican commercial broadcaster TV Azteca agreed a deal with the Liga Mexicana de Beisbol for free-to-air rights to the 2017 and 2018 Serie del Rey seasons.
- ◆ **Basketball:** Australian pay-television broadcaster Fox Sports acquired rights to the domestic Women's National Basketball League in a three-season deal, from 2017-18 to 2019-20.
- ◆ **Basketball:** French pay-television broadcaster SFR Sport acquired rights to the Euroleague and Eurocup tournaments (page 31).
- ◆ **Basketball:** The NBA extended its distribution deal with Eurovision, the European Broadcasting Union's production arm. Eurovision will transmit live NBA games, cable and satellite-television channel NBA TV and other NBA programming to the league's international media partners until the end of 2021-22.
- ◆ **Boules:** The World Confederation of Boules Sports (CMSB) signed a deal with the International Olympic Committee's Olympic Channel.
- ◆ **Boxing:** The following companies acquired rights to the 2017-18 edition of the World Boxing Super Series: Canadian basic-tier broadcaster Super Channel; Dutch commercial broadcaster RTL; pay-television broadcaster Arena Sport in the Balkans; UK commercial broadcaster ITV; Bulgarian commercial broadcaster Nova; Ukrainian commercial broadcaster Inter; Turkish

DEALS ROUND-UP

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pay-television operator Tivibu; Russian sports broadcaster Match TV; Belgian telco Voo; Singaporean pay-television broadcaster StarHub; and free-to-air specialist agency TV Media Sport in sub-Saharan Africa. Commercial and pay-television broadcaster Modern Times Group was allocated rights in the Baltic and Nordic regions to the World Boxing Super Series (page 17).

◆ **Boxing:** Promoter Hennessy Sports entered into a partnership with video-sharing platform YouTube. It commences with a live stream of the September 23 WBO World Heavyweight Championship title fight between Joseph Parker and Hughie Fury.

◆ **Cricket:** Indian pay-television broadcaster DSport agreed a deal to televise the Twenty20 series between Pakistan and an International Cricket Council World XI.

◆ **Cricket:** Pay-television broadcaster Star India secured global media rights to Twenty20 competition the Indian Premier League (page 10).

◆ **Drone Racing:** Pay-television broadcaster Fox Sports Asia signed a deal with the Drone Racing League for 2017 only. The deal covers Brunei, Cambodia, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Macau, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand.

◆ **Esports:** Video game developer Hi-Rez Studios and the World Esports Association agreed a deal with social media platform Facebook for new competition the Paladins Premier League. Paladins is a team-based first-person-shooter game.

◆ **Handball:** The International Handball Federation agreed a content partnership with the Olympic Channel.

◆ **Mixed Martial Arts:** The Ultimate Fighting Championship signed a digital partnership with combat sports network Fite TV, through which it will stream pay-per-view events in the US.

◆ **Mixed Martial Arts:** The Cage Warriors promotion signed a deal with UK digital-terrestrial broadcaster FreeSports. The deal began with live coverage of the Cage Warriors 86 event on September 16 and covers the three remaining events in 2017.

◆ **Motorcycling:** Greek pay-television broadcaster Cosmote TV extended an exclusive rights deal for the MotoGP series, from 2018 to 2020.

◆ **Olympic Games:** Qatari broadcaster beIN Media Group agreed a partnership with the Olympic Channel. The agreement began on September 4 with programming blocks and will lead to the launch of a 24/7 linear channel, entitled 'beIN Sports: Home of the Olympic Channel', on November 1. The new channel will be available in 24 territories in the Middle East and North Africa.

◆ **Paralympic Games:** New Zealand public-service broadcaster TVNZ and production company Attitude Pictures agreed a deal with the International Paralympic Committee. The new deal covers the 2018 winter Paralympic Games and the 2020 summer Games.

DEALS ROUND-UP

AUGUST 31 TO SEPTEMBER 13

◆ **Roller Sports:** The International Roller Sports Federation (FIRS), which is to rebrand as World Skate, agreed a deal with the Olympic Channel.

◆ **Rugby Union:** Pan-African pay-television broadcaster SuperSport acquired rights to the Pro14 cross-border club competition ahead of the debuts of South African teams the Cheetahs and Southern Kings in the club competition. SuperSport will produce selected South Africa-based fixtures and take the overseas feed for other televised Pro14 matches.

◆ **Rugby Union:** US media company Discovery Communications agreed a deal to show the Pro14 in 62 territories in the 2017-18 season. It will show coverage across Europe, excluding the UK and Ireland, via sports broadcaster Eurosport and OTT service Eurosport Player. Coverage across Asia will be shown via OTT service RugbyPass and pay-television broadcaster Setanta Sports Asia.

◆ **Show Jumping:** The CBC Sports division of Canadian public-service broadcaster CBC agreed a three-year deal, from 2018 to 2020, to continue showing live coverage of major events at Spruce Meadows in Calgary. The deal includes coverage of the National, the North American and the Masters. CBC Sports will also continue showing the CHIO Aachen, CHI Geneva and The Dutch Masters.

◆ **Skiing:** Austrian public-service broadcaster ORF agreed a multi-year deal with the OSV, the sport's governing body in the country.

◆ **US College Sport:** The IMG agency agreed a 10-year deal with the University of Hawaii's

athletics department. The department had previously handled its rights operations in-house.

◆ **Volleyball:** German sports broadcaster Sport1 acquired exclusive free-to-air rights for the women's Volleyball Bundesliga. Sport1 will show 10 regular-season games in Germany, Austria and Switzerland.

◆ **Wrestling:** Indian pay-television channel DSport acquired rights to the Lucha Underground promotion. DSport will broadcast three seasons of Lucha Underground, comprising 98 episodes in total, in a Friday evening slot.

◆ **Wrestling:** Canadian French-language broadcaster TVA Sports agreed a multi-year deal with the WWE promotion.

MEDIA RIGHTS NEGOTIATIONS

◆ US media companies Fox and Turner rejected reports that the Argentinian Superliga, the top division of club football in the country, would continue to be shown on digital-terrestrial platform Televisión Digital Abierta. Rodrigo de Loredó, president of state-owned telco Arsat, had said talks were at an advanced stage for the Superliga to be broadcast on TDA through to the end of the year. Fox and Turner, who hold Superliga rights for five seasons from 2017-18 to 2021-22, said they had not authorised TDA to show Superliga matches.

◆ According to *The Australian* newspaper, the Tennis Australia governing body opened talks with commercial broadcasters over a new domestic rights deal for the Australian Open grand slam tournament, aiming to sell its rights

DEALS ROUND-UP

AUGUST 31 TO SEPTEMBER 13

before those belonging to national governing body Cricket Australia. The newspaper said Alfonso Medina, head of Tennis Australia's media rights, had visited broadcasters for informal talks.

◆ The Brazilian football confederation (CBF) said it is targeting a minimum of \$148m (€125m) through its new sales process for national team matches. The CBF is selling the rights in Brazil to matches taking place from November 2017 until the start of the 2022 Fifa World Cup.

◆ Internet company Amazon is reportedly expected to challenge pay-television broadcaster Sky New Zealand for domestic rights to competitions organised by the New Zealand Rugby Union and its Sanzar partners in the southern hemisphere.

◆ Golf's PGA Tour will retain its media-rights deals with the NBC and CBS networks in the US until the end of 2021. The tour would have been able to opt out of the deals as early as 2018 had it decided to do so by September 1.

◆ The CAA Eleven agency launched new tenders in Italy for rights to Uefa national team properties. The tenders include European Qualifiers from 2018-19 to 2021-22; the 2018-19 and 2020-21 Nations League competitions, plus other international matches; and Euro 2020.

◆ The European Handball Federation said it would begin a tender process for its media and marketing rights over a 10-year period, from 2020 to 2030, during the week commencing September 18.

◆ Showtime Sports executive vice-president and general manager, Stephen Espinoza, said the pay-television broadcaster is interested in acquiring US rights to the Ultimate Fighting Championship once the mixed martial arts promotion's current deal with pay-television broadcaster Fox Sports expires at the end of 2018.

INDUSTRY NEWS IN BRIEF

AUGUST 31 TO SEPTEMBER 13

- ◆ The PGA Tour entered into a digital media partnership with South Korean media group Eclat. The PGA Tour and Eclat will launch the first Korean-language version of PGATour.com.
- ◆ Pac-12 Networks, the content and multi-platform media company for the Pac-12 US college sports conference, signed a multi-year deal with US OTT streaming service fuboTV. The Pac-12 Network channel will be available to all fubo Premier subscribers at no extra charge. All six of Pac-12 Networks' regional channels will also be made available to fuboTV subscribers through the Sports Plus add-on package.
- ◆ FuboTV signed a new carriage deal to offer the NFL Network and NFL RedZone American football channels.
- ◆ US technology company Apple said it will bring live sports to its digital media player and microconsole service, Apple TV.
- ◆ Walt Disney Company chief executive Bob Iger said ESPN's new OTT service will be based on a business model similar to that of Apple's music service, iTunes. Iger said the offering will launch in the spring of 2018 and serve as a "sports marketplace platform". Iger said users will be able to "buy, almost on an à la carte basis, a sporting event, a season, a league, maybe a conference... It won't necessarily be a one-size-fits all."
- ◆ The NFL said it is in close contact with DAZN after the OTT platform endured technical problems during its coverage in Canada of the opening weekend of the 2017 season. DAZN customers in Canada reported a number of issues during the platform's pre-season coverage, as well as the start of the regular-season schedule. The start of Indianapolis Colts vs. Los Angeles Rams on September 10 was not made available by DAZN.
- ◆ UK pay-television broadcaster BT Sport agreed to stream its *Rugby Tonight* rugby union magazine programme on social media platforms Facebook and Twitter. BT Sport will stream the first quarter of the show on its official Facebook page and Twitter feed. The show features coverage of the English Premiership top-tier club competition.
- ◆ UK pay-television broadcaster Sky will show coverage of the October 28 world heavyweight boxing clash between Anthony Joshua and Kubrat Pulev via a new Box Office streaming service, which will launch in partnership with technology provider NeuLion. The service will make the fight available to non-Sky customers. The fight will also be available through the existing Sky Sports Box Office service.
- ◆ Representatives of the 20 football clubs in the English Premier League reportedly met to discuss the possibility of introducing a new 7.45pm kick-off time on Saturday evenings for television coverage.
- ◆ Specialist UK cycling broadcaster the Bike Channel ceased operating after failing to secure a buyer.
- ◆ Italian broadcaster Mediaset and major shareholder Fininvest are claiming €3bn (\$3.6bn) in damages from French media group Vivendi, after the latter stepped away from an April 2016

INDUSTRY NEWS IN BRIEF

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agreement to take full control of pay-television broadcaster Mediaset Premium.

◆ Internet company Amazon agreed deals with German sports broadcaster Sport1 and action sports and lifestyle channel EDGEsport. Sport1's Sport1 US channel will be made available via the Prime Video app for €4.99 (\$6) per month. EDGEsport will be available for €2.99 per month.

◆ The German Bundesliga was set for talks with Eurosport after the international sports broadcaster's coverage in Germany of Hamburg vs. RB Leipzig on September 8 endured technical problems.

◆ Media company CSI Sports signed carriage deals with Portuguese telco Nowo, Nepalese pay-television operator Dish, Indonesian internet company My Republic, Singaporean pay-television operator Singtel and Swiss telco UPC for its Fight Sports pay-television channel.

◆ Swiss telco UPC agreed a deal to show content from production company Red Bull Media House on its new sports broadcast platform, MySports. The deal will initially run for three years.

◆ Romanian pay-television broadcaster Dolce Sport rebranded as Telekom Sport in line with the branding of its owner, telco Telekom Romania.

◆ The 21st Century Fox media company submitted a legal challenge against the CBS network's proposed takeover of Australian commercial broadcaster Ten.

◆ Media companies Fox, Turner and beIN Media Group were shortlisted following their bids to

acquire full ownership of Chile's football league broadcaster, Canal del Fútbol, according to the *El Mercurio* newspaper. The trio reportedly tabled non-binding offers of up to \$1.1bn (€919m).

◆ The South American football confederation (Conmebol) shortlisted four entities in its search for a new partner agency for the commercialisation of its club and national team competitions (page 29).

◆ The World Rally Championship reported a 17-per-cent year-on-year increase in its global television audience for the first seven rounds of the motorsport series' 2017 season. Citing research from audience measurement company Nielsen, the WRC said more than 436m people around the world had tuned in to watch coverage of the series. The WRC also said global broadcast time increased 10 per cent year-on-year to almost 6,650 hours.

◆ OTT streaming platform Sportflix did not launch as planned amid an investigation by the IMPI, the Mexican regulator for intellectual property. The platform was scheduled to launch on August 30. On August 31, the platform's website posted a message that said it must "go through the necessary processes to provide the best quality of sports broadcasts". The IMPI said it was investigating Sportflix after the platform was accused of offering sports programming shown by broadcasters without authorisation.

◆ Pay-television operator Fox Networks Group Latin America said it was preparing to lead an industry-wide legal claim against Sportflix amid piracy allegations levelled against the platform.

INDUSTRY NEWS IN BRIEF

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◆ Sports and betting-related services company Sportradar struck an exclusive global deal to distribute live streams and data from all upcoming competitions provided by esports platform PvPro and the Fortuna Esports organisation.

◆ Latin American telco América Móvil said it had sealed an agreement to sell its 30-per-cent stake in a group of Mexican football clubs. As part of the agreement, América Móvil said it will retain certain broadcasting rights for top-tier Liga MX clubs Pachuca and Club León, and second-tier Ascenso MX club Mineros de Zacatecas.

◆ International Games Broadcast Services, a joint venture between the IMG agency and production company HBS, was appointed as host broadcaster of the 2018 Asian Games, which will take place in Jakarta and Palembang in Indonesia.

◆ Sky expressed its disappointment after a proposed takeover of the European pay-television operator by 21st Century Fox was put on hold by Karen Bradley, the UK's secretary of state for Culture, Media and Sport. Bradley said she would refer the deal to market regulators over concerns about broadcasting standards, with at least a six-month delay now looking likely.

◆ The International Tennis Federation partnered with Sportradar to launch a new live-streaming platform for its Davis Cup and Fed Cup national team tournaments. Fans will be able to purchase individual ties, a whole round of ties, or an annual package covering all rounds of the competition. The platform will be available for

the Fed Cup final between Belarus and the USA in November.

INDUSTRY MOVES

◆ Sam Jones was appointed chief executive of OverTier, the joint venture between global sports marketing company Bruin Sports Capital and advertising giant WPP. OverTier operates the NFL's OTT business in Europe.

◆ US media company 21st Century Fox appointed Peter Rice to the newly-formed position of president. Rice will continue to serve as chairman and chief executive for Fox Networks Group.