

TVSportsMarkets

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Editorial


Robin Jellis

Editor
+44 20 7265 4139
+44 7846 822175
robin@tvsportsmarkets.com
@robinjellis


Callum McCarthy

Reporter
+44 20 7265 4244
+44 7462 149895
callum@tvsportsmarkets.com
@clmmcrthy


David Cook

Reporter
+44 20 7265 4109
+44 7402 085693
david.cook@tvsportsmarkets.com
@dmacook


Frank Dunne

Chief Sports Writer
+39 051 523 815
+39 349 584 6423
frank@tvsportsmarkets.com
@frankdunnetvsm

Analysts


Gino Di Castri

Analyst
+44 20 7265 4246
+44 7792 662816
gino.dicastro@sportbusiness.com
@gdicastro


David Svenson

Analyst
+44 20 7265 4245
+44 7540 343332
david.svenson@sportbusiness.com
@David2241

Account Management


Paul Santos

Head of Business Development
+44 20 7265 4183
+44 7931 390502
paul.santos@sportbusiness.com
@onesantos


Scott Longhurst

Account Manager
+44 20 7265 4184
+44 7500 904656
scott.longhurst@sportbusiness.com


Patrick Odling

Account Manager
+44 20 7265 4103
+44 7921 140713
patrick.odling@sportbusiness.com
@patrickodling


Max Frew

Account Executive
+44 20 7265 4178
+44 7493 7793374
max.frew@sportbusiness.com

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TV Sports Markets, trading address: 7th Floor, 133 Whitechapel High Street, London, E1 7QA

TV Sports Markets, registered address: 4th Floor, Park House, 116 Park Street, London, W1K 6AF

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FOOTBALL

Shake-up expected at MP & Silva as IMG adds Serie A to portfolio

By Frank Dunne

- IMG buys Serie A international rights from 2018-19 to 2020-21 for €340m per season
- The total fee is €367m per season including betting rights, match signal and marketing costs
- MP & Silva's current buyout deal, from 2015-16 to 2017-18, is worth €185.7m per season

The MP & Silva agency is expected to undergo a radical shake-up of senior management in the wake of this week's dramatic loss of international rights to Italy's Serie A, the agency's flagship property.

It is thought the three founding members of the agency – Riccardo Silva, Andrea Radrizzani and Carlo Pozzali – have been asked by the agency's Chinese owners, Everbright Securities and Baofeng Technology, to return to play a greater role in the strategic direction of the company.

Since selling the majority of their stakes in the agency to Everbright/Baofeng in May 2016, the three have remained on the board but with little input into daily operations.

The changes will inevitably lead to speculation about the future of Jochen Lösch, the former president of Traffic Sports Marketing, who was made chief executive in October 2016. Lösch was originally appointed to run MP & Silva's operations in the Americas and was unexpectedly installed as chief executive of the entire agency days before that year's Sportel trade fair.

The plans are said to be based on the agency's performance over the last 12 to 15 months, rather than being a kneejerk reaction to the Serie A loss. The agency has only agreed three significant rights deals in that period:

- in August 2016, it paid about €40m (\$47.6m) per season for the rights to Germany's Bundesliga in 31 European territories for the four seasons from 2017-18 to 2020-21 (*TV Sports Markets* 20:14);
- in February 2017, it was appointed global adviser to the Arab Gulf Cup Football Federation for 14 seasons, from 2017 to 2030;
- in March 2017, it secured global rights, outside the US and the Nordics, to the nascent World Boxing Super Series, from 2017-18 to 2019-20 (*TV Sports Markets* 21:10).

MP & Silva has over 70 rights-holder clients and a large enough portfolio of rights to be able to absorb the loss of Serie A. But the loss of a margin thought to be in the region of €45m per season will be a painful blow. The property had also been an important element of the agency's content bundling strategy in Asia.

The agency pays €185.7m per season for the rights in its current buyout deal, from 2015-16 to 2017-18 (*TV Sports Markets* 18:20). Rights sales are thought to bring in about €230m per season.

The deeper concern at Everbright/Baofeng is that MP & Silva has been standing still and risks losing ground on its main rivals in the medium term if the situation is not immediately addressed.

In the same timeframe, IMG has been more aggressive, particularly for premium football rights. In October 2016 it agreed to pay about \$122m per season for the global rights to the English FA Cup over six seasons, from 2018-19 to 2023-24 (*TV Sports Markets* 20:19). In September 2017, in a joint bid with digital media company Perform, it agreed to pay \$350m per year for global media and marketing rights to the Copa Libertadores and Copa Sudamericana, from 2019 to 2022 (*TV Sports Markets* 21:17).

In the past two years, IMG has also established a €630m joint venture with pan-European basketball club competition the Euroleague, and bought the Ultimate Fighting Championship for \$3.775bn.

MP & Silva has held Serie A international rights for the last three cycles: 2010-11 to 2011-12; 2012-13 to 2014-15; and 2015-16 to 2017-18. From 2004 to the centralisation of the rights ahead of the 2010-11 season, the agency sold rights of multiple Serie A clubs through individual deals.

Aggressive bidding

Serie A's adviser, the Infront Sports & Media agency, published an invitation to tender for international rights in the next three-season cycle, from 2018-19 to 2020-21, on August 7, requiring bids by September 15. In total, the league received 30 bids.

The biggest first-round bids are reported to have been as follows:

- MP & Silva, €333m per season for all international rights;
- Mediapro, €260m per season for all international rights;
- IMG, €250m per season for all international rights;
- Perform, €221m per season for all international rights excluding China;
- BeIN Media Group, €105m per season for rights in the Middle East and North Africa.

After direct negotiations with the bidders led by league director general Marco Brunelli and Infront Italy chief executive Luigi De Siervo, second-round bids were:

- IMG, €352m per season, including €12m per season for betting rights;
- MP & Silva, €351m per season, including betting rights and the Coppa Italia;
- Mediapro, €315m per season.

The second-round bids were delivered to the league on October 6, but were not opened. The bidders were invited to make their presentations to club presidents on October 10.

The bid envelopes were opened after the presentations and IMG was awarded the rights. The strength of IMG's presentation – led by Ioris Francini, co-president of IMG's parent company Endeavor – is said to have been hugely important to the outcome.

Its final offer is worth €367m per season. The fee is broken down as follows: €340m per season for Serie A; €12m per season for betting rights; €7m per season for the provision of the match signal; and €8m per season for promotion and marketing of the competition.

A package of international Italian-language rights aimed at overseas Italian communities was won by Italian state broadcaster Rai with a bid of €4m per season.

The €371m-per-season total is double the league's current revenues and comfortably exceeds its own target of €300m per season.

The strategy of opening up the process to every potential bidder and not being bound by first-round bids proved successful in forcing the big agencies to bid more aggressively.

Sources say several territory-specific bids were disappointing. In China, where big growth is expected, direct offers were low. Bids from the Suning conglomerate – which owns Serie A club Inter Milan – and streaming operator Tencent were said to be worth between €5m and €6m per season.

International rights to the Coppa Italia and Italian Super Cup – which were included in the tender – were not assigned. They will be discussed at the next league assembly, for which a date has not yet been set. The rights are currently held by B4 Capital in a deal worth €26m per season (*TV Sports Markets* 19:9). ♦

Note to readers: Riccardo Silva is majority owner of SportBusiness Acquisitions Limited, the parent company of SportBusiness Group, which publishes *TV Sports Markets*.

FOOTBALL

TVE pays up for Spain matches as advertising market recovers

By Robin Jellis

- TVE to pay between €2.4m and €2.5m per Spain match from 2018-19 to 2021-22
- Spain European Qualifier matches are worth €1.9m each from 2014-15 to 2017-18
- Uefa has third-party and Euro 2020 rights to sell, while Fifa is selling 2018 World Cup rights

Spanish public-service broadcaster TVE's aggressive move to acquire all Spanish national team matches at the end of last month is evidence the country's advertising market recovering from its 2013 low.

TVE has agreed a four-season deal, from 2018-19 to 2021-22, to show 40 Spain national team European Qualifier and Nations League matches. The deal will be worth between €96m (\$113m) and €100m over the period, or between €2.4m and €2.5m per match. The TVE deal was struck with CAA Eleven, Uefa's sales agent for its national team competitions.

A direct comparison to the current cycle is not possible for two reasons. First, the Nations League is a new competition. Second, Spanish friendly matches were previously sold as part of a wider package of football rights.

TVE has rights to 20 Spain European Qualifier matches in the current cycle, from 2014-15 to 2017-18, in a deal worth about €38m, or €1.9m per match (*TV Sports Markets* 19:2).

Spain friendly matches – before their centralisation by Uefa as part of the Nations League – were sold by the Spanish football federation, the Real Federación Española de Fútbol.

Rights to these matches are held by commercial broadcaster Mediaset in a three-year deal, from 2015 to 2017, worth about €35m. The deal includes rights to between 10 and 15 friendlies over the period as well as other events operated by the RFEF, including the Copa del Rey final and the Supercopa.

The rights were tendered by Uefa on August 9, with bids due on September 26. Uefa offered all European Qualifier and Nations League matches to the market, as well as rights to the Euro 2020 tournament. Uefa is still to sell Euro 2020 and third-party European Qualifier and Nations League rights in the country.

In the current 2014-15 to 2017-18 cycle, rights to third-party European Qualifier matches are held by telco Telefónica in a deal worth a total of about €9m.

Uefa bidding process

Spanish national team football matches must be shown free-to-air in accordance with listed-events legislation, limiting the number of potential bidders.

It is understood Spain's two major commercial broadcasters, Atresmedia and Mediaset, both bid for rights to Spain's European Qualifier and Nations League matches. Both offers are understood to have been well below Uefa's expectations.

TVE's aggression is down to two main factors. First, after years of having little to spend on sports rights, it was keen to spend its budget on this deal before the funds could be allocated elsewhere. Second, the recovery of the advertising market means it is easier for broadcasters to recoup rights costs.

Spanish sources say the local television advertising market is currently worth between €2.2bn and €2.3bn. This is a recovery from a low of about €1.7bn in 2013, but still a long way from its 2007 peak of €3.47bn (data from advertising consultancy Infoadex).

Despite the improvement in the advertising market, Atresmedia and Mediaset are still "very conservative" with regard to rights acquisitions, one local expert said. Both are determined to only offer fees they can completely recoup from advertising revenue.

Uefa would only have sold Euro 2020 rights if it received a strong increase on the value of its Euro 2016 deal in the country. Mediaset paid €28m for rights to 23 live matches, including all Spain matches. Uefa failed to strike a pay-television deal for the 28 other matches and streamed these matches on its website (*TV Sports Markets* 20:9).

Broadcasters are expected to make stronger offers for Euro 2020 rights once Spain's participation is guaranteed. But local experts doubt TVE will be able to bid aggressively given its outlay on Spain national team matches.

Upcoming World Cup sale

Fifa, football's global governing body, is currently trying to sell rights to the 2018 World Cup to Spanish broadcasters. On March 30, Fifa opened a tender process for rights to the 2017 Confederations Cup, the 2018 men's World Cup and the 2019 women's World Cup. Bids were due by May 2. It struck a deal with Mediapro for the Confederations Cup only, which the agency showed via its digital-terrestrial broadcaster Gol.

Rights to the 2014 edition were held by Mediaset and the Mediapro agency in a deal worth a bit less than €50m (*TV Sports Markets* 17:11). This was about half the value of rights to the 2010 World Cup, for which the Prisa media group paid €95m (*TV Sports Markets* 15:23).

A deal for 2018 is expected to be completed in the coming months following Spain's qualification. The fee is likely to be higher than for the 2014 edition given the advertising market's improvement. ♦

MOTORSPORT

Trouble at Ten leads to early renegotiation of Australian deal

By David Cook

- Fox to pay just over \$25m per year for F1 rights in Australia from 2018 to 2022
- Ten to pay \$5m per year to sublicense rights to the Australian grand prix over the period
- Ten's current deal for F1 rights in Australia, from 2015 to 2019, is worth \$25m per year

Financial problems at its free-to-air partner Ten led Formula One Management to strike a new deal in Australia, handing much more exclusivity to pay-television broadcaster Fox Sports.

Fox will sublicense rights to Ten in a renegotiated five-year deal, from 2018 to 2022, inverting the old five-year deal, from 2015 to 2019, in which Ten sublicensed to Fox.

The rights have increased in value, as Fox will pay slightly more than the \$25m (€21.3m/A\$32m) per year previously paid by Ten.

Fox's exclusivity will also increase, as Ten's only live coverage will be of the season-opening Australian grand prix. Ten shows 10 live races per year in the existing deal, while Fox shows every race live. Ten will also retain highlights to all other races.

Ten currently recoups about two-thirds of its annual investment by sublicensing to Fox. This arrangement will continue until the end of the year. In the new deal, Ten will pay \$5m per year to sublicense these rights from Fox.

As is the case in the current cycle, Fox will take the feed provided by UK pay-television broadcaster Sky, which has live rights to all races (*TV Sports Markets* 20:6). Fox will edit the highlights shown by Ten.

An abrupt end

Fox had not intended to begin talks over a renewal until mid-2018, but negotiations began this summer after Ten entered voluntary administration. Ten missed a payment for F1 rights earlier this year.

A primary reason for Fox becoming the licensee is due to FOM's inability to sell rights to Ten directly, as Ten was not able to pay the required fee, and can only afford to show one live race per year.

The rights were not tendered as FOM needed to move swiftly to repackage the rights and only wanted to negotiate a new deal with Fox. FOM did not specify to Fox that it must partner with Ten, but is happy for Ten to be the free-to-air partner. The new deal was agreed in September after approximately six weeks of negotiation.

Anti-siphoning law aids Ten

The Australian grand prix is protected by Australia's anti-siphoning list meaning live rights must be offered to free-to-air broadcasters. It is thought Fox did not speak to any other broadcasters about free-to-air rights.

It is possible the event could have been removed from the list if no free-to-air broadcaster had agreed a deal to show the event. One source said Fox would likely have still been keen to sublicense rights to a free-to-air partner to avoid the negative publicity this could have attracted.

Despite its financial difficulties, Ten wanted to hold on to live rights to the Australian grand prix due to its importance and popularity in the country. A source close to Ten said it expects the race to attract about 1m viewers, whereas most races would attract no more than a few hundred thousand.

Ten and Fox to revisit partnership strategy

Industry experts have told *TV Sports Markets* Ten and Fox are likely to take a more pragmatic approach to sports rights partnerships in future.

The broadcasters share rights to the V8 Supercars motor-racing series in a six-year deal, worth a total of \$215m from 2015 to 2020, as well as domestic rights to Football Federation Australia events (*TV Sports Markets* 21:10).

US media company CBS, Ten's largest creditor, has entered a binding agreement to acquire the broadcaster for a reported A\$205m. Talks over a new F1 deal began before Ten agreed the takeover deal with CBS. The takeover is subject to clearance from the Foreign Investment Review Board. ♦

FOOTBALL

Uefa gets 45% increase for Europa League in Scandinavia

By Robin Jellis

- Europa League rights in Scandinavia to be worth €14.5m per season from 2018-19 to 2020-21
- TV2 Norway to pay €7.5m per season; Discovery to pay €7m per season for Denmark & Sweden
- Current pan-Scandinavian Discovery deal, from 2015-16 to 2017-18, worth €10m per season

Uefa has increased the value of Europa League media rights in Scandinavia by about 45 per cent in deals with TV2 in Norway and Discovery Communications in Denmark and Sweden.

Uefa, football's European governing body, will earn about €14.5m (\$17m) per season from the new deals in its three-season cycle, from 2018-19 to 2020-21.

Commercial and pay-television broadcaster TV2 will pay about €7.5m per season for the Europa League in Norway.

US media company Discovery will pay about €7m per season for the Europa League in Denmark and Sweden. The split is about €4.5m per season for Denmark and €2.5m per season for Sweden.

The pan-Scandinavia rights in the current three-season cycle, from 2015-16 to 2017-18, are held by Discovery in a deal worth about €10m per season (*TV Sports Markets* 19:11). This splits about €4m per season for Norway, just under €4m per season for Denmark and just over €2m per season for Sweden.

The deals with Discovery and TV2 Norway were agreed with the Team Marketing agency on behalf of Uefa.

Uefa chose not to tender Champions League and Europa League rights at the same time in the new cycle, as it has done in the past. The tender for Champions League rights was launched on April 10, with bids due on May 8. The Europa League tender was issued on August 21, with bids due on September 19.

Europa League rights in all three territories were awarded after just one round of bidding.

The increase is regarded by local experts as a good result for Uefa given there was no other competition for the rights. Discovery bid for rights in each of the three territories, while TV2 bid for rights in Norway only.

Multi-territory commercial and pay-television broadcaster Modern Times Group is understood not to have been interested in the Europa League following its deal in May for Champions League rights in the new cycle. Its three-season deal for the Champions League, from 2018-19 to 2020-21, will be worth about €85m per season (*TV Sports Markets* 21:9).

One local expert said: “You don’t need the Europa League when you have the Champions League. The Europa League doesn’t add anything. It just adds costs.”

Another source pointed out that any kind of increase is a good outcome when compared to the struggles of the MP & Silva agency, which has so far been unable to agree a linear broadcast deal for the German Bundesliga (see story, page 28).

Broadcaster rationale

Both TV2 and Discovery are understood to have been keen on Europa League rights as they provide well-produced football content on weeknights. There is some interest in the performances of local teams, but much of the interest is driven by the involvement of big European teams.

Discovery did not bid aggressively for the Europa League rights in Norway in the new cycle. Since acquiring Europa League rights in the current cycle across all of Scandinavia in June 2015, the media company has bought rights to the Norwegian domestic top-tier football league, the Eliteserien, meaning Europa League rights are no longer as important as they were (*TV Sports Markets* 19:23).

The Europa League provides Discovery with good quality football content in Sweden ahead of the start of its six-year deal for Swedish top-tier football rights, which will run from 2020 to 2025 (*TV Sports Markets* 21:6).

For TV2, it further bolsters the broadcaster’s football rights portfolio. TV2 in May acquired rights to 30 non-exclusive Champions League matches per season via a sublicensing deal with MTG. The deal, from 2018-19 to 2020-21, is worth about €8m per season.

TV2 also holds English Premier League rights in the country in a three-season deal, from 2016-17 to 2018-19, worth €65m per season (*TV Sports Markets* 19:18). ♦

TV ITALY

Fox swoops for college sport and volleyball after Euroleague loss

By Callum McCarthy

- Fox to pay €100,000 per year for men's and women's CEV Champions League rights
- Contract covers 2017-18 and 2018-19; the men's competition is worth about €85,000 per year
- Deal for NCAA rights in 2017-18 with Fox thought to be worth more than \$300,000

Fox Sports Italia has filled the Euroleague-shaped hole in its midweek schedule and rounded out its North American sports coverage by acquiring rights to the CEV Champions League and NCAA college basketball and football.

The pay-television broadcaster has extended its existing two-season deal for the men's edition of the CEV Champions League, volleyball's premier European club competition, to cover 2018-19. And for the first time it has acquired the women's edition in a two-season deal covering 2017-18 and 2018-19.

Fox's total outlay on the two competitions will be about €100,000 (\$117,000) per season. The bulk of the value is in the men's competition, with the women's competition allocated a small five-figure euro rights fee per season. The deal was struck with the Sportsman Media Group agency, which holds CEV international rights to both the men's and women's Champions League.

Fox also acquired a package of US National Collegiate Athletic Association rights, for the 2017-18 season only, in a deal thought to be worth more than \$300,000. While the majority of this is thought to be a rights fee, technical costs are understood to be high.

The one-season deal was struck with ESPN Media Distribution, sports broadcaster ESPN's in-house distribution arm, and includes rights to two top basketball games per week and two top American football games per week.

Fox already holds a large package of college sports rights in Italy thanks to parent company 21st Century Fox, which has long-term global rights deals with multiple college athletic conferences. Outside the US, Fox exploits these rights on its own channels in territories where Fox Sports is active.

Uplifts paid in both deals

ESPN Media Distribution will earn slightly more than from its previous deal for NCAA rights in Italy. Pay-television broadcaster Sky Italia has held the rights for the past five seasons, and is thought to have paid about \$300,000 per season for its rights from 2012-13 to 2016-17. This included technical costs.

The reason for the increase is two-fold. First, Fox had to pay a premium to break ESPN MD's relationship with Sky, a trusted long-term partner. Second, Fox bid more as it needed live basketball content, and wanted exclusive NCAA rights to measure its popularity.

For CEV Champions League rights, Sportsman will earn slightly more than in previous deals in Italy.

Rights to the men's competition have been held by Fox in three separate deals since 2015-16: a one-season deal in 2015-16; a two-season deal covering 2016-17 and 2017-18; and a one-season extension covering 2018-19.

These deals are thought to have increased incrementally in value, with rights to the 2015-16 season worth a mid-range five-figure euro fee. The two-season deal covering 2016-17 and 2017-18 is worth about €85,000 per season. The one-season extension covering 2018-19 is also worth about €85,000.

Rights to the women's competition have been trickier for Sportsman to sell. Men's and women's rights are usually sold as a package, but Italy is a rare exception.

In 2015-16, rights to the women's tournament were sold to digital-terrestrial broadcaster Gazzetta TV for a small fee. When Gazzetta closed in January 2016, the rights were awarded to pay-television broadcaster Mediaset Premium for technical costs only. In 2016-17, rights were awarded to digital-terrestrial broadcaster Sportitalia, which also covered technical costs.

Fox's two-season deal for the women's competition is the first time it has earned a rights fee since the deal with Gazzetta.

Response to losing the Euroleague

Fox's acquisitions are a direct response to the broadcaster's loss of Euroleague basketball rights to US media company Discovery Communications. Fox's deal for exclusive Euroleague rights in Italy ran for four seasons, from 2013-14 to 2016-17, and was worth an average of €980,000 per season (*TV Sports Markets* 21:9).

It was part of a wider deal encompassing the Netherlands, Poland and sub-Saharan Africa, though rights in Poland were handed back after Fox Networks Group cancelled its plans to launch a channel in the country.

The loss of Euroleague rights was a blow, as it provided a large amount of well-produced live and delayed content. But the properties it has acquired to replace the Euroleague deliver two key things it lost: strong basketball rights and locally-relevant content.

The NCAA acquisition further lends to Fox Sports Italia's identity as a broadcaster of North American sport: it also holds MLB, NFL and NHL rights in the country. NCAA rights represented a cheaper option than the Euroleague, and will provide a similarly large amount of content.

CEV Champions League rights provide quality live content on weeknights. Men's and women's matches are played in alternate weeks on Tuesday and Wednesday nights. And while its prestige is lower, the CEV Champions League offers more locally-relevant content – the Euroleague currently has just one Italian team participating.

Cumulatively, five Italian clubs will participate in the CEV Champions League: three in the men's competition (Trentino; Perugia; Civitanova), and two in the women's competition (Conegliano; Novara). Fox will show all matches of each club, as well as the competition's season-ending Final Four.

The Confédération Européenne de Volleyball often lobby to begin matches at times that do not clash with European club football, but will find this difficult in Italy. None of the five Italian volleyball clubs competing in CEV competitions own their home arena, and are rarely granted flexibility on match times. ♦

BASKETBALL

NBA deals close in Spain and Poland after huge Japanese deal

By Callum McCarthy

- Telefónica to renew NBA in Spain for about \$9.5m per season from 2017-18 to 2019-20
- NC Plus close to flat renewal; current deal, 2015-16 and 2016-17, worth \$1.5m per season
- NBA finalises \$45m-per-season deal with Rakuten in Japan, from 2017-18 to 2021-22

The NBA's blockbuster deal with e-commerce firm Rakuten in Japan will soon be followed by new deals in Spain with Telefónica and Poland with NC Plus, TV Sports Markets understands.

It is thought telco Telefónica will pay about \$9.5m (€8.1m) per season in a three-season deal, from 2017-18 to 2019-20. This is a small increase on the \$8.75m per season the telco paid in its previous four-season deal, from 2013-14 to 2016-17 (*TV Sports Markets* 18:10).

The fee has stayed relatively steady because of a dearth of competition. Pay-television broadcaster beIN Sports was not interested in NBA rights as it is comfortable with its football portfolio.

Telefónica felt it needed to retain NBA rights as it is Spain's premier basketball broadcaster, holding rights to both the domestic Liga ACB and the pan-European Euroleague.

In Poland, pay-television operator NC Plus has yet to finalise a deal, but is also not expected to deviate much from its current fee. NC Plus paid \$1.5m per season for its NBA rights in a two-season deal covering 2015-16 and 2016-17.

This was a 46-per-cent decrease on the \$2.8m per season it paid in a four-season deal, from 2011-12 to 2014-15. The decrease was a result of weak competition and poor ratings on NC Plus for regular-season matches. Sources say the average live regular-season game attracts about 25,000 viewers.

Commercial and pay-television broadcaster Polsat and pay-television broadcaster Eleven Sports have no interest in the rights.

Polsat recently displaced NC Plus as the Polish broadcaster of the Uefa Champions League and Europa League, from 2018-19 to 2020-21, and holds rights to Uefa European Qualifiers and the Nations League until the end of 2022. It also holds rights to the Euroleague until the end of 2018-19 (*TV Sports Markets* 20:16; 20:20; 21:12).

Eleven holds rights in the country to the Bundesliga, Italy's Serie A and Spain's LaLiga. Its deals with the latter two leagues expire at the end of the 2017-18 season, and it is thought Eleven is looking to reserve funds for renewing these rights.

The NBA is unsuitable for free-to-air broadcasters in Europe as most tip-off times range between 1am and 4.30am CET. There were no bids from free-to-air broadcasters in either Spain or Poland.

Blockbuster Rakuten deal in Japan

The NBA's five-season deal with Rakuten, from 2017-18 to 2021-22, is worth about \$45m per season. The deal spans media and merchandising rights, as well as exclusive rights to carry the NBA's League Pass OTT service on its own Rakuten TV video-on-demand service.

The vast majority of the value of the deal is in the media rights and carriage of NBA League Pass. Rakuten TV will show nine games per week – one per weekday and two on both Saturday and Sunday. A subscription to NBA League Pass includes every live NBA game.

The deal mirrors the NBA's change of strategy in multiple international territories, such as across sub-Saharan Africa, where rights are awarded on an exclusive basis to a single multi-platform partner instead of being spread across several broadcasters and streaming platforms.

Rights in Japan were previously spread across pay-television broadcaster Wowow, commercial broadcaster Fuji TV, public-service broadcaster NHK and OTT platform DAZN. ♦

RUGBY UNION

Six Nations signs off long-term NBC deal but suffers fall in Italy

By Robin Jellis

- NBC buys Six Nations rights in the US, from 2018 to 2023, for about \$400,000 per year
- Previous US deal with beIN, from 2014 to 2017, was worth about \$1m per year
- Discovery renews in Italy for €1.5m per year, from 2018 to 2021, down from €2.5m per year

The Six Nations last week secured a long-term deal with media company NBCUniversal in the US, but is understood to have suffered a 40-per-cent fall in the value of its rights in Italy.

The US deal with NBC will run for six years, from 2018 to 2023, although there is a break clause after four years. The deal is thought to be worth about \$400,000 (€340,560) per year. The deal was struck with the Six Nations Committee, the tournament organiser and commercial rights-holder.

This is lower than the previous value of the rights when they were held by pay-television broadcaster beIN Sports in a four-year deal, from 2014 to 2017, worth about \$1m per year. This was part of a wider, multi-territory deal between beIN and the Pitch International agency, which held Six Nations rights outside the competing nations over the period (*TV Sports Markets* 21:9). BeIN's allocation for rights in the US is thought to have been above market value.

In May, the Six Nations renewed its international rights deal with Pitch, from 2018 to 2021, for a minimum guarantee of about €6m per year.

The deal excludes the competing nations (England, France, Ireland, Italy, Scotland and Wales), as well as rights in Canada and the US. It carved these rights out for the first time as it wanted to guarantee wider exposure. It retained rights in Canada as it felt a US broadcaster may be keen to acquire rights in both territories. This has not materialised, but the Six Nations is expected to close a deal with a Canadian broadcaster in the coming weeks.

The Six Nations is thought to have been willing to accept a lower fee from NBC as part of its attempts to grow rugby union in a key developmental territory for the sport.

Acquiring Six Nations rights complements NBC's portfolio of other rugby union rights. It holds English Premiership Rugby rights from 2016-17 to 2020-21, as well as rights to the Rugby World Cup in 2019 and 2023 (*TV Sports Markets* 20:12; 21:9). The media company is keen to acquire rugby union rights because they are relatively inexpensive and the sport is growing in popularity in the US.

NBC will stream all 15 Six Nations matches per year on NBC Sports Gold, its direct-to-consumer platform. Linear coverage will be shown on: the NBC network, pay-television broadcaster NBCSN; and business channel CNBC. Linear coverage will also be streamed on the NBC Sports website and app.

Fee falls in Italy

US media company Discovery Communications is understood to have agreed a new four-year deal for Six Nations rights in Italy, from 2018 to 2021. The deal will be worth about €1.5m per year.

Discovery's current four-year deal, from 2014 to 2017, is worth about €2.5m per year (*TV Sports Markets* 17:16). The fee has fallen because there was no other competition for the rights, and because Discovery is widely considered by rugby experts to have overpaid for its rights in the current cycle.

The deal follows Discovery's 62-territory agreement for Pro14 rights last month, covering 2017-18, which is thought to be worth about \$250,000. The deal was struck directly with the Pro14 after the league bought the rights back from Pitch, its international rights-holder. ♦

TV RUSSIA

Russian league deal delay likely but rights will stay with Match TV

By Callum McCarthy

Any new deal for domestic Russian Football Premier League rights will likely be completed next March at the earliest, far later than the November estimate of league president Sergey Pryadkin, TV Sports Markets understands.

Pryadkin's hopes for a 50-per-cent increase in a new deal with sports broadcaster Match TV are also optimistic. Insiders say Match TV's fee is likely to remain close to the RUB1.98bn (€29.1m/\$34m) per season it currently pays (*TV Sports Markets* 19:18). Of this amount, Match reclaims approximately RUB500m per season from the league for producing all 480 matches each season. The duration of the cycle is likely to remain at three seasons, and the new deal will run from 2018-19 to 2020-21.

The RFPL president also suggested the league could split its rights by selling linear and digital rights separately. Insiders say there is little to no chance of this occurring.

Gazprom Media, which owns Match TV and pay-television operator NTV Plus, is a subsidiary of energy company Gazprom. Gazprom is a key stakeholder in the RFPL as the owner of Zenit Saint Petersburg, Russia's top club, and the energy company (not the media group) is thought to be mostly responsible for funding Match TV's rights fee.

If the RFPL decided to sell digital rights separately, Gazprom and Match TV could lowball the league. Sources say Match TV will be able to pay a minimum of RUB680m and a maximum of RUB1.02bn toward the per-season fee for exclusive RFPL rights in any deal, with Gazprom topping up the fee.

It is thought Pryadkin must wait for a meeting with Alexey Miller, Gazprom chief executive, before negotiations can begin. This is not expected to happen this year.

In addition to exclusive media rights, Gazprom Media is also expected to retain the licence to pay-television channel Our Football, the exclusive pay-television broadcaster of the RFPL.

Until the 2015-16 season, Our Football was owned and operated by the league, which shared subscription revenue 50:50 with pay-television operators that carried the channel.

As part of the consolidation of the Russian sports broadcasting market in 2015, the Russian government handed the channel's licence to Gazprom Media to prevent Gazprom reducing its investment in the league.

Currently, two RFPL matches per week are broadcast on Match TV's terrestrial channel, with the six others broadcast on Our Football. This is not expected to change from 2018-19 onward.

Football TV acquisitions

Russian pay-television broadcaster Football TV has renewed its rights to the Dutch Eredivisie, the top league in the Netherlands, in a one-season deal covering 2017-18.

It is understood to be paying about the same as in its previous one-season deal, for the 2016-17 season, worth €65,000 (*TV Sports Markets* 20:15). Both deals were completed with the IMG agency.

Football TV has also acquired English Football League rights, for 2017-18, in a deal with the Pitch International agency. Its one-season deal is thought to be worth a high five-figure fee – less than the €100,000 per season paid by pay-television broadcaster Eurosport in a one-season deal for 2016-17 (*TV Sports Markets* 20:14).

Football TV is exploiting both sets of rights on Russian social media platform VKontakte, and is attempting to recoup its investment via advertising. The broadcaster is showing two matches per week from each league.

This is the same streaming model used by the Telesport agency to exploit its rights to LaLiga, the top two divisions of Spanish club football. Telesport is paying about €2.5m per season in a four-season deal, from 2017-18 to 2020-21, and is streaming two matches per week on VKontakte until its own OTT service becomes operational (*TV Sports Markets* 21:15). ♦

TENNIS

MTG seals off ATP in Scandinavia by adding Norway and Sweden

By Robin Jellis

The ATP is earning less from market-by-market sales in the Nordics than from the last cycle's pan-regional deal, after Modern Times Group added World Tour rights in Norway and Sweden to its earlier Denmark deal last month. A separate deal has also been agreed in Finland with MTV3.

Multi-territory commercial and pay-television broadcaster MTG will hold ATP rights in Denmark, Norway and Sweden for three years, from 2017 to 2019.

Last month's deal for Norway and Sweden is thought to be worth about €600,000 (\$704,640) per year. Most of the value is in Sweden where tennis is more popular. Only about €100,000 per year of the total is thought to be for Norway.

The deal covers World Tour Masters 1000 events and the end-of-season ATP Finals. In Sweden, the broadcaster will also hold rights to the Stockholm Open for men's singles and doubles.

Last December, MTG acquired ATP rights in Denmark for about €650,000 per year (*TV Sports Markets* 20:22). That deal covers all World Tour Masters 1000 and 500 series events as well as the ATP Finals.

TV Sports Markets understands a three-year deal has also been struck in Finland, from 2017 to 2019, with commercial and pay-television broadcaster MTV3. The deal is worth about €100,000 per year.

The last time ATP rights were sold in the region they were acquired on a pan-Nordic basis by pay-television broadcaster C More, from 2014 to 2016, in a deal worth about €1.6m per year (*TV Sports Markets* 20:17). This deal covered Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden.

Rights in the new 2017-2019 cycle were sold market by market, mainly because C More now only buys rights in Sweden. Both C More and MTV3 are owned by media group Bonnier.

That rights in Norway and Sweden were sold nine months into the year shows there was little interest in them.

MTG acquired ATP rights in Denmark last year following its loss of WTA rights to commercial and pay-television broadcaster TV2. The TV2 deal is for four years, from 2017 to 2020, and is worth between €650,000 and €700,000 per year. At this point, MTG felt no need for tennis rights in Norway or Sweden.

The ATP initially held talks with C More over a renewal. It also offered the rights to US media company Discovery Communications, which operates across the region, but Discovery declined as it feels its coverage of the four grand slams across the region is sufficient. Discovery currently holds rights to all grand slams across the Nordics, apart from Wimbledon in Denmark, which is with MTG.

ATP rights in Scandinavia are generally regarded as 'nice-to-have' but not 'must-have'. It offers good quality content during weekdays but adds few subscribers.

One local rights expert suggested MTG picked up the ATP rights in Norway and Sweden to solidify its relationship with the IMG agency, which advises the ATP on the sale of its rights. MTG and IMG also have a three-year deal, from 2016 to 2018, for a host of golf properties sold by the agency, worth about \$10m per year (*TV Sports Markets* 19:6).

ATP not the only one to struggle

The ATP is not the only tennis rights-holder to have struggled to sell its rights in the region. Following its deal with TV2 Denmark last December, the WTA has so far failed to strike deals in the other Nordic territories.

WTA rights across the Nordics in the previous four-year cycle, from 2013 to 2016, were held by C More in a deal worth about \$900,000 per year. C More sublicensed rights in Denmark only to MTG for about \$500,000 per year over the period. ♦

DIGITAL RIGHTS

Twitter set to play long game for sports rights across Asia-Pacific

By David Cook

Twitter will take a patient approach to the acquisition of sports rights in Asia-Pacific, according to its head of sports partnerships in the region.

Aneesh Madani told *TV Sports Markets* the social media platform would not bid aggressively to secure exclusive rights in Asia-Pacific. Twitter announced several digital highlights deals in the region last month.

Madani said: “For now, it’s just a case of establishing ourselves as a platform for premium content. We aren’t precious about getting exclusive rights. Our goal is to give our partners more reach, revenue and innovation.

“Eventually, it will come down to how we see ourselves serving our partners and where it makes sense for us to do these types of deals.”

When Twitter acquired the tender for Indian Premier League cricket rights earlier this year, observers questioned whether a blockbuster bid for digital rights to Asia’s biggest sports property might be forthcoming. But Twitter did not bid at the auction in September. Global platform-neutral rights were bought by pay-television broadcaster Star India (*TV Sports Markets* 21:16).

Madani refused to comment on the specifics of Twitter’s lack of an offer for IPL rights, but on the topic of competing with traditional linear broadcasters for sports rights, he said: “We see ourselves as a partner to these broadcasters, rather than a competitor. We are partnered with several of the traditional broadcasters in the region already.”

New Twitter deals

Twitter’s new deals include: global rights for replays and highlights of International Cricket Council events in 2018; highlights from the Australian Open for users in Australia, via commercial broadcaster Seven; and highlights of pay-television broadcaster Fox Sports Asia’s content in all markets where it is active, including most of Southeast Asia, in 2017 and 2018.

Both the ICC and Seven deals are extensions; Fox Sports Asia is a new partner.

As the ICC deal is only for 2018, it will not cover a men's World Cup, World Twenty20 or Champions Trophy, but will cover the 2018 women's World Twenty20 in the West Indies.

Madani said: "Asia-Pacific is one of our largest and fastest-growing regions. Much of our audience there is driven by video so it's important we have that content there."

He added: "To put this into perspective, it's been just about a year since we've been streaming premium live video. In just less than a year, we've announced more than 40 live streaming partnerships and the total is continuing to grow."

Twitter is also planning to expand its partnership with game developer Riot Games, Twitter Australia's partner for video game League of Legends. The partnership has already included live streaming of the League of Origin and Oceanic Premier League Grand Final esports events, and 10 live events via Twitter-owned streaming platform Periscope Producer.

Revenue-share model

Twitter sells advertising around sports clips and live streams, and shares revenue with the content producer.

An example of this is an advertising deal Twitter recently agreed with telco Motorola in India. Motorola sponsored sports news publisher Cricbuzz's analysis videos on India's recent one-day international cricket series against Australia. The revenue was shared between Twitter and Cricbuzz.

Madani said: "We have content partners who have an existing community on Twitter with lots of conversations happening on the platform, so naturally there is an opportunity to commercialise that."

Global rights portfolio

Twitter has global content deals in place with the NFL, NBA and WNBA. Its global live streaming rights to the NFL's Thursday Night Football package were lost to Amazon in April (*TV Sports Markets* 21:6).

Asked about the possibility of Twitter agreeing more global live rights deals for sports properties, Madani said: "This is the first time we've announced a group of deals like this in APAC and you should expect to hear more from us." ♦



For the full interview with Aneesh Madani, visit
www.sportbusiness.com

TABLE TENNIS

ATTU grows international rights revenue in Lagardère renewal

By David Cook

Lagardère Sports agreed to pay an increase of about 50 per cent for international Asian Table Tennis Union rights in its renewal at the end of last month.

TV Sports Markets understands the agency will pay around \$300,000 (€255,000) per year for the rights in a four-year deal, from 2018 to 2021. The fee is up from just over \$200,000 per year in the current four-year cycle, from 2014 to 2017.

That deal was initially agreed with the IEC in Sports agency, which has since been incorporated into the Lagardère brand. Both deals are buyouts. The rights were not tendered in the new cycle, and private negotiations over a renewal began a few months ago.

Events included in the deal are: the 2019 and 2021 editions of the Asian Table Tennis Championships; the annual Asian Cup; the Asian leg of the annual Euro-Asia Challenge; the 2019 qualifying tournament for the following year's Olympic Games; and a qualification event for the 2018 Youth Olympic Games.

The deal excludes the host territory of each event. These rights will be sold directly by the ATTU.

A clause in its existing contract meant Lagardère had a 30-day exclusive negotiation window, but this was exceeded. Negotiations were protracted because the ATTU has a small executive team which had to solve internal governance issues before it could focus on the sale of its media rights.

Table tennis key for Lagardère

Renewing ATTU rights further strengthens Lagardère's table tennis portfolio. The agency also holds rights to International Table Tennis Federation events in a five-year deal, from 2016 to 2020, worth \$750,000 per year, though this deal excludes rights in China, Japan, Singapore and Taiwan (*TV Sports Markets* 20:6).

Industry sources have described the ATTU rights as low-profile. One source claimed it is unlikely there will be much interest in Asian table tennis outside of a few key markets, such as China and Singapore, and that it will be difficult for Lagardère to make much profit on the sale of the rights.

While China is the most important market for table tennis, Lagardère has also singled out the Middle East and parts of Southeast Asia as important markets.

It will be more difficult for Lagardère to profit from events held in China, as this will exclude Lagardère from selling the rights to broadcasters in the country.

ATTU rights have become more important to Lagardère because it can now package them with the ITTF, making the rights more appealing to broadcasters.

Broadcasters holding the rights to both packages is not uncommon. Chinese state broadcaster CCTV and Malaysian pay-television broadcaster Astro hold both ATTU and ITTF rights, from 2014 to 2017 and 2017 to 2020 respectively.

Lagardère has already accepted some offers for ATTU rights in core table tennis markets, but is yet to sign off on any deals. ♦

MOTORSPORT

Sport1 increases fee and content in domestic ADAC Masters deal

By David Svenson

The organisers of the ADAC GT Masters German motor-racing series have secured an increase of at least 40 per cent in a new domestic rights deal with Sport1.

The three-year deal, from 2018 to 2020, will be worth about €100,000 (\$117,440) per year. It covers free-to-air rights in Germany, Austria and Switzerland and was agreed by ADAC, the General German Automobile Club. The rights will be exclusive in Germany, but non-exclusive in both Austria and Switzerland.

Sport1's current three-year deal, from 2015 to 2017, is worth about €70,000 per year. The rights were held by commercial broadcaster ProSiebenSat.1 in a two-year deal, covering 2013 and 2014 – it showed coverage on its Kabel Eins channel.

The ADAC GT Masters complements Sport1's motorsport portfolio, which also includes: the FIA World Endurance Championship in 2017; IndyCar from 2016 to 2018; the German Touring Car Masters from 2016 to 2017; and the World Rally Championship in 2017 and 2018 – a deal worth just over €50,000 per year (*TV Sports Markets* 20:22).

In its new ADAC GT Masters deal, Sport1 will again have live rights to all seven races per year. It will also be able to show live coverage of the qualifying stage at each event, which it does not currently have the right to do.

OTT platform DAZN – owned by digital media company Perform – will also broadcast the ADAC GT Masters as part of its content partnership with Sport1. This partnership, under which the two share rights to certain sports properties, will run until the end of 2019.

International rights for the ADAC GT Masters have been distributed by German production company Sporttotal – formerly known as Wige Media – on a revenue-share basis since 2010. The current deal expires at the end of 2017.

In 2017, the ADAC GT Masters is shown live internationally by: Dutch pay-television broadcaster Ziggo; pay-television broadcaster Digi Sport in Hungary and Romania; Auto 24 in Russia; and sports channel Nuvola61 in Italy. ♦

FOOTBALL

No upfront fee for MP & Silva in Nordics and Romania with Laola

By Callum McCarthy

Laola1.tv is not paying an upfront fee to MP & Silva for German Bundesliga rights in the Nordics and Romania, with the two hoping to earn revenue from sponsorship and advertising.

The deal grants Sportradar-owned OTT streaming platform Laola exclusive digital Bundesliga rights in the Nordics and Romania, and covers 2017-18 only. MP & Silva is unlikely to complete deals with linear broadcasters in these territories this season.

Laola is showing all Bundesliga matches for free in the five territories. In order to get the maximum possible exposure for the league, MP & Silva and Laola are seeking to distribute the content to other platforms in these countries.

Laola has been able to acquire the rights without paying a guarantee as MP & Silva failed to sell to broadcasters in these territories, with broadcasters claiming the agency's asking prices were too high.

Despite being announced on October 4, it is understood the deal has not yet been approved by the Bundesliga.

MP & Silva holds Bundesliga rights in the Balkans, Eastern Europe, Eurasia, the Nordics and Portugal in a four-season deal, from 2017-18 to 2020-21. The deal is worth about €40m (\$47m) per season, and the agency believed just under half of this amount could be earned from a deal in the Nordics alone (*TV Sports Markets* 20:14).

The agency will now turn its attention to sales in these territories for 2018-19 onward. Experts suggest MP & Silva would have wanted to package Bundesliga rights alongside Serie A rights in the Nordics, but its loss of Serie A international rights to the IMG agency from 2018-19 has negated this option (see story, page 3).

Elsewhere, the Bundesliga is still without a broadcast partner in the Czech Republic, and one package of rights remains unsold in Slovakia. Rights in both territories are held by the Pragosport agency (*TV Sports Markets* 21:16). ♦



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DEALS ROUND-UP

SEPTEMBER 28 TO OCTOBER 11

FOOTBALL

- ◆ Norwegian commercial and pay-television broadcaster TV2 acquired rights to the Uefa Europa League (page 10).
- ◆ The French football league extended its partnership with video-sharing platform YouTube. The partnership, first signed in 2012, will continue throughout the 2017-18 season.
- ◆ Spanish public-service broadcaster TVE retained its rights to Spain's national team matches in a new deal with Uefa (page 6).
- ◆ The Mexican football federation (Femexfut) struck a deal with pay-television operator Televisa and commercial broadcaster TV Azteca, from 2018 to 2026. Televisa and Azteca beat a joint bid from media company NBCUniversal and telco América Móvil.
- ◆ Coverage of the Italian Serie A women's competition will be shown on social media platform Facebook. Coverage of one match per week will be streamed on the Facebook page of the country's National Amateur League and the calciofemminileitaliano.it website.
- ◆ Sports and betting-related services company Sportradar agreed a deal for live Bundesliga rights in the Nordics and Romania (page 28).
- ◆ DAZN, the OTT service operated by digital media company Perform, confirmed it had secured Uefa Europa League rights in Germany and Austria for three seasons, from 2018-19 to 2020-21. The deal was first reported in *TV Sports Markets* 21:16.

- ◆ Sports broadcaster Fox Sports Latin America acquired exclusive rights to the home matches of six clubs in Liga MX Femenil – the top women's club competition in Mexico. The broadcaster signed deals with Chivas, León, Monterrey, Pachuca, Santos and Tijuana until 2023.
- ◆ The IMG agency and state broadcaster Rai acquired Serie A international rights in deals worth a total of €1.113bn (\$1.326bn), from 2018-19 to 2020-21 (page 3).

OTHER SPORTS

- ◆ **Basketball:** The British Basketball League agreed a streaming partnership with UK-based internet media company Unilad. The Unilad and Unilad Sport pages on social media platform Facebook will stream one BBL game per week during the 2017-18 season.
- ◆ **Basketball:** Euroleague Basketball, which organises the top two tiers of the continental club competition in Europe, signed Greek online sports platform Gazzetta.gr as its official premium media partner in the country for five seasons, from 2017-18 to 2021-22.
- ◆ **Basketball:** Sports broadcaster ESPN acquired rights in the US to a range of national team events operated by the International Basketball Federation (Fiba), from 2017 to 2021. The deal includes rights to all men's and women's continental cups during this period, as well as qualifiers for the 2019 World Cup and the 2018 women's World Cup.
- ◆ **Boxing:** US telco AT&T acquired rights to the quarter-final stages of the 2017-18 World Boxing

DEALS ROUND-UP

SEPTEMBER 28 TO OCTOBER 11

Super Series elimination tournament, which will be exploited across a number of its platforms.

◆ **Boxing:** UK pay-television broadcaster Sky acquired rights to the heavyweight bout between Tony Bellew and David Haye, which takes place on December 17.

◆ **Boxing:** French telco Altice agreed a deal with British promoter Matchroom through which its pay-television broadcaster, SFR Sport, will hold exclusive rights in France and Belgium to world heavyweight champion Anthony Joshua's next three fights. SFR Sport will also exclusively broadcast seven other major fights in 2017-18.

◆ **Cricket:** Media group Sony Pictures Networks India signed a six-season deal, from 2017-18 to 2022-23, with the Cricket Australia governing body. The deal covers India and the Indian subcontinent and grants Sony exclusive rights to all men's and women's international and domestic T20 matches played in Australia.

◆ **Formula One:** Australian pay-television broadcaster Fox Sports acquired exclusive rights to the Formula One motor-racing series in a five-year deal, from 2018 to 2022 (page 31).

◆ **Formula One:** ESPN struck a multi-year deal for Formula One rights in the US, which will begin in 2018. ESPN and ABC will televise all 21 races next year.

◆ **Netball:** UK public-service broadcaster the BBC acquired rights to the Europe Open Championships, which ran from October 5-8 in Cardiff. The BBC showed live and highlights coverage of the event.

◆ **Rugby League:** German commercial broadcaster ProSiebenSat.1 acquired rights to this year's World Cup, which runs from October 26 to December 2 in Australia, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea. Games will be shown by free-to-air channel ProSieben Maxx, and live-streamed by ran.de and prosiebenmaxx.de, as well as their respective apps.

◆ **Rugby Union:** NBC Sports agreed a six-year deal for Six Nations rights, from 2018 to 2023 (page 17).

◆ **Squash:** The Professional Squash Association extended a deal with Malaysian telco Astro for the PSA World Tour until 2021.

◆ **Squash:** The PSA extended a deal with Indonesian media company MNC.

◆ **Squash:** Pay-television broadcaster Sony extended an agreement with the PSA covering the Indian subcontinent.

◆ **US College Sport:** Pay-television broadcaster Fox Sports Italia acquired rights to National Collegiate Athletic Association basketball and American football (page 12).

◆ **US College Sport:** Chinese e-commerce company Alibaba extended and expanded its partnership with the Pac-12 Conference, and will distribute the conference's media rights in China until the end of 2024.

◆ **US College Sport:** International sports broadcaster Eleven Sports agreed a deal with social media platform Twitter to live-stream American football games from the Ivy League. Eleven will stream seven games during October

DEALS ROUND-UP

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and November via the @ElevenSportsUSA Twitter handle.

◆ **US College Sport:** The Van Wagner Sports & Entertainment agency agreed a multi-year deal with the Big South Conference. VWSE's Collegiate Services division will manage and distribute broadcast rights, sponsorship sales, promotions, event production and marketing activation.

MEDIA RIGHTS NEGOTIATIONS

◆ Italian media group Mediaset confirmed it had bid for rights to the 2018 and 2022 editions of the Fifa World Cup. Mediaset's chief financial officer Marco Giordani said the offer was "rational".

◆ Russian Premier Football League president Sergey Pryadkin said talks are being held with privately-held broadcaster Match TV over a three-season extension to its rights deal for the top division of domestic football (page 19).

◆ The Ultimate Fighting Championship is able to take its US broadcast rights to the open market after an exclusive negotiating period expired with current partner, pay-television broadcaster Fox Sports.

◆ A meeting to discuss a new international media-rights revenue distribution model for English Premier League football clubs was adjourned on October 4 without an agreement being reached. A proposal presented by the league's executive chairman, Richard Scudamore, suggested that 35 per cent of international rights revenue should be divided between the clubs based on their final league position. The rights income is currently split equally between the 20 clubs, but the six richest

clubs – Arsenal, Chelsea, Liverpool, Manchester City, Manchester United and Tottenham Hotspur – are reportedly pushing for a larger share.

Fourteen clubs would need to back the proposal for it to be adopted, but the plan was reportedly well short of the required support threshold.

◆ Social media platform Facebook refused to rule out a bid for the next cycle of Premier League rights, but maintained broadcasters should not feel threatened by its growing presence in the sports rights market.

INDUSTRY NEWS IN BRIEF

SEPTEMBER 28 TO OCTOBER 11

- ◆ The Learfield Sports agency confirmed a merger with the IMG College division of the WME-IMG agency. IMG and Atairos, which own Learfield, will retain ownership of the new entity. Silver Lake, a WME|IMG partner and long-term investor, will acquire a minority stake in the venture through a new capital deployment.
- ◆ Media company Altice USA struck a carriage deal with Disney, covering the latter's portfolio of channels, which will be available via Altice's Optimum cable-television service.
- ◆ DAZN, the OTT service operated by digital media company Perform, agreed carriage deals with cable television providers Shaw and SaskTel. Shaw and SaskTel customers will be able to purchase subscriptions to the NFL Game Pass OTT service.
- ◆ England's Rugby Football Union will live-stream games from new women's league the Premier 15s on social media platform Facebook and on the Premier 15s website.
- ◆ English Premier League football club Chelsea struck carriage deals for its in-house Chelsea TV channel with pay-television platforms and broadcasters in a number of countries. Deals were agreed with: Claro Sports in Argentina; Eleven Sports in Belgium and Luxembourg; Teleclub in Switzerland; telco Cell C in South Africa; and fuboTV in the US.
- ◆ Clubs in LaLiga, the top division of Spanish football, earned a €388.7m (\$463.2m) rise in revenue distributed from broadcast rights during 2016-17. LaLiga reportedly distributed a total of €1.387bn to its member clubs.
- ◆ Telco Telecom Italia approved the creation of a joint venture with French pay-television broadcaster Canal Plus, which plans to compete for sports rights in Italy.
- ◆ Italian Serie A football club Inter Milan rebranded its club channel as part of a major revamp of its in-house media operations. Inter Channel will be rebranded as Inter TV. Inter will also undertake special projects involving virtual and augmented reality, and has launched an app to host the content.
- ◆ Serie A club Juventus struck a deal with online streaming service Netflix. Netflix will produce a four-part documentary series on the club. The series will consist of hour-long episodes and is scheduled to be released in early 2018.
- ◆ The management board of German media company Constantin Medien ended a process to sell sports broadcaster Sport1 and advertising sales division Sport1 Media. Constantin Medien had initiated a sales process for Sport1 and Sport1 Media earlier this year, with pay-television broadcaster Sky Deutschland among those reported to be interested. The management board said the "structured, competitive bidding process regarding a possible sale of Sport1 and Sport1 Media" had been ended "with immediate effect".
- ◆ Eurosport Gold, a new channel using content from the international sports broadcaster's Eurosport 2 channel, launched on telco Rostelecom in Russia. The channel was established following a collaboration between the telco and Media Alliance, which owns 80 per cent of Eurosport and other channels operated

INDUSTRY NEWS IN BRIEF

SEPTEMBER 28 TO OCTOBER 11

by Discovery Communications in Russia. Eurosport Gold will show the NHL, as well as Italian football and tennis.

◆ German media and technology company Sporttotal is to launch its self-titled online streaming platform in Austria.

◆ Portuguese pay-television broadcaster Sport TV launched a new 4K channel for its football coverage. Thirty matches from the domestic Primeira Liga and Spain's LaLiga will be shown in 4K over the course of 2017-18.

◆ Greek pay-television operator Cosmote agreed a carriage deal with international pay-television broadcaster Fox Sports, which holds rights to the MLB, NFL and NHL.

◆ Japanese e-commerce firm Rakuten agreed a five-year media and marketing partnership with the NBA, from 2017-18 to 2021-22 (page 15).

◆ Cricket Hong Kong appointed production company Sunset+Vine to provide host broadcast services for the 2017 Hong Kong World Series and 2018 Hong Kong T20 Blitz, as well as social media video content and highlights programmes for each match.

◆ LaLiga TV, the official channel of the top division of Spanish football, agreed a partnership with pay-television operator AsiaSat across the Asia Pacific region.

◆ The South American Football Confederation (Conmebol) accepted a joint bid from the IMG agency and Perform for its commercial rights, from 2019 to 2022. The deal was reported in *TV Sports Markets* 21:17.

◆ Cricket South Africa's inaugural T20 Global League was postponed until the 2018-19 season.

◆ African pay-television broadcaster Kwesé TV is on air once again in Zimbabwe following the latest court ruling over its broadcast licence.

◆ Content Arena, a marketplace connecting sellers and buyers of sports media rights, will launch at the Sportel Monaco trade show in Monaco later this month.

◆ The International Basketball Federation (Fiba) has launched an app for its European Basketball Champions League.

◆ Deltatre, the providers of the NFL Game Pass Europe OTT service, offered a 20-per-cent discount on annual subscription fees as a means of compensation for issues that have affected the service. Game Pass Europe said discounts will be applied for all customers, regardless of whether they had encountered difficulties.

◆ WME|IMG announced the creation of a new holding company, Endeavor. Endeavor will assume the full portfolio of brands and services operated by the agency. WME|IMG co-chief executives Ari Emanuel and Patrick Whitesell will serve as the chief executive and chairman of Endeavor, respectively.

INDUSTRY MOVES

◆ Telco Telecom Italia appointed Amos Genish to its board, making him chief executive.

◆ The Octagon sports marketing agency appointed William Mao to its new Octagon Media Rights Consulting business.