



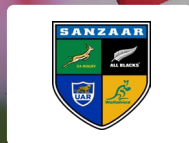
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Cooler UK market allows Channel 4 to pick up England rights



FIS and Infront on course for legal collision over centralisation plan



Sharp drop for Sanzaar rugby union package in UK deal with Sky



Sky renews UK deal for golf's Masters at slight increase



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FOOTBALL

Cooler UK market allows Channel 4 to pick up England rights

By Callum McCarthy

- Channel 4 will pay about £80m for exclusive rights to 20 England matches, from 2022-24
- Per-match value of about £4m represents decline of over 30 per cent on previous cycle
- Deal struck in private negotiations after tender produced lacklustre bids

Channel 4 took advantage of an apathetic UK market to secure rights to the Uefa Euro 2024 qualifiers and 2022-23 Nations League matches of the England men's national football team, agreeing a reduced per-match price in the process.

UK Government-owned commercial broadcaster Channel 4 will pay about £80m for exclusive rights to 20 England matches over two seasons, 2022-23 and 2023-24. The £4m per match Channel 4 will pay is about a third less than the average per-match fee paid by commercial broadcaster ITV and pay-television broadcaster Sky for England matches in the previous cycle from 2018-19 to 2021-22.

[ITV paid about £140m for exclusive rights to 24 England matches](#) – just under £6m per match – over the 2018-22 cycle. The deal contained rights to 20 qualifying matches – 10 for the 2018 Fifa World Cup and 10 for Uefa Euro 2020 – as well as four friendly matches.

[Sky is thought to have paid just under £100m for exclusive rights to 16 England matches over the 2018-22 cycle](#) – about £6m per match. Of the 16 matches, 14 were Nations League matches and two were friendlies.

Both the fee and the contract term are smaller than Uefa and CAA Eleven had envisaged. [In January](#), CAA Eleven, the governing body's exclusive sales agent for its national team properties, made rights to European Qualifiers and the Nations League available over four- or six-season durations – from 2022-23 to 2025-26 or from 2022-23 to 2027-28.

However, a lack of strong bids meant the rights went unsold after the first-round deadline on February 15, after which CAA Eleven moved to private negotiations with broadcasters. Uefa and CAA Eleven were disappointed in particular at the level of interest from ITV and Sky, which all

but relinquished the rights with offers significantly lower than their current spend.

Channel 4 is understood not to have bid during the official tender process for European Qualifiers and Nations League matches, but its interest in premium international football was known to Uefa after last year's tender for UK rights to Euro 2024 and Euro 2028.

It is thought ITV's reluctance to bid strongly to retain its Qualifiers rights has much to do with its ambition to renew rights to the European Championships alongside the BBC. Sources say Channel 4 made an unsuccessful attempt to acquire a package of rights to each tournament – a bid which led to talks between the broadcaster and CAA Eleven after Qualifiers and Nations League rights remained available.

Though the deal represents a significant decrease compared to the previous cycle, Uefa and England's Football Association are thought to be satisfied with the terms of the deal. Live coverage on Channel 4 will ensure England's Qualifiers and Nations League matches will be on free-to-air television for the next two seasons, providing greater exposure for the FA's sponsors and for the Nations League itself, which began its life in the UK as a pay-television property with Sky.

Agency IMG will produce Channel 4's coverage of England's remaining home international matches in 2022, after which the broadcaster will tender the production contract from January 2023 to June 2024, after which its deal expires.

Uefa and CAA Eleven have no immediate plans to re-tender rights to England's Qualifiers and Nations League matches from 2024-25 to 2027-28, though it is likely they will return to the market at some point during 2023.

Uefa has faced tough battles across Europe's big-five markets – the UK, France, Germany, Italy and Spain – as rights fees in the previous cycle reached levels that became impossible for free-to-air broadcasters to refinance. In addition, many public-service broadcasters across Europe are facing budget restrictions as the economic effects of Covid-19 pandemic continue to be felt.

The per-match value of German national team matches fell by almost 30 per cent – [from just under €9m per match to about €6.25m per match](#) – in recent deals with public-service broadcaster ARD and ZDF, and commercial broadcaster RTL.

In France, Uefa has only been able to agree [a short-term deal with commercial broadcasters TF1 and M6](#), which will pay €2.9m per match for France's six Uefa Nations League matches in 2022-23. This is down from the €3.5m per match TF1 and M6 paid in the previous deal.

Riding a wave

Since 2016, Channel 4 has steadily grown out of its status as a minor player in the UK's sports broadcasting market. It has been the free-to-air broadcaster of Formula One in the UK since 2016, paying £10m per year for free-to-air rights to the British Grand Prix and highlights to all other races in a three-year deal from 2020 to 2022.

Most notably, Channel 4 has been the exclusive broadcaster of the Paralympic Games since 2012, [investing far more than any other non-host broadcaster](#) since the London Games in 2012.

Since 2019, its sports broadcasting ambitions have expanded considerably. It acquired free-to-air rights to the 2019 Cricket World Cup final from Sky, bringing England's victory over New Zealand to a peak audience of 4.5m. In 2021, it acquired exclusive rights to England's four-Test series against India in a deal worth £4m.

It has been most active in motorsport, continuing its coverage of the British Grand Prix and expanding its Formula One output by showing last season's finale in Abu Dhabi, attracting a peak audience of 7.4m. It also showed live W Series races in 2021 and most recently doubled down on its relationship with Formula E in a two-year deal covering 2022 and 2023, with an optional extension for 2024.

Channel 4 sees live England football matches as the perfect tool to drive large primetime audiences and hopes the matches will have a positive effect on ratings for programming that immediately follows on from the matches. Experts say Channel 4's faith in live sport has grown steadily over the past few years as it looks to increase viewership among young men.

Channel 4 is currently owned by the UK Government but could soon be privatised should a suitable buyer be found. The broadcaster does not receive any government funding and relies on advertising revenue generated by in-house advertising agency 4Sales.

Though Channel 4 is desperate to fight off the threat of privatisation, its acquisition of England football matches is not thought to have a direct link. Talks over a deal between Uefa and Channel 4 began in February this year, while the UK Government's plan to privatise the channel was revealed in late April.

Experts say the broadcaster's deal for live England matches will likely help its argument against privatisation, broadening its appeal to the British public and expanding its remit beyond creative programming that champions diversity and alternative voices.

Third-party

Rights in the UK to the third-party package of European Qualifiers and Nations League matches were [acquired by streaming platform Viaplay](#), which is owned by Nordic Entertainment (Nent) Group.

Nent's four-season deal will run from 2024-25 to 2027-28 and is understood to represent a significant uplift on the £10m per season paid by Sky in the previous four-season cycle, from 2018-19 to 2021-22.

SportBusiness Media understands pay-television broadcaster Premier Sports is the strong favourite to secure the third-party rights package in the interim period covering 2022-23 and 2023-24. ○

SKIING

FIS and Infront on course for legal collision over centralisation plan

By Martin Ross

- Infront's near 20-year monopoly over World Cup rights at risk amid FIS plans
- Skiing world body claims international rights generate €70m in annual sales
- Eliasch seeks to railroad federations into backing Concorde Agreement

Controversial plans to centralise international broadcast rights to World Cup events under a so-called 'Concorde Agreement' have placed the International Ski Federation (FIS) in legal conflict with the Infront agency as broadcast coverage of the 2022-23 season remains shrouded in doubt.

Under the tenure of president Johan Eliasch, the Swedish businessman set to be re-elected later this month, FIS has informed its member national associations of plans to centralise the rights under a singular agreement as soon as next season.

While such centralisation is still to be approved by the FIS Council, there remains huge uncertainty over the upcoming season as national associations still await the approval of the race calendar, leaving broadcasters – already unsettled by the uncertainty over ownership of the rights – unable to plan coverage.

Infront, which has enjoyed a near monopoly over the rights for the last two decades, has warned that “chaos” would ensue if the centralisation is enacted. Under the current piecemeal approach, it holds individual rights agreements with all national associations bar the Austrian Ski Association (ÖSV).

SportBusiness also understands that FIS has moved to recover full control of sponsorship rights sales to its competitions by ending the involvement of FIS Marketing AG (FISMAG), an entity set up by FIS in 2009 with minority shareholders Infront and the Tridem Sports agency.

Details of the plans to commercialise the rights under the Concorde Agreement were outlined to national ski associations last month in a letter co-signed by Eliasch and Michel Vion, the FIS secretary general.

The letter, which has been seen by *SportBusiness*, indicates that FIS Media & Marketing (FIS M&M), an in-house operation, would assume complete control of broadcast and sponsorship rights sales to not only the FIS World Cup events, but also the World Championships, Continental Cups and FIS Games.

It is understood that, under the Concorde Agreement proposals, FIS intends to go to market offering two-year media rights deals spanning 2022-23 and 2023-24. This comes despite the slew of centralised media rights deals already in place through deals struck by Infront for most World Cup races.

However, doubts remain over the likelihood of such a timeline and whether it is still realistically on the table. A vote had been earmarked for the FIS Council meeting on April 4 but did not take place. The logistics of assembling a sufficient in-house team for next season and putting in place the necessary broadcast production, while simultaneously fending off legal challenges, appear to be overwhelming.

A further Council meeting was due to be held today (Friday).

Broadcasters to have secured rights through deals with Infront have now become concerned over how coverage will be delivered next season. Other parties are also affected, with the ÖSV's rights held by both the European Broadcasting Union and the IMG agency. The EBU has also held Swiss-Ski's international rights but Infront is contracted to assume those from next season onwards.

Amid what is being viewed as a 'power grab' by Eliasch, the relationship between the FIS Executive and Infront has now completely broken down to the extent that communication has only been conducted in recent months through lawyers.

While no clear consensus over the plans has yet emerged from the national associations, they also appear reluctant to be seen to challenge Eliasch's plans for fear of losing FIS World Cup hosting slots. Traditional skiing broadcasters already facing the scheduling headache of a Fifa World Cup being held in the middle of the winter sports season remain frustrated by the ongoing lack of information over the 2022-23 calendar.

The in-house entity, it is proposed, would also handle broadcast production, digital media channels and content creation, hospitality and event services and sponsorship support. It would also set up a new OTT live streaming platform to be populated by rights carved out of deals. Member associations and local organisers would continue to be able to sell domestic media rights to World Cup races. They would, according to the proposed Concorde Agreement, also be able to sell domestic sponsorship and merchandising rights.

'Plethora of legal claims'

Responding to questions from *SportBusiness*, Infront underlined that it "has in place valid

contracts with its partners, both the national ski associations (NSAs) and the media rights licensees”.

The statement continued: “We will continue do everything to safeguard our contractual and legal position. So far, we are focusing on explaining and emphasizing the existing legal and contractual obligations towards our partners. We have communicated all our concerns with a concrete need for action to avert chaos and damage to professional skiing.”

The agency added: “Infront has long-term and exclusive contracts with most of the NSAs that organise FIS World Cups for their media rights. These usually run until the 2025-26 seasons, in some cases even until the 2030-31 season, and are sold as a package to broadcasters or other media companies. Most of the media rights are already allocated for exploitation as part of multi-year license agreements.

“The implementation of the proposed centralisation model would lead to a plethora of legal claims and lawsuits for many years to come at many levels and with huge additional costs and uncertainties attached. For the fans, this could lead to a situation where they cannot access FIS World Cup coverage as conveniently and widely as it is the case today.”

Despite both parties clearly being at polar opposites, Infront maintained that it is “prepared to enter a solution-oriented dialogue at any time”. The agency added: “The communication and cooperation with FIS on an operational level, particularly with the FIS race directors of the various disciplines, remains excellent.”

At the time of writing, FIS has yet to respond to a request for comment.

FIS’ lofty centralisation projections

In moving to centralise the international broadcast rights to the World Cup series, FIS has looked to promise its member associations healthy financial rewards but details of the sales strategy or projected revenues from different markets are sparse.

In its letter to members, the FIS wrote: “What we know for sure is that the European main markets excluding Austria generate international rights sales (excluding domestic rights) per season of at least €70m with rights acquisition costs of less than €45m, leaving a healthy annual profit in excess of €25m, which is significantly more than what FIS generates in profits.

“Austria on the other hand has a more conventional commission-based rights exploitation model with a minimum guarantee.”

Financial promises made by FIS in its letter to members include:

- Payment of a World Cup ‘revenue guarantee’ matching the existing terms but with an additional 35 per cent of profits distributed on a pro-rata basis of a nation’s contribution to overall media rights revenues;

- An indemnity to national associations against any resulting legal claims brought by Infront, including costs;
- And increased prize money for skiers.

FIS M&M would, it is proposed, negotiate deals directly and cut out agencies. In the letter to national associations, Eliasch and Vion say the “best possible outcome for our sport” is “not to line the pockets of third-party agencies” who have a “range of entirely self-serving motivations”.

In response to the criticism, Infront told *SportBusiness*: “As a long-standing partner of the FIS and NSAs, Infront has helped to develop professional skiing and has also generated a huge reliable income for the associations for decades, also in challenging times.

“This successful model has also enormously increased the value of the FIS World Cup commercial rights. Of course, this has been and still is also a legitimate business for Infront and other intermediaries as we are adding substantial value.”

Major broadcast deals in place through Infront include agreements with Nordic Entertainment (Nent) Group in the Nordic countries, Discovery in most of Europe, the Asia-Pacific, sub-Saharan Africa and Mena region, and German public broadcasters ARD and ZDF. All three contracts run to 2026. The deals were [analysed in detail by SportBusiness Media in February](#).

By effectively cutting out the dominant winter sports agency (or other agencies) from any future commercial rights sales, industry observers have immediately questioned how an in-house FIS sales team could extract the maximum value from the market.

Within a personnel structure outlined to member associations, it is proposed that FIS M&M would be headed by a marketing director. The FIS letter last month referenced a leading candidate for the role, described as a “very experienced executive with an exceptionally strong background in winter sport marketing as well as marketing and sales of media and broadcast rights”.

It is proposed that the initial FIS M&M would also include: a head of sponsorship; a media rights manager; a digital manager; production manager; and business affairs executive.

Infront also sells commercial rights to the FIS World Championships. In 2018, the agency was reappointed by FIS to sell broadcast and sponsorship rights to the Alpine World Ski Championships and Nordic World Ski Championships until 2025.

Move to assume sponsorship sales

Writing to the national associations last month, FIS said that agreements in relation to the sale of sponsorship rights by FIS Marketing AG had been terminated.

Infront and Tridem Sports combined with FIS 13 years ago to set up the Switzerland-based entity. They were both minority shareholders with FIS assuming majority ownership.

FIS, under the direction of Eliasch, now claims that it has “eliminated the impediment towards exploiting our sponsorship potential”. The letter last month claimed that the international federation is “free to take control of sponsorship marketing and sales”.

However, Infront told *SportBusiness* that it is “contesting the legal validity of the unilateral termination of the FISMAG shareholders agreement by FIS,” but declined to comment on its litigation strategy in this case.

National associations have been told by FIS that the sponsorship sales have been “in stagnation and decline” under FIS Marketing AG over the last decade. Under the FIS proposals, “headline sponsorship” and timing and data packages would be sold, along with secondary packages. Local event and “headline” domestic sponsorships would continue to be controlled by the national associations and/or local organisers.

In cutting off Tridem, FIS has also ostracised Christian Pirzer, the former IMG executive with widespread commercial expertise in winter sports. Pirzer founded Tridem in 2008.

Eliasch, the former chief executive of sportswear manufacturer Head, is [set to stand unopposed for re-election](#) at the FIS General Assembly on May 25 and 26. The Swede was elected in June last year. FIS had previously been headed by Gian-Franco Kasper for 22 years. Kasper stepped down from the role in May 2021 and passed away in July at the age of 77. [o](#)

RUGBY UNION

Sharp drop for Sanzaar rugby union package in UK deal with Sky

By Imran Yusuf

- Sanzaar package loses majority of value in new UK deal with Sky, from 2022-25
- Sky paying \$8.5m per year in new deal, down from \$26m per year
- Reduction due to lack of competition and decline of Australian rugby union

UK pay-television broadcaster Sky is paying a drastically reduced amount for exclusive rights to rugby union properties sold by Sanzaar, the southern hemisphere rugby union alliance.

Sky's new four-year deal for rights to all international and club rugby properties operated by Sanzaar's member unions is understood to be worth around \$8.5m (€8m) per year, from 2022 to 2025.

This is about two-thirds less than Sanzaar's previous [deal with Sky](#), worth around \$26m per year from 2016 to 2020. Sky earlier agreed a one-off deal to show the 2021 Rugby Championship, the national-team round-robin competition between Sanzaar's four constituent nations: Argentina, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa.

The drop in value to just under one third of the old fee is primarily explained by an absence of competition compared to the previous cycle, in which Sky and its main pay-television rival BT Sport battled it out for the rights.

The fall is also reflective of the decline in rugby union in Australia; both in terms of the success of the national team and the sport's popularity among the population. Experts say a relatively weak Australian team brings down the UK value of the Rugby Championship and England's tours to the country.

The time difference is also far from ideal. The marquee opening match of the 2021 Rugby Championship, New Zealand v Australia, took place at 7.05pm local time and 8.05am in the UK.

While Sky views its long-standing relationship with Sanzaar as important, it is not essential for the broadcaster in terms of maintaining or adding subscriptions. This is similar to its position on Cricket Australia rights; after [BT poached CA rights](#) for the 2016-17 to 2020-21 cycle, Sky found that its absence had little to no impact on its subscriber numbers.

Indeed, the drop in the Sanzaar package's value echoes the fall in value of CA rights in the UK, which include the Ashes Test series between Australia and England. BT paid £15m per year for the rights in the last cycle, but reduced the value to £8m per year from 2021-22 to 2024-25.

Inventory

Sky's new four-year agreement, brokered by the RDA and Future Media Services agencies, covers at least 150 club and national team fixtures per year. The inventory comprises:

- The Rugby Championship competition comprising Argentina, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa
- All home national team matches played by these nations
- The Super Rugby Pacific club competition, featuring five club teams each from New Zealand and Australia, one from Fiji and one from the Pacific Islands
- Domestic competitions in South Africa and New Zealand: the Currie Cup and National Provincial Championship respectively.

Sanzaar sells the rights to these properties in most markets outside the respective domestic territories.

A major component in the deal with regard to the UK market is this summer's 'Home Nations' tours of the southern hemisphere, with fixtures in 2022 set to include Australia v England, South Africa v Wales, New Zealand v Ireland and Argentina v Scotland.

Sources say these matches represent the majority of the value of the deal. The three Australia v England Tests, on July 2, July 9 and July 16, are particularly appealing for the broadcaster. England last toured Australia in 2016.

For Sky, the matches also represent good quality content in the summer months, which helps pay-television operators avoid churn – customers ending subscriptions after the football season concludes.

Super Rugby Pacific is a new competition as of this year. Super Rugby has gone through various iterations since it started as the Super 12 in 1996, with teams from Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. The competition previously included teams from Japan and Argentina.

Earlier this year, Sanzaar [established an OTT streaming platform](#) to broadcast Super Rugby Pacific in the UK and other markets where it did not have rights agreements in place. This will continue to be available in the UK for the time being, making Sky's digital rights to the competition temporarily non-exclusive. Sources say that as the Super Rugby Pacific competition started before Sky's new deal was done, some Sky subscribers had already signed up to the service.

South Africa will continue to play in Sanzaar's Rugby Championship tournament until [at least 2025](#), the last year of the new Sky deal, though sources say there is growing expectation that it will join the Europe-based Six Nations Championship after that.

Earlier this year, Sanzaar chairman Marcelo Rodríguez said he hoped the Rugby Championship would return to its usual home-and-away format this year. Last season, organisers were forced to [move all fixtures to Queensland in Australia](#) due to disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic in Argentina, New Zealand and South Africa. ○

GOLF

Sky renews UK deal for golf's Masters at slight increase

By Imran Yusuf

- Sky to pay about \$16m per year for live UK rights to the Masters, from 2023-25
- Value up from \$14m per year but now includes exclusive rights in Ireland
- No decision yet regarding Discovery sublicensing US PGA Tour next year

UK pay-television broadcaster Sky renewed its agreement with the Augusta National Golf Club for rights to The Masters, paying a slight increase.

The deal for exclusive live rights to all four rounds of the major tournament each year is understood to be valued at about \$16m per year. Sources say the duration of the contract is for two years, 2023 and 2024, with the option of a third year in 2025.

In its [previous deal](#), Sky paid around \$14m per year for in a three-year deal, from 2020 to 2022.

In that deal, Sky gained exclusive live coverage of the key days of Saturday and Sunday after years of trying to wrest away those rights from UK public-service broadcaster the BBC.

From 2020-22, the BBC showed highlights at the conclusion of the day's play. In the 2022 Masters from April 7-10, these highlights were broadcast in the UK at midnight and also early the following morning. The BBC is expected to secure a similar deal for highlights from 2023, though Sky will also show full highlights from each day's play in the new deal.

An important aspect of the new deal is that Sky now also holds exclusive rights in Ireland. Previously, the now defunct pay-television broadcaster Eir Sport showed The Masters in addition to Sky.

Experts say that Ireland is an important market for Sky, with growing opportunities for its platforms and distribution. Acquiring exclusive rights there is seen as a 'tidying up' of the situation as Sky already held exclusive rights in Ireland in all its other prominent golf deals that also cover the UK.

No competition – this time

Sky is thought to have faced no competition in its renewal. The BBC would have struggled to afford the rights fee and, in any case, sources say live overseas golf no longer fits with its strategic priorities. Experts say that Augusta was somewhat disappointed the BBC was not able to continue its role as a live broadcaster in the previous cycle.

The proposed [Discovery – BT Sport joint venture](#) is a potential future threat to Sky's dominance of golf rights in the UK but experts say the Masters sales process came too early for this to be a factor.

Nevertheless, Sky is understood to be highly respectful of its relationship with Augusta, which itself values long-term relationships and would not have taken advantage of the absence of competitive tension.

Anomaly

The Masters is something of an anomaly among prominent golf tournaments in that it is essentially a private members club. Domestically, it prioritises control over the broadcasting of the tournament ahead of maximising its media rights fee. It does so in order to preserve its brand qualities of prestige and exclusivity, and ensure tailored coverage for its sponsors. For this reason, commercial broadcaster CBS has shown the Masters in the US since 1956.

Even though media rights revenues are not always the primary driver for Augusta in its choice of broadcast partners, experts say that the UK deal is by far the most lucrative beyond the US. Sources evaluate the UK deal as being worth around 40 per cent of Augusta's total international media rights revenues. Other key markets include Japan, Korea, Spain, the Nordics, Australia and South Africa.

'Home of golf'

In the UK and Ireland, Sky holds rights to every marquee golf property: the [European Tour](#) (which includes the Ryder Cup), the US PGA Tour, all four men's major tournaments, all five women's major tournaments, the LPGA Tour and the Ladies European Tour.

As a comparison, Sky's deal for The Masters is far higher than what it pays for the [US PGA Championship](#) for the five-year period from 2019 to 2023, which is a fee of just over \$2m per year. However, for the UK-based major, The Open, Sky pays around £18m (\$22.6m) per year, following its [three-year extension](#), running from 2022 to 2024.

Sky's position as the 'home of golf' will most likely be challenged in the coming cycles – though it remains to be seen how far Discovery and its prospective partner BT intend to encroach onto what has been Sky's territory for many years.

Discovery and the US PGA Tour are locked in a joint venture which [handles all PGA Tour broadcast rights outside the US until 2030](#). Sky currently shows the PGA Tour but its [agreement, from 2015-16 to 2021-22](#), thought to be worth about £20m per season, expires at the end of this season.

Experts say that while no conclusive decision has yet been made, it is unlikely Discovery will sublicense the PGA Tour to Sky from 2022 onwards. Discovery [launched its GolfTV OTT streaming service in 2019](#) on the back of a \$2bn agreement to manage the PGA Tour's international media rights.

Sources say, however, that were Discovery to decide to sublicense these rights to Sky, it would be a strong and almost definitive signal that it will not challenge Sky for rights to other prominent golf properties in the near future.

Experts also told *SportBusiness Media* that Discovery would be content to only show the US PGA Tour in the UK, given the property's strengths both in terms of quality and volume of content.

These deliberations are also taking place amid general disruption in golf's commercial landscape. The European Tour formed a strategic alliance with the [US PGA Tour](#) in 2020 under which the PGA Tour took a stake in the company. The PGA Tour and the European Tour are understood to be working together on a number of other initiatives including a combined 'global' calendar, spurred in particular by the [Saudi-backed](#) breakaway league. [o](#)

FOOTBALL

Olympiacos closing in on lucrative three-season deal with Cosmote

By Nick Roumpis

- Cosmote set to pay €15m-€18m per season for Olympiacos rights, from 2022-25
- Nova paid Olympiacos around €10m for its rights during 2021-22
- New deal would be blow to Greek Super League's plan to centralise media rights

Greek powerhouse Olympiacos is set to switch from Nova to Cosmote in a lucrative deal that casts further doubt over the league's efforts to centralise the management of its media rights.

SportBusiness Media understands that pay-television broadcaster Cosmote is offering Olympiacos between €15m to €18m per season for rights to its Greek Super League home matches from 2022-23 to 2024-25. The deal, which is yet to be signed, would see Cosmote secure exclusivity over Greece's most successful team for the next three seasons.

The deal would represent an increase of at least 50 per cent on the current deal between pay-television broadcaster Nova and Olympiacos, worth around €10m in the 2021-22 season.

Cosmote became a major player for Greek Super League rights this season, securing deals with eight of the league's 14 teams including heavyweights Panathinaikos and AEK Athens. With the addition of Olympiacos, Cosmote would hold rights all of the league's premium fixtures and become the main broadcaster of the domestic league.

Besides AEK and Panathinaikos, which are each understood to earn between €8m and €9m per season, Cosmote has deals in place for 2022-23 with OFI, Volos, Atromitos, Panetolikos, Apollon Smyrni and Lamia.

Sources with knowledge of the process said that Olympiacos tested the market earlier this year and approached both Nova and Cosmote in the hope of securing a longer-term deal.

After losing top-tier international football competitions to Nova, Cosmote was willing to go the extra mile to secure Olympiacos home matches. Initial discussions focused on a two-season deal, but it later emerged that a three-season deal was more favourable for both sides.

Cosmote's pursuit of Olympiacos rights is in response to its loss of English Premier League rights. Nova's owner, United Media Group, acquired Premier League rights in Greece over the six seasons from 2022-23 to 2027-28 [in a deal struck last year](#). The agreement will displace Cosmote after it showed the league for nine consecutive seasons.

Cosmote and Nova have been exchanging blows for other major properties over the last 12 months. Nova [took German Bundesliga rights](#) from Cosmote from 2021-22 to 2024-25 [as well as LaLiga rights](#) from 2021-22 to 2025-26, [but lost Serie A rights](#) to Cosmote in a deal worth €4m per season, doubling Nova's previous fee.

The two broadcasters also bid for NBA rights [but Cosmote was able to renew its agreement](#) with the league from 2021-22 to 2023-24. The property has become increasingly important in Greece amid the presence of Greek NBA star Giannis Antetokounmpo.

For Olympiacos rights, Nova was not willing to enter an all-out bidding war with Cosmote to retain them. Sources say Nova remains interested in Super League rights but is more budget-conscious after a year of going head-to-head with its rival.

This leaves Nova with rights to the Super League home games of PAOK, Asteras Tripoli, Giannena and Atromitos for the next season. Nova's deal with Aris expires at the end of the 2021-22 season and sources say that Cosmote is also interested in acquiring the rights to the Thessaloniki-based team.

Champions League rights to also change hands

It is understood that the deal between Cosmote and Olympiacos runs in parallel with a separate agreement involving Uefa Champions League rights. Olympiacos is owned by shipping magnate Evangelos Marinakis, who also owns Nottingham Forest and Greek free-to-air commercial channel Mega TV.

Cosmote, which acquired rights to all Uefa club competitions from 2021-22 to 2023-24, [sublicensed the first-pick Champions League game on Wednesday evenings to Mega TV](#) for the duration of the contract. However, it is understood that Mega TV is looking to offload this package back to Cosmote, something which could bring the total value of the two separate deals for Olympiacos rights and Champions League rights to over €20m per season.

One source claimed that Wednesday evening Champions League rights did not perform as Mega TV expected due to strong competition from other free-to-air channels, hence the commercial broadcaster wants to hand back the rights.

Centralised management

The long-term deal between Olympiacos and Cosmote is also thought to be a major blow to the Greek Super League's plans for the centralised management of media rights from 2023-24 onwards.

The Greek Super League voted in favour of centralised management last year with Olympiacos and Panathinaikos opposing the proposal. However, with Olympiacos under a long-term individual contract, it would be tough for the league to pursue with its centralised management plans, multiple sources said.

“Nobody really expected it to happen, but the Olympiacos deal with Cosmote looks like the last nail in the coffin for centralised management,” said one source.

Nova held Greek Super League rights for 2016-17 and 2017-18 under centralised management, but this was paused from 2017-18 onwards with clubs selling their rights individually.

It is understood that the Greek Super League approached multiple agencies last year to explore the possibility of centralised media rights distribution, but the discussions held did not lead to an agreement. [o](#)

FOOTBALL

LaLiga preparing UK D2C solution as talks with Fite stall

By Callum McCarthy

- Fite's €30m+ deal for LaLiga rights in UK & Ireland hangs in the balance
- Disagreements over payment schedule understood to be primary cause for delay
- LaLiga preparing D2C solution should deal collapse before 2022-23

LaLiga is preparing to roll out its LaLiga Pass direct-to-consumer streaming product in the UK and Ireland for the 2022-23 season as sources say its deal with streaming platform Fite is on the brink of collapse.

In April, combat-focused streaming platform Fite is understood to have signed a three-season deal for exclusive media rights to LaLiga in the UK and Ireland worth more than €10m (\$10.5m) per season, from 2022-23 to 2024-25. The deal would represent a significant increase on the [€5m-€7m per season paid by incumbent pay-television broadcaster Premier Sports](#), from 2019-20 to 2021-22.

As Fite is a brand-new player to both the UK and Ireland and the world of top-tier sports rights, LaLiga and its sales agent Mediapro are understood to have insisted on a significant upfront deposit as security for the deal. Sources close to the situation say Fite wants to renegotiate the payment schedule, causing serious concern at LaLiga over whether the deal can go ahead.

After [Fite submitted the highest bid during a tender for UK and Ireland rights in February](#), LaLiga had no intention of continuing with a linear partner in the UK from the 2022-23 season onward. The UK broadcasting licence for its LaLiga TV linear channel – which is owned and operated by Premier Sports – is currently set to expire on June 30 this year without a renewal.

LaLiga is now weighing up its options with only three months remaining until the beginning of the 2022-23 season. Sources say the league is willing to forego a third-party media rights deal in 2022-23 to avoid striking a deal worth a similar amount to its current agreement with Premier Sports. It is thought the league wants to rebuild its status as a premium property across the UK and Ireland and feels the fee it would receive in a deal with Fite to be a step in the right direction.

LaLiga's rights in the UK and Ireland were once worth about €26m per season in a deal with pay-television broadcaster Sky, from 2015-16 to 2017-18. [This amount fell to €20m per season](#) in a deal with streaming platform Eleven Sports, which was set to run from 2018-19 to 2020-21 before Eleven's UK arm collapsed in late 2018.

Premier Sports acquired the rights after its offer of up to €7m per season for exclusive rights to the league beat then-incumbent's Sky's offer of €6m per season.

A direct-to-consumer offering such as LaLiga Pass – which has already been rolled out in Indonesia and Thailand – is thought to be LaLiga's current preferred fallback option as the league would be able to collect detailed, user-specific data that could help its clubs get closer to their respective UK and Ireland fanbases.

Fite had not responded to a request for comment from *SportBusiness Media* at the time of publication. LaLiga did not comment on the information contained in this article, confirming only that it "is in the process of closing the tender process".

Fite conundrum

Fite is owned by media group TrillerVerz, having been [acquired by the company last year](#). Fite is best known for being the global platform of TrillerVerz's wholly-owned properties such as the Bare Knuckle Fighting Championship and a series of influencer boxing events.

Triller, the social media platform owned by TrillerVerz, shot to fame in 2021 as the primary sponsor and exclusive distributor of Mike Tyson's exhibition bout against Roy Jones Jr, paying between \$30m and \$35m for [global media rights and title sponsorship rights to the event](#).

Fite is also home to several niche subscription products related to professional wrestling promotions, including All-Elite Wrestling and New Japan Pro Wrestling.

By virtue of its combat and professional wrestling specialism, Fite shocked the UK market by emerging as the highest bidder for LaLiga rights during a formal tender in February this year, outbidding incumbent pay-television broadcaster Premier Sports and multi-platform broadcaster DAZN in the first round.

Fite has only one previous experience of acquiring football rights: [a pay-per-view deal with agency Mediapro](#) to show the current phase of Conmebol World Cup Qualifiers in the United States. The deal involved no upfront rights fee and was based solely on a revenue share.

LaLiga's tender in the UK and Ireland was also operated by Mediapro – the league's international media rights sales agent – which launched a tender immediately after the collapse of DAZN's deal to acquire UK pay-television broadcaster BT Sport. [As one of LaLiga's domestic broadcasters alongside telco Telefonica](#), DAZN was set to be awarded rights in the UK and Ireland without a tender should it have completed the acquisition.

After Fite submitted the largest bid, LaLiga went ahead to secure the deal. The league is understood to have reached an agreement with Fite over the fee, duration, free-to-air exposure and payment schedule during the subsequent contract negotiations. Fite was set to hold exclusive subscription-platform rights to LaLiga with one match per week – either the Saturday 18:00 CET or the Sunday 18:00 CET kick-off slot – set to appear on UK digital-terrestrial broadcaster ITV4 for the duration of the deal.

ITV4 was set to cover the technical costs of broadcasting the matches but would not have paid a rights fee for the matches. Free-to-air exposure was understood to be a prerequisite of any pay-television broadcast deal from 2022-23.

As issues over the payment schedule threaten to scupper Fite's deal before it has begun, LaLiga and Mediapro have been left to search for a suitable alternative option.

Returning to Premier Sports is thought to be an unlikely option as the broadcaster has already applied to wind up LaLiga TV's UK broadcasting licence. Creating a new application to the UK's communications regulator Ofcom is expected to be a lengthy process, leaving LaLiga without full coverage at the beginning of next season.

LaLiga TV was a crucial element of Premier Sports' current deal. On top of the €5m-per-season rights fee, Premier Sports shared revenue with LaLiga via: the carriage agreements it made for LaLiga TV; direct subscriptions to LaLiga TV via Premier Sports portals; and a share of a revenue pot distributed by Premier Sports based on each subscriber's stated intentions for signing up to the overall Premier Sports bundle of channels.

Sky and BT are also thought unlikely destinations for the rights as neither broadcaster bid during the tender process earlier this year. DAZN is thought to remain interested in the rights given its status as the league's domestic broadcaster but sources say it does not want to pay a similar rights fee to Fite. ○

FOOTBALL

Presa: ElevenSports.com ‘not in competition’ for viewers with Fifa+

By Frank Dunne

- ‘Elements’ of Fifa deal could be rolled out to other rights-holders
- Diversification key to thriving in increasingly fragmented marketplace
- Fifa deal is a ‘great show of trust’ in Eleven’s technology as much as its content

Eleven, the media group owned by Aser Ventures, has said its content and technology deal with Fifa does not put it in competition for viewers with the governing body’s new streaming platform Fifa+ and will instead “power growth” for Eleven’s platform ElevenSports.com.

Fifa unveiled the [new platform](#) on April 12 and it was subsequently revealed the new service will be populated, in part, through [the deal with Eleven](#). Both platforms will show the matches free. ElevenSports.com also includes subscription and pay-per-view tiers in some markets, but no game carried free on Fifa+ will be behind a paywall on Eleven’s platform.

Unlike ElevenSports.com, Fifa’s platform does not require registration for viewers to access content. This has led some industry experts to suggest that, given a choice between the two platforms, new visitors in many markets would probably opt for Fifa+, slowing the growth – and attractiveness to investors – of Eleven’s platform. Fifa also benefits from having a more recognisable global brand than Eleven and a much stronger slate of shoulder football content, some experts say.

Talking exclusively to *SportBusiness* this week, Pedro Presa, Eleven group chief adviser for DTC and strategic projects, rejected these arguments. He said: “We’re not competing with Fifa+ for users. Whether fans are watching for free on [ElevenSports.com](#) or via Fifa+, our objective is to bring football at all levels to users wherever they are. We want to work collaboratively with Fifa+ to serve audiences and develop commercial opportunities around the live content we acquire.”

Presa added: “Fifa+ and [ElevenSports.com](#) are different products with different offerings. Fifa+ is amazing and we hope millions of people will get to enjoy the service. But we at ElevenSports.com have a long track record of generating value for fans and rights-holders. We have a loyal community of fans that we have built up over many years and that will continue to be the case.”

[ElevenSports.com](https://www.elevensports.com) launched last year. It was created following the acquisition in 2020 by Eleven of the MyCujoo platform that Presa and his brother, João, launched in 2015. The platform grew rapidly by aggregating content from dozens of football associations around the world.

More than half of the content currently available on ElevenSports.com will remain only on [ElevenSports.com](https://www.elevensports.com), and not be carried on Fifa+. Conversely, any new match added to Fifa+ will automatically be carried by [ElevenSports.com](https://www.elevensports.com). It is understood that as part of the deal, when Fifa establishes that a member association is interested in having its games carried on Fifa+, Eleven will then take over to handle the production and distribution of the games to both platforms.

“We actually see the Fifa+ deal powering further growth for [ElevenSports.com](https://www.elevensports.com) because it will mean a huge amount of additional content being made available for our users,” Presa said. “The question for us is not about whether they should watch on ElevenSports.com or Fifa+ instead. If a fan can find live content they weren’t previously able to watch through this deal, that is already a success for us wherever they watch it.”

The Fifa deal, Presa said, was “massive” for Eleven. It was the result of several years and “many hundreds of hours” of discussion.

He said: “We’re delighted by the trust Fifa+ have placed in us and we’re excited to be utilising our capabilities to support the delivery of what we think is a truly groundbreaking platform.” He added that Eleven was exploring ways the company could support other rights-holders and that there were “definitely elements” of the Fifa deal that could be used as a model elsewhere.

Thriving in a fragmented world

The launch of Fifa+, and the Eleven deal underpinning it, come against a background of uncertainty about the growth potential of streaming services. This has largely been caused by the market reaction to Netflix’s disappointing first-quarter results. The company lost 200,000 subscribers, its first loss in a decade, leading to a one-day 25-per-cent drop in its share price, which has continued to plummet. Netflix famously does not carry sport but if the global market leader has already hit a wall, the implications go beyond one company.

Presa argued that while there were lessons to be drawn from Netflix’s difficult moment, sport was different. “There are certain commonalities in streaming, whether for sports or wider entertainment: quantity and quality of content, pricing, user experience, and platform stability all need to be right to build a community of subscribers and retain them,” he said.

“However, there is obviously a significant difference when it comes to sport. Most football fans want to follow a particular team in a particular league. Should the streaming platform lose the rights to that team to a key competitor, it is very likely that that competitor also picks up that fan. It’s here that data also has an enormous role to play in subscriptions and retention. It’s not only about the value of a subscriber, but what the overall value is to a streamer of particular content relative to the subscription itself.”

Eleven's rivals in the sports streaming sector, meanwhile, are gearing up. Premium sports streamer DAZN has [just agreed a deal](#) with betting technology firm Pragmatic Solutions, as it prepares to launch its sports betting service DAZN Bet. Football-focused streamer OneFootball last week raised [\\$300m of fresh investment](#) and unveiled a blockchain technology joint venture.

Eleven's response to the challenges of fragmentation, aggressive competition and an unpredictable landscape is diversification.

"The key point here is that Eleven isn't just a sports streamer", Presa said. "Eleven delivers a 360-degree offering to brands and rights-holders. The group houses award-winning content creation capabilities and produces everything from short form social content to award-winning documentaries like *Take us Home: Leeds United*.

"Eleven has a suite of digital marketing and talent management services too, to help partners engage with fans at every stage of the journey. We have our own proprietary streaming technology which powers our global platform and is available to rights-holders to help them share content D2C."

Tech stacks up

For some industry experts, Fifa's adoption of Eleven's technology is arguably more significant than its acquisition of the company's football content. As the sports media sector gradually shifts to streaming technology as the default delivery system and rights-holders increasingly look to direct-to-consumer options, the stability of the platform will become a key differentiator for players in the sector.

Presa said this aspect of the deal was "a great show of trust" by Fifa. He said Eleven's 'tech stack' had a proven record in delivering on a large scale and being robust. "It has supported tens of millions of users annually, and hosted tens of thousands of live events, which were broadcast in high quality from technology as simple as a smartphone from over 150 territories, often in challenging environments," he said.

The backbone of Eleven's technology stack is [MyCujoo Live Services](#), a plug-and-play streaming service that can be easily integrated into an existing web or app platform. It will be responsible for ensuring 40,000 live matches per year will be distributed simultaneously to both [ElevenSports.com](#) and Fifa+. Eleven has recently done deals to deliver the service to companies like Brazil-based LiveMode, Rugby Americas North and the Mediamax Networks media group. It also provides a competitive advantage for Eleven in the speed and efficiency of rolling out its content platforms in new markets.

As Presa put it: "We start from the position: can we serve fans in a particular market in a new way? If we think we can bring something new to the market, then we explore it further. And based on a range of factors – availability of the right content, the media landscape, the streaming infrastructure – we take a decision on whether to launch.

“Having our own streaming tech gives us an advantage here as we are able to launch in a new market in just a few weeks, as we have done in a number of markets in Southeast Asia over the past few months.”

In October, ElevenSports.com was rolled out in [seven Southeast Asian markets](#): Brunei, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand. ○

ICE HOCKEY

NHL almost doubles value in Germany and Austria with Sky

By Nick Roumpis

- Sky Deutschland paying just under €1m per season for NHL rights, from 2021-25
- Free-to-air deal in Germany with ProSiebenSat.1 brings NHL's income up to €1m
- Sky deal is NHL's first long-term deal in region after the coronavirus pandemic

The National Hockey League doubled the value of its rights across Germany and Austria this season on the back of strong competition, with Sky Deutschland and ProSiebenSat.1 sharing the property during 2021-22.

In a deal valued at just under €1m (\$1.05m) per season, Sky Deutschland secured pay-television rights to the NHL in Germany, Austria, Luxembourg, Liechtenstein and the South Tyrol region of Italy in a four-season deal from 2021-22 to 2024-25.

Free-to-air rights in Germany are held by ProSiebenSat.1 during the 2021-22 season in a deal that brings the total value of NHL rights across the region up to €1m in the current season. ProSiebenSat.1 [exploits the rights on its commercial channel ProSieben Maxx](#).

The deals represent a 100-per-cent increase on the €500,000 paid in last-minute deals across Germany and Austria by German pay-television broadcaster Sport1, streaming service DAZN and Austrian commercial broadcaster Puls 4 during the 2020-21 season.

Under Sky's four-season deal with NHL, which was announced in September 2021, Sky shows around 300 live games per season across the regular season, the Stanley Cup playoffs, the Winter Classic, the All-Star Game and the Stanley Cup Finals.

All games are broadcast with the original English-language commentary but certain games will also be available with German commentary. These games include weekend games in favourable timeslots for European audiences as well as games during the playoffs.

ProSieben Maxx, which is owned by German media group ProSiebenSat.1, is showing a total of 18 games during 2021-22 under a deal that started on February 27 and was signed by Seven. One Sports, the sports business unit of Seven.One Entertainment Group. Games will also be shown via ProSiebenSat's sports app, Ran.

It is understood the NHL secured a strong increase for the rights for two main reasons. Firstly, the 2021-22 season is the first full season after the pandemic following a 2020-21 season which was reduced from 82 to 56 regular-season games amid the pandemic.

Secondly, and more importantly, DAZN and Sport1 were interested in renewing the rights, creating competition for the property and driving up its value.

Sky wanted to secure NHL rights as a way of broadening its portfolio after the loss of top-tier properties such as the Uefa Champions League in the 2021-24 cycle. Sky later struck a sublicensing agreement with Amazon for 16 live Champions League matches per season.

ProSiebenSat.1 also holds rights in Germany and Austria to the NFL and wanted to continue its coverage of US sports after the latest Super Bowl. This directly influenced its decision to acquire NHL rights, sources said.

From the NHL's perspective, switching from Sport1 and DAZN to ProSieben Maxx and Sky was not only a matter of more money. Sources said that NHL believed deals with those two broadcasters, which have broader reach, is the next step in the league's effort to further develop its product in the region.

Germany is one of the most important markets in Europe for NHL, along with the Nordics and Russia.

An increasing number of German players are competing in the NHL, with Leon Draisaitl winning the MVP award for the 2019-20 season. Other German players featuring in NHL include Tim Stützle, Thomas Greiss and Philipp Grubauer.

The NHL has ramped up its efforts to enhance its international coverage in recent years. In 2018 it introduced the NHL European Game of the Week, which has now been rebranded to NHL Saturday and NHL Sunday in the 2021-22 season, increasing the number of games broadcast in European primetime.

Elsewhere in Europe, NHL has broadcast deals in place with Nordic Entertainment Group in the Baltics and Poland (2021-26), Setanta Sports in Ukraine (2021-26), Canal Plus in France (2019-22), and Central European Media Enterprises in Slovakia and the Czech Republic (2019-22).

The NHL is advised on all deals in Europe, excluding the Nordics, by the IMG agency. ○

TENNIS

French Open value suffers steep decline in India with Sony

By Imran Yusuf

- Sony to pay \$1m per year for French Open, down from \$4m per year
- Sony's deal, from 2022-24, struck as Star uninterested in renewal
- Australian Open and US Open also thought likely to struggle in new deals

Indian pay-television broadcaster Sony Pictures Networks secured rights to the French Open tennis tournament amid a lack of competition.

Sony will pay around \$1m (€950,000) per year for exclusive rights in a deal covering the 2022, 2023 and 2024 tournaments. The deal covers rights in India and the wider subcontinent: Bangladesh, Bhutan, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. This year's French Open begins on May 22 and concludes on June 5.

The deal was agreed between Sony and the French tennis federation, the Fédération Française de Tennis, which operates the tournament. It is understood that the FFT reached out to multiple broadcasters in India earlier this year and held private negotiations.

Previously, Disney-owned Star held French Open rights in a five-year deal from 2017 to 2021. Star paid around \$4m per year having outbid Sony and other pay-television rivals in two rounds.

Unlike that bid process, negotiations over a new deal lacked any competitive tension. Sources say advertising revenues for tennis grand slams are on the decline in India and broadcasters such as Star, pay-television broadcaster Viacom18 and streaming platform FanCode see limited strategic value in properties that don't extend across a whole sporting season.

Furthermore, broadcasters were reluctant to invest in promoting the tournament given the effort and expenditure required to boost viewership for a tournament which lasts just two weeks a year.

Another complicating factor for the French Open is that it overlaps with the Indian Premier League cricket tournament, which this year ends on May 29.

Beyond India, Sony will exploit its rights via its pay-television Ten Sports channel in Pakistan and

its Sony-branded pay-television channels in Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. It is expected to strike sublicensing deals in other markets.

US Open, Australian Open face struggle

Experts say that other grand slams are expected to struggle in their upcoming rights negotiations in India.

The US Open has been shown by Star for the past five years in a deal valued at \$4m per year from 2017 to 2021. Tennis Australia's deal with Sony for the Australian Open, valued at \$1.2m per year, ended after this year's 2022 tournament. Sources say that both grand slams face difficult market conditions ahead of negotiations.

The exception is Wimbledon, for which Star holds the rights until 2023 in a deal worth \$4m per year. Sources say that the overall brand value the grand slam provides will ensure a healthy rights fee from 2024 and beyond.

The emergence of an Indian tennis star would transform the market. The most high-profile Indian tennis player of recent years, Sania Mirza, is due to retire this year. [o](#)

TENNIS

Servus deal keeps French Open free-to-air value flat in Austria

By Nick Roumpis

- Servus to pay €200,000 for free-to-air French Open rights in Austria for 2022
- ORF paid the same fee for the rights in previous three-year cycle, from 2019-21
- Servus will pay less than €100,000 for rights to US and Australian Opens in 2022

Austrian commercial broadcaster ServusTV has paid a flat fee to secure rights to the French Open grand slam tennis tournament this year, replacing Austrian public-service broadcaster ORF.

It is understood that Servus is paying €200,000 (\$210,000) in a deal that includes rights to one match per day, plus the semi-finals and the final. The fee is thought to be in line with the annual fee paid by ORF in its previous deal from 2019 to 2021.

Servus will exploit the rights via its commercial channel and via its streaming platform ServusTV On.

Servus acquired the rights from US media giant Discovery, which is paying close to €30m per year for exclusive, multi-platform rights in Europe (excluding France) to the French Open over the five years from 2022 to 2026. Discovery exploits the rights via its sports broadcaster Eurosport and its subscription streaming platform Discovery+ in markets where it is available.

With the acquisition of French Open rights in 2022, Servus has completed deals for three of the four major grand slam tournaments for 2022.

It also struck deals with Discovery to acquire non-exclusive rights to one match per day from the US and Australian Opens for 2022, paying less than €100,000 in total. The value of the US Open and Australian Open are lower because of the time differences between the host countries and Austria, which are not ideal for local audiences.

Servus has invested in rights to each tournament as a means of complementing its top-tier assets and adding stardust to its existing tennis portfolio. Servus also holds rights to the ATP Cup and Davis Cup in the DACH region as well as rights to the German, Vienna, Hamburg and Stuttgart Opens in Germany and the Generali and Vienna Opens in Austria, all for 2022 only.

On April 15, Servus announced its partnership with the German Tennis Association as the two parties want to jointly promote the television presence of tennis in the country.

Aside from tennis, the commercial broadcaster will pay about €14m per season over the course of the 2021-24 cycle [for non-exclusive rights to the Champions League first-pick Wednesday match](#), final and highlights in Austria. The package also includes non-exclusive rights to the first-pick Europa League or Europa Conference League match on Thursday.

It also acquired half of Austria's European Qualifiers from 2022-23 to 2027-28 for €19m, while it became the first Austrian commercial broadcaster to secure exclusive rights to the Uefa European Championship, [after agreeing deals worth €24m for Euro 2024 and €26m for Euro 2028](#).

Its top-tier property portfolio also includes rights to the Formula One for the 2021-23 cycle [in a deal worth about \\$15m \(€14.3m\) per year](#). ○