

Extra cash in Ekstraklasa

The media rights selling process for the Polish league, Ekstraklasa is about to start soon. Ekstraklasa S.A and MP & Silva are willing to finalize it by February 2015.

Current deal, that expires with the end of current season gives all broadcasting rights exclusively to nc+ (with 2 games per round transmitted also by Polish Television). From this deal alone the 16 Clubs get around 120 million PLN to split, with higher places in the table at the end of the season rewarded with more money.

Up to this moment the sales of media rights in Poland was based on the rivalry of two biggest broadcasters on the market: Cyfrowy Polsat and nc+ (earlier Canal+). Last contract was signed in March last year. On the beginning of September this year Ekstraklasa S.A. has changed its tactics. Company has announced that starting with new season (2015/2016) on behalf of Ekstraklasa media rights will be offered by MP & Silva, one of the biggest sports rights media agencies in the world.

The global media company is an advisor and "financial warrant" of both the domestic and international rights, as **Roberto Dalmiglio, Commercial Director in MP & Silva** says and stresses that every rights ownership stays with Ekstraklasa S.A. Agency could however offer rights to the league worldwide and on non-limited scope.

As Businessweek has found out, In the coming days potential contractors will receive an invitation with detailed offer. They will have about a month for reply. The list of interested companies should be finished by the end of November. Whole process is expected to end at the beginning of the new year – in January or February 2015.

Which sums are we talking about? This won't be disclosed by neither Ekstraklasa S.A or MP & Silva. As we know, the difference between previous deal and new one will be significant. Ekstraklasa Clubs will get a guaranteed sum for a first time ever.

Ekstraklasa has protected itself. MP & Silva because they will only get reward for their advising role only if they work out a surplus to the sum guaranteed in the deal. Additional money will be split between the agency and the Clubs, and if they don't meet the given sum, they'll have to cover the difference. MP & Silva must be confident in believing in marketing power of Polish football.

There are rumours on the market about a possibility of bundling of the rights, or even bringing the Polish league back – after many years – to public TV. – Free to air television as one of the distribution channels would be considered. This we can be sure – **Bogusław Biszof, President at Ekstraklasa S.A** commented. - We are ready for negotiations with every willing subjects, including those who did not show the league in past.

From the potential sponsor's point of view, free access TV is more attractive. The best Ekstraklasa games in Polish Television gather more than 1 million viewers, while record viewership in nc+ this season (Wisła Kraków – Legia Warszawa) is 335 thousands. - The number of people in front of the TV is not everything. We proceed with other activities, such as website Ekstraklasa.tv created in cooperation with Onet/RASP or mobile app launched recently – adds Biszof.

Advisory in rights selling isn't the only task for MP&Silva during whole process. - We are to help finding sources of revenues for Ekstraklasa, and that can only be achieved by improving the league's exposure. It's not only live coverage of games, but also possibility to buy a game pass for someone who works during the match - explains Roberto Dalmiglio.

Users of such tool would have a possibility to watch the games in any chosen time. – There's a huge potential in this area. You have 40 million people – adds Dalmiglio.

There is in beyond imagination for nc+ to forfeit the tender. – Because of preparations taking place before the start of rights selling process we cannot comment on the aspects you asked about. - replies Communication and PR Director in nc+, Arkadiusz Mierzwa and adds: - Of course, as the broadcaster that shows games of Ekstraklasa since 20 years we are interested in further use of our experience. We consider the coverage of Polish league as a vital element of our sports offer, although we also have rights to other tournaments, such as UEFA Champions League and Europa League, as well as English, Spanish or Italian domestic leagues.

Average viewership of English Premier League was at 46 thousands in Poland. At the same time Ekstraklasa gathered around... 200 thousands of viewers per game. The names don't play, and that Zabrze is much closer to the Polish heart than Manchester.

