

Sky vs BT: What do we actually achieve?

In the wake of BT Sport's capture of European football, [Tom Fennelly](#) assesses the impact of TV rights on the modern game

Sunday 10 November 2013



The battle between Sky Sports and BT has intensified after BT claimed the rights to broadcast the Champions League. Image: 2010 World Wheelchair Basketball Championship | Media Blog

On Saturday, BT Sport announced that from the 2015/16 season they would be the UK's sole broadcaster of all European football, in both the Champions League and the Europe League, up until the 2018/19 season. The deal gives them the live broadcast rights to all of the 350 matches played in both of the UEFA tournaments, which came at a price of a whopping £299 million. This sort of move that monopolises the broadcasting of the European game has never been seen in the history of British television; in the past, the rights would have been shared between (the free-to-air broadcaster) ITV and (subscription broadcaster) Sky Sports. Both had been televising the tournaments (although they existed previously in other forms) since 1992.

"Finally," says the archetypal man on the street, "Sky Sports' grip on everything football is broken!" And maybe the archetypal man on the street is right to rejoice in the light of this news.

This bitter resentment towards Sky Sports stems as far back as the creation of the Premier League in 1992, when the channel outbid the BBC and ITV to live and exclusive broadcasting of England's top flight football. It was the start of the increasing commercialisation of the 'beautiful game', and Sky Sports continued to monopolise sport over the years with exclusive coverage of England's international cricket games and, to an extent, of horse racing through the channel At The Races. This year alone, they exclusively set up channels dedicated to Formula 1 and the Ashes test series.

Maybe, then, BT Sport's move is a good thing. Away from European football, they also broadcast 38 live Premier League matches, as well as games from the FA Cup and top-flight leagues in Germany, Italy, France and Scotland. Away from football, they also broadcast live rugby union, women's tennis and (as of next year) Moto GP. In line with the free market world that we live in, BT Sport provides excellent competition against the monopoly that Sky Sports previously held over football coverage, especially after Setanta Sports and ESPN have spectacularly failed in fulfilling this role in previous years. The existence of BT Sport as a viable competitor will mean cheaper and more competitive prices for the consumer and a better standard of coverage and punditry.

Regardless, the archetypal man on the street now faces more difficult choices financially. Does he stick with Sky Sports, switch to BT Sport, or get both? Can he only afford one or the other, or even afford either? During my lifetime as an avid sports-watcher, I've never had home access to any subscription sports channel; my parents could never afford it. They would only go as far as getting Virgin Media. So if I want access to all of Sky Sports, I'll need to pay an extra £27.25 a month. To get the package that includes BT Sport, my price per month will rise from £8 to £24.50. If I want both, that's £51.75 a month. It's cheaper to watch the adult channels.

Over the past twenty years, the archetypal man on the street's access to England's top-flight football has nearly completely rescinded. The average football fan is going from being priced out of going to football matches to being priced out of even watching the game at home. The days of universal access to the game we love through terrestrial and free-to-air television are long gone as the sport was turned into a money-spinner. But I'm not saying that's necessarily a bad thing: the hugely increased revenue from television rights has helped to grow sports and sports clubs massively, especially as many clubs are pivotal parts of their local community's.

A solution? Stop the coverage of sport from private subscription services and simply increase the TV License fee; we bring it back to the old days so the original 'working man's' game can actually be watched by the 'working man' again. But that borders on socialism, and that's the last thing that football needs.

My solution? Simply let Sky Sports monopolise the sport scene. I don't want to mess around juggling a load of sports subscriptions; it's much more pragmatic for me just to have top-flight English football centralised in one big subscription for a reasonable price. And, truth be told, I love Sky Sports. I love Gillette "it's unbelievable, Jeff" Soccer Saturday. Jeff Stelling should receive a knighthood. I think Gary Neville is an excellent pundit and much better than Alan Hanson, a man I have to use the subtitles for in order to understand what he is saying. Jamie Redknapp is a babe. I love watching either the Sure For Men advert or listening to an excerpt from Tinie Tempah's 'Written in the Stars' in between the ad breaks. Their studios look amazing. Their coverage is professional and of a high-standard.

Look, they're just good at what they do. And the archetypal man on the street should be fed up of the complexity of watching sports on the tele. BT Sport just adds to the confusion. In the case of Sky Sports, if you can't beat them, join them.

Now I'm going to have to find more internet loopholes for watching Tottenham Hotspur live in the bloody Europa League, again.

DISCLAIMER: the author apologises for the use of gender-specific language that is intrinsic in modern football.



2 comments

Lee

26 Dec '13 at 12:49 pm

Fully agree! I paid to watch my football on tv, and now I have to pay more! Thanks BT for stealing all the important Liverpool matches from the subscription I already paid for :(one channel should monopolise all games for each team, then each fan only needs one aubscription to watch all games for just their team with the odd few other random games thrown in

[▲ Report](#)

dave

16 Apr '14 at 8:18 pm

You could just get a dodgy sky box :) sky sports and bt sports all in HD for £6 a month

[▲ Report](#)

Most Read **Discussed**

1. [Men's Football 3s fight back to win on Derby Day](#)
2. [Premier League Round-Up: Gameweek 15](#)
3. [Zidane the greatest of all time](#)
4. [Mind over Matter: An insight into the psychology of boxing](#)
5. [Women's sport to open and close Roses 2019](#)
6. [Is lad culture really a bad thing?](#)

Write for Nouse Sport

[Get in touch with the editors](#)

[Join the Facebook group](#)

More in Sport

- [Premier League Round-Up: Gameweek 15](#)
- [Premier League Round-Up: Gameweek 14](#)
- [Men's Football 3s fight back to win on Derby Day](#)
- [Premier League Round-Up: Gameweek 13](#)
- [Netball 1s show Roses mettle in front of large crowd](#)
- [Netball 1s easily overcome Leeds Beckett](#)

[About Nouse](#)
[Who's Nouse](#)
[Website Credits](#)
[Contact Us](#)
[Advertising](#)
[Archives](#)

[Student Discounts](#)

[Print Editions](#)

[Mini-Sites](#)

[Nouse on Twitter](#)

[Nouse on Facebook](#)

[Nouse on Google+](#)

© 1964–2018 Nouse

[Policies](#) |

