
Advanced Certificate in Sports Law

Sports Broadcasting Rights

Sports Broadcasting Rights: An Explanation of Key Terms and Concepts

Sports broadcasting rights refer to the legal rights granted to broadcast sports events on various platforms such as television, radio, and the internet. These rights are typically owned by sports organizations, teams, or leagues and are sold to broadcasters for a fee. The following are some key terms and concepts related to sports broadcasting rights:

1. **Exclusive Rights:** Exclusive rights refer to the legal right granted to a single broadcaster to air a particular sports event. This means that no other broadcaster can air the same event during the same time. Exclusive rights are often sought after by broadcasters as they ensure that they have a monopoly over the event's airtime, which can lead to higher viewership and revenue.

Example: The National Football League (NFL) in the United States sells exclusive broadcasting rights to its games to various networks such as CBS, Fox, and NBC. These networks have the exclusive right to air NFL games, and no other network can broadcast the same games during the same time.

2. **Non-Exclusive Rights:** Non-exclusive rights refer to the legal right granted to multiple broadcasters to air a particular sports event. This means that more than one broadcaster can air the same event at the same time. Non-exclusive rights are often granted when the sports organization, team, or league wants to reach a wider audience by allowing multiple broadcasters to air the event.

Example: The Indian Premier League (IPL) in cricket sells non-exclusive broadcasting rights to its games to multiple networks such as Star Sports, Sony, and Viacom18. These networks can air the same IPL games at the same time, allowing the league to reach a wider audience.

3. **Over-the-Air (OTA) Broadcasting:** Over-the-air broadcasting refers to the traditional method of broadcasting sports events on free-to-air television channels. These channels are often publicly owned and are available to anyone with a television and an antenna. OTA broadcasting is funded through advertising revenue.

Example: The Olympic Games are often broadcasted on free-to-air television channels, allowing anyone with a television and an antenna to watch the games without any subscription fees.

4. **Pay-Per-View (PPV):** Pay-per-view is a method of broadcasting sports events where viewers are charged a fee to watch the event. This fee can be a one-time payment or a subscription fee for a series of events. PPV is often used for high-profile events such as boxing matches or championship games.

Example: Boxing matches featuring high-profile fighters such as Floyd Mayweather or Manny Pacquiao are often broadcasted on pay-per-view, with viewers paying upwards of \$100 to watch the fight.

5. **Subscription-Based Broadcasting:** Subscription-based broadcasting refers to the method of broadcasting sports events where viewers are required to pay a monthly or annual fee to access the content. This method is often used by sports networks such as ESPN or NFL Network, which offer 24/7 coverage of sports events.

Example: ESPN offers a subscription-based service called ESPN+, which allows viewers to access live sports events, original content, and on-demand programming for a monthly fee.

6. **Terrestrial Broadcasting:** Terrestrial broadcasting refers to the method of broadcasting sports events through radio waves that are transmitted from land-based stations. This method is often used for radio broadcasts of sports events.

Example: The FIFA World Cup is often broadcasted on terrestrial radio stations, allowing listeners to tune in and listen to the games for free.

7. **Satellite Broadcasting:** Satellite broadcasting refers to the method of broadcasting sports events through satellites that transmit signals to receivers on the ground. This method is often used for television broadcasts of sports events in remote or rural areas.

Example: The Super Bowl is often broadcasted on satellite television networks, allowing viewers in remote or rural areas to watch the game even if they do not have access to terrestrial broadcasting.

8. **Streaming:** Streaming refers to the method of broadcasting sports events over the internet. This method allows viewers to watch the event live or on-demand, often through a subscription-based service.

Example: The NFL offers a streaming service called NFL Game Pass, which allows viewers to watch live and on-demand games for a subscription fee.

9. **Blackout:** A blackout refers to the practice of preventing the broadcast of a sports event in a particular area, usually to encourage ticket sales. Blackouts are often implemented by sports organizations, teams, or leagues to protect the value of their broadcasting rights.

Example: The NFL often implements blackouts in local markets to encourage fans to attend games in person.

10. **Sublicensing:** Sublicensing refers to the practice of granting a third-party broadcaster the right to air a particular sports event. This is often done when the primary broadcaster does not have the reach or resources to air the event in a particular market.

Example: The NBA often sublicenses its broadcasting rights to local television stations in smaller markets, allowing fans to watch their favorite teams even if they are not carried by a national network.

In conclusion, sports broadcasting rights are an essential aspect of the sports industry. These rights allow sports organizations, teams, and leagues to generate revenue and reach a wider audience. By understanding the key terms and concepts related to sports broadcasting rights, stakeholders can make informed decisions regarding the sale, distribution, and consumption of sports events. Through the use of exclusive and non-exclusive rights, over-the-air and pay-per-view broadcasting, subscription-based and

terrestrial broadcasting, satellite broadcasting, streaming, blackouts, and sublicensing, sports broadcasting rights provide a critical link between sports and fans.