

Serie B announces Helbiz termination, Sky and DAZN face increased payments

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Lega Nazionale Professionisti Serie B (LNPB) has terminated its rights deal with Helbiz, the US-based micro-mobility company, in a move that is set to mean Sky Italia and DAZN will be required to increase their payments for the 2023-24 season.

The LNPB has announced that Sky and DAZN's increased commitments are due to Helbiz Media Italia's "non-fulfilment" of payment obligations.

Helbiz has been encountering financial difficulties and in November announced it was seeking partners for its media business, Helbiz Live, as it undertook several measures to reduce costs. Helbiz was looking for partners to share the operation of the media business to reduce costs and return focus on its flagship mobility business.

Helbiz Live was formed in June 2021 armed with domestic streaming rights to Serie B, while also being appointed to distribute rights worldwide. The award of non-exclusive domestic rights to Serie B covered the three-season period spanning 2021-22 to 2023-24, as did Helbiz's appointment as the exclusive marketer of the league's international rights.

DAZN and Sky acquired rights packages under the LNPB's strategy of pursuing a non-exclusive rights model for its current three-season window. This meant the LNPB managed to effectively double its revenue from broadcast rights, but the terms of the arrangements will mean that with one rights-holder dropping out, the remainder will need to increase their contributions.

For 2023-24, the LNPB said Sky will now be required to pay €16m (\$17.5m) for package one (pay-television), plus €12m for package two (streaming). Sky shares the latter package with DAZN, which will also be required to pay €12m – instead of €10m – for 2023-24, the league stated.

Serie B rights revenue had reached €48.5m per season through the deals with Sky, DAZN and Helbiz – €16m for Sky's pay-television package, plus €10m apiece from the trio for streaming rights and a further €2.5m from Helbiz for international rights. Helbiz's exit will mean a substantial cut in revenue for the final season of the current rights cycle.

The invitation to tender in 2021 stated that if two broadcasters acquired rights to the same package, then the fee would be €12m each per season. If three broadcasters secured rights to the same package, the fee would be €10m each per season. For four or more broadcasters, the figure would drop to an annual sum of €8m each.

DAZN was the league's main domestic rights-holder from 2018-19 to 2020-21 in a rights deal worth €22m per season, plus a bonus dependent on subscriber numbers to the platform. Public-service broadcaster Rai held free-to-air rights to broadcast one match every Friday night over the 2018-21 cycle, in a deal worth about €3m per season. Rai also held free-to-air highlights and radio rights.

Meanwhile, Lega Serie B is currently weighing up two proposals submitted for its international betting video and fastpath data rights from 2024-25 to 2028-29.