

## AHEAD OF THE GAME

Matt Hughes



**H**AMPSHIRE have been warned they will be blocked from taking control of the Southern Brave if prospective new owners Delhi Capitals do not pay a fair market value for the Hundred franchise.

In a significant intervention that could also apply to Yorkshire, who are in takeover talks with Sunrisers Hyderabad, the England and Wales Cricket Board has told counties it will not gift its 51 per cent stake in the related Hundred team to them if the other 49 per cent does not fetch a high enough price in the auction.

The threat of Hampshire being stripped of their Hundred team entirely, with the Southern Brave franchise moved to another area of the country, has also been raised to stop Delhi seeking to buy into the competition on the cheap.

“The ECB has robust measures in place to stop carpetbaggers,” a source with knowledge of the sales process told *City A.M.* “This is not a buy-one-get-one-free process. The Hundred franchise could be taken elsewhere if necessary.”

Hampshire have agreed a £120m deal to sell the club to Delhi's owners, GMR Group, which has sparked fears at Lord's that the Indian infrastructure company is seeking to gain control of a Hundred franchise on the cheap.

The ECB is selling off 49 per cent of the eight Hundred franchises to private investors, with the remaining 51 per cent to be gifted to the host venues, including Hampshire.

In recent talks with the ECB however, Hampshire have been told that they will only get their 51 per cent stake in the Brave after the sales process has been completed – and on the proviso that the governing body gets fair market value for their 49 per cent.

The fair market value assessment will be conducted by the American bank Raine Group, with the threat of losing their Hundred franchise being kept in reserve if Hampshire's new owners don't play ball.

## THREE-HORSE POOL RACE

The Tote is facing a battle on two fronts to keep control of pool betting at racecourses, with racing's stakeholders divided over a three-way



fight to deliver fixed-priced punting at racecourses.

Colossus Bets made a multi-million-pound offer last week to replace the Tote Group, and *City A.M.* can reveal that the ARC [Arena Racing Company] group of courses has held talks about splitting from the rest of racing and setting up its own pool betting service.

The ARC courses are understood to be giving serious consideration to going it alone, as they believe they have the capability to offer their own pool betting. The 16 courses own a 45 per cent stake in technology firm i-neda Limited, which provides

betting software and operational services to the betting industry, with billionaire businessman and Celtic's largest shareholder Dermot Desmond also owning 45 per cent of the company.

While it does not own the most prestigious courses, ARC is responsible for putting on around 45 per cent of the UK's race meetings each year so it is a major

**Big fight was shown on three platforms**

player. During talks with the Tote Group and other courses, ARC is understood to have stressed that it will only renew if its own i-neda software is used at its courses.

Senior figures at several ARC courses are convinced that by using their own technology they could develop their own pool-betting brand to replace the Tote at their tracks.

The current contract with the

Tote Group expires in October 2025 and the racecourses are hopeful that a resolution over the next deal can be reached by next month.

Colossus is understood to have offered the 55 courses between £15m and £20-a-year for exclusive rights to provide pool betting.

## CHELSEA 1, LIVERPOOL 0

Chelsea's majority shareholder Clearlake Capital has secured a significant coup by recruiting a senior executive from Fenway Sports Management, whose parent company owns Premier League rivals Liverpool.

American lawyer David Beetsen has joined Clearlake as managing director with a brief to work across all of their investments, but has told sources that a significant amount of his time will be devoted to Chelsea.

Beetsen spent more than 10 years working for the Fenway Sports Group subsidiary, although had little involvement with Liverpool, with most of his work focused on baseball's Boston Red Sox and the Pittsburgh Penguins ice hockey.

## BIG FIGHT BUYS TOP SECRET

The viewing figures for Daniel Dubois' stunning world heavyweight knockout of Anthony Joshua at Wembley last



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weekend are proving elusive, with even the broadcasters refusing to share them with each other.

The IBF title fight was available to buy via three different networks in the UK – Sky Sports, TNT Sport and Dazn – and given they regard their data as commercially sensitive, collating viewing figures is all but impossible.

All three broadcasters will have been hit by the continued growth of illegal streaming, however, with a report for online intelligence company YieldSec revealing that there were more than 774,000 illegal views of Joshua-Dubois, 87 per cent of them in the UK.

# Man Utd and Spurs face new-look Europa League

**T**HE CHAMPIONS League revamp may have taken all of the headlines but the Europa League also has a new format, which Manchester United, Tottenham Hotspur and Rangers will sample for the first time this week.

Roma, Lazio, Athletic Bilbao, Real Sociedad, Ajax, Lyon, Porto, Eintracht Frankfurt and Galatasaray have also reached the competition's league phase which, like its more prestigious sibling, has expanded to include four extra teams.

Unusually, the action starts on Wednesday – to learn why, and how the Europa League will differ this year, read on.

## WHAT'S THE NEW FORMAT?

Anyone who has deciphered the new-

look Champions League will have this down pat right away. For everyone else: the key difference is that instead of 32 teams split into eight groups, the league phase features one very big table of 36 teams.

Each club plays eight games, each against a different opponent, with four at home and four away. Opponents are drawn equally from four seeding pots to ensure all teams face a similar level of difficulty.

Unlike in previous seasons, this initial stage runs until the end of January, at which point the top eight sides will progress straight to the last

16. Teams ranked from ninth to 24th face off in a seeded play-off round for the right to join them.

## WHO DO BRITISH TEAMS FACE?

Manchester United: Twente (H), Porto (A), Fenerbahce (A), PAOK (H), Bodo/Glimt (H), Viktoria Plzen (A), Rangers (H), FCSB (A).

Tottenham: Qarabag (H), Ferencvaros (A), AZ Alkmaar (H), Galatasaray (A), Roma (H), Rangers (A), Hoffenheim (A), Elfsborg (H).

Glasgow Rangers: Malmo (A), Lyon (H), FCSB (H), Olympiacos (A), Nice (A), Tottenham (H), Manchester United (A),

Union Saint-Gilloise (H).

## LOSERS TO THE CONFERENCE?

No, there is no second chance at a European trophy for teams who finish the league phase in positions 25 to 36 – just like in the Champions League.

This is good news for clubs in the Conference League, however, who no longer have to worry about landing a comparative big fish from the competition above as a reward for reaching the knockout rounds.

## IS IT STILL ON THURSDAYS?

Yes and no. This season the action

begins on a Wednesday, when half of the 18 first round games are due to take place, including Manchester United's match at home to their manager Erik ten Hag's first team, FC Twente.

The remaining nine matches, including Tottenham hosting Azerbaijani champions Qarabag, are scheduled for the following day.

For future rounds all Europa League games will take place in the competition's traditional Thursday evening slot.

## HOW CAN I WATCH IT?

Unlike the Champions League, UK viewers won't find any Europa League games live on Amazon Prime or highlights on BBC TV.

All of the action is on TNT Sports and its streaming platform Discovery+.