

# FOCUS ON FOX

With an infusion of global capital and the World Cup looming in 2014, the Latin American sports marketplace is poised to take off as never before. On the eve of SPORTELAmerica in Miami, gateway city to the region, **Rick Horrow** discusses the market with **Jim Ganley**, Chief Operating Officer, FOX Pan American Sports.

**Rick Horrow:** Where does FOX Pan American Sports fit into the overall FOX family of broadcast networks?

**Jim Ganley:** Fox Pan American Sports is the parent company co-owned by private equity firm HM Capital Partners LLC, formerly known as Hicks, Muse, Tate, and Furst, and News Corporation's Fox Sports International. Tom Hicks, one of the Hicks, Muse founders, is a co-owner of the Premier League's Liverpool Football Club and the Texas Rangers Major League Baseball franchise.

FOX Pan American Sports has several distinct channels: FOX Sports Espanol in the United States, and FOX Sports Latin America, which has a number of feeds including FOX Sports Mexico, a Northern feed comprising Venezuela, Dominican Republic, and Central America, and the Southern feed which includes Uruguay, Paraguay, and Argentina.

**RH:** Have you always been involved in sports and sports programming?

**JG:** (Laughs). Not really - I started out with Viacom back in 1978, in their tax department! I migrated to other cable television and on-demand programming companies, all on the financial side of the business, after that, and was with Reiss Media Enterprises and Petry Media for 11 years combined before joining FOX. I had gotten to know the Hicks group through acquisitions at Petry Media.

**RH:** How vastly different, or not, is doing business in Latin America compared to doing programming in the United States?

**JG:** The framework is basically the same - you've got marketing, programming, affiliate relations, and then you've got production. You've got cable operators in Latin America; you've got cable operators here.

Latin America's a big territory, 20-something countries, and each country is very nationalistic, so when you try and do something with the



The Brazilian Grand Prix - Getty Images Sport.

whole territory, it really doesn't work. That's why we ended up with so many different feeds, so we can sprinkle in local programming. National accents are of great importance as well - an Argentine on-air accent isn't appreciated outside of Argentina, the same with Mexico. Colombian and Venezuelan accents are kind of neutral so they work everywhere. Maintaining that kind of language nuance is very important when we're planning our shows.

**RH:** Covering that large a geographic market, is it a real challenge getting crews?

**JG:** We definitely utilise local production crews in all of the countries in our market, although of course we send our top narrators, who do the calling of the games, from place to place.

**RH:** How do you differentiate yourself from ESPN en Espanol?

**JG:** FOX Pan American Sports channels are Latin sports, produced by Latins in Latin America. Our studios are in Argentina and Mexico, and everything for our channel is produced there, so the culture is also built into the production, the voices, the inflections. It really is a Latin channel for Latins.

**RH:** What's your market share?

**JG:** We're the Number One channel in terms of market share. That's overall, not just the sports sector. We have the most paying subscribers of everybody in Latin America, period.

**RH:** Tell me about your programming mix. We know football is king in Latin America, but what other sports are popular?

**JG:** It depends on where you are. Baseball is important in Mexico and the Caribbean, but no place else, really. I'd say overall our programming is 80 per cent football, five per cent tennis, five per cent other sports. And viewers tend to be very nationalistic - if one of their countrymen is competing in the Olympics they'll watch, but if their country is not playing, they don't want to watch.

We cover football in a variety of ways, not only Latin American matches, but the Barclay's Premier League and Major League Soccer in the US as well. We think "Futbol Para Todos" is the most entertaining soccer programme on television - the three hosts are very irreverent,

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guest stars are also invited to play a "futvolley" match, we discuss football and throw some fun in at the same time. The NFL, which is one of our properties, is very popular in the Latin American market as well. For example, there are 80,000+ Brazilian NFL fans registered on orkut.com, one of Google's social networking sites.

**RH:** What are major events that you broadcast each year?

**JG:** We produce the two biggest football tournaments in the region, the Copa Santander Libertadores, and the Copa Nissan Saudamericana, each of which is held in the finalists' home country. We also produce the Premios sports awards shows in Mexico City and Buenos Aires every December. We just moved that show last year - we produced the Premios in Miami for the first five years, but this year we decided to bring the athletes and the show to the different countries so it could be celebrated more locally. To keep them fresh, we may also eventually move those programmes around to Cancun or Rio, places like that.

We also hold broadcast rights for the whole circuit of Formula One races, including of course the Grand Prix Brazil. We cover the World Cup from a news standpoint, but we do not broadcast the games - those rights are held elsewhere.

**RH:** Do you do things programming-wise in Latin America that you would never dream of doing in the United States?

**JG:** Oh, yeah. For one thing, women are more liberalised in Latin America than they are in the United States. Programming is often very sexy, racy. If you showed it in the United States, you would get killed.

**RH:** Tell me about the sponsorship world in Latin America in terms of dollars spent - what percentage of European or American sports sponsorship revenue have we seen there?

**JG:** There are a lot of European sponsors in Latin America, a lot of Japanese advertising there too. Naming rights are not as far along as they are in more mature markets, but they're making inroads, especially in Brazil and Argentina. Advertisers like us because we can give them a broad platform of sponsorship elements. We have one of the biggest Internet portals in Latin America. We have FOX Sports Magazine in the United States.

We have product placement. Most of our programming is live - we do over 5,000 hours of live programming a year on the channel, so there are a lot of opportunities for sponsor mentions, product placement, and other promotions for our clients.

We also do a fun half hour show on the beach in Punta del Este in Uruguay, the Riviera of Latin America, which is an incredibly popular place for advertising product placement.

Lots of bikinis on the beach and interviews with celebrities who are on vacation there during the month of January. Many of the companies who advertise with us really want to be seen at that beach.

**RH:** What is an up and coming sport that you've got your eye on, that's not on anybody else's radar yet?

**JG:** I wouldn't tell you.

**RH:** Because?

**JG:** Then everybody else will go buy it!