

# DIGITAL ON-LINE SPORTS MARKETING AND BUSINESS sports marketing

## The future's Orange for rugby as Heineken Cup refreshes ITV Sport

Telecommunications giant Orange has made its first foray into the world of UK sports sponsorship with a multi-million pound investment in European rugby.

The company has become Official Communications Partner to ERC Ltd, organisers of both the Heineken Cup and the European Shield competitions. Orange will work closely with ERC Ltd to deliver technology solutions for the tournament's infrastructure and will provide SMS and WAP services to bring rugby fans news on the competitions. Orange will also aid in the development of the sport via an investment programme aimed at all levels of the

game, including grassroots rugby through an extensive youth development initiative.

"Orange is delighted to announce this association with such a dynamic and fast moving sport," says John Allwood, executive vice president of Orange UK. "As a company founded on the principle of investment in the future, we will also work with the sport to develop potential talent within rugby." Orange hopes to replicate the success of its sponsorship profile in France, which includes deals with 16 of the nation's top rugby sides. The ERC deal will reinforce the company's position as the dominant sponsor in French club rugby.

■ In further rugby news, ITV Sport has signed a two-year deal to cover the Heineken Cup, Europe's premier rugby competition. Placed on the recently launched ITV Sport Channel, the new subscription service carried by the ITV Digital platform, coverage will comprise live matches from the tournament's pool stages, Quarter Finals, Semi Finals and the Final itself, to be played next May. The coverage is to be shared with the BBC's existing Heineken Cup deal.

ITV's broadcasts of the competition began on the weekend of September 29/30 with Newcastle vs Newport and Wasps vs Stade Francais.

## Tetley's online links with 365 Corporation

Tetley's, the official sponsors of the Tetley's Super League, has teamed up with web company 365 Corporation for the online promotion of the Tetley's Super League Grand Final at Old Trafford.

The dhtml campaign will take place across the 365 sports network, including football365, cricket365, planet-rugby, F1 and Win365, in the week leading up to the showpiece occasion of the rugby league calendar.

A floating Tetley's Smoothflow can will be used, offering the chance to win a free year's supply of Tetley's along with tickets to the match and signed shirts of the two finalists.

Tetley's will also use a 'Fancy a bit of this?' banner across the sites in a bid to generate interest in the match from a wider audience of sports consumers.

Gareth Roberts, Tetley's sponsorship manager, describes the rationale behind the deal: "We want to generate interest in the Tetley's Super League Grand Final from sports fans who wouldn't necessarily watch the game.

"The link up with 365 Corporation allows us to target thousands of sports fans and let them see what rugby league has to offer."

The match takes place on Saturday 13 October.

## Liverpool FC beats Man Utd online

New quarterly data released by Nielsen/NetRatings has found that Liverpool's official club website, liverpoolfc.tv, is the highest rated Premiership online proposition.

From June-August this year, the site attracted a composite unique audience of 152,000, which compared favourably with Lancastrian rival manutd.com, which won 135,000 viewers. Liverpool visitors also spent twice as long on the site as their Manchester counterparts.

The figures were compiled by Nielsen/Net Ratings new rolling quarterly service, which allows for a much wider range of websites to be reviewed with no loss of statistical integrity. Tom Ewing, internet analyst at Nielsen/NetRatings, states that the research indicates the profitability of sport online: at manutd.com, nearly a quarter of users visited the site's online shop facility.