

## Facebook to broadcast La Liga games for free in Indian subcontinent

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Viewers in the Indian subcontinent will be able to watch for free Barcelona FC, pictured here winning the Spanish Super Cup earlier this month, on Facebook thanks to its deal to broadcast La Liga matches

Lionel Messi, Gareth Bale and a host of La Liga stars will be beamed for free to viewers in the Indian subcontinent as part of a landmark deal with

Facebook to broadcast live matches, the Spanish top flight division said Tuesday.

All 380 football matches of the new 2018-2019 La Liga season, which begins Friday, will be available to watch on the social media network in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, La Liga said in a statement.

"We are delighted to team up with Facebook and be able to bring the action closer to all followers of La Liga in the Indian subcontinent," said La Liga President Javier Tebas.

"La liga is a reference in world football and it is a great satisfaction for us that now, the number of people who can watch matches live in this geographic area will be greater than ever and they will be able to do so for free through Facebook."

The deal will last for the next three seasons and will include pre- and post-match analysis programmes.

The financial details of the agreement were not disclosed in the statement but Spanish sports daily Marca reported that the deal was worth 90 million euros (\$105.5 million).

In June La Liga announced it had renewed its contract for five seasons, between 2019-2024, for the international broadcast rights for the Spanish championship for around 4.48 billion euros—or about 896 million euros per season, a 30 percent increase over the previous agreement.

## **'New audiences'**

Facebook earlier this month agreed a deal with UK broadcaster Eleven

Sports to show one La Liga and one Serie A game per week on its platform.

Five-time World Player of the Year Ronaldo's Serie A debut with Juventus at Chievo on August 18, and Atletico Madrid's La Liga opener at Valencia two days later are among the matches scheduled for free-to-air viewing. Barcelona's visit to Valladolid on August 25 is also included.

"This partnership reflects our commitment to helping broadcasters reach new audiences, build their brands and deliver a great viewing experience for sports fans on Facebook," Rhys Beer, Facebook's live sports programming lead for Europe, the Middle East and Africa, said at the time.

The deal is just the latest step towards the online sector securing lucrative live football contracts after Amazon secured the rights to show 20 Premier League matches a season for three years in the UK, starting from the 2019/20 season in June.

The US company breaks up the recent dominance of Sky and BT Sport of lucrative Premier League TV rights in a first for the online sector that is threatening to shake up the traditional sports rights market.

India has a billion-plus mobile phone users—more than any other country on earth—and close to half a billion people with internet access, most via their smartphones, that make streaming video from sites like Facebook possible.

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