

THE 25 STORIES THAT SHAPED THE YEAR

SportsProTM

February 2011

FIFA WORLD CUP

How Qatar 2022
beat the odds

SPONSORSHIP:
Emirates' flightplan
for success
Page 50

FOOTBALL:
The Englishman at
the heart of the NFL
Page 72

RUGBY:
The IRB's quest
to rule the world
Page 78



25 STORIES THAT SHAPED THE SPORTING YEAR



Lagardère completes its empire

When French media giant Lagardère set up its own talent management agency, Lagardère Unlimited, in the spring of 2009, few could have predicted that it would set about a raid on burgeoning American agency BEST that would see it acquire the company in full just over a year later. The process started in May 2009 with the French entity persuading BEST tennis chief Ken Meyerson to switch allegiance, with his star client, Andy Roddick, in tow. Clearly, in Meyerson, who was an integral part of BEST's growth from a start-up subsidiary of Louisville-based Blue Equity in 2005, to a major player – representing some 200 professional athletes and 200 entertainment and media personalities – in the US agency industry by 2009, the Lagardère Group liked what they saw. By June 2010, the ultimate deal was done; Lagardère Unlimited subsumed BEST in its entirety. With its new acquisition, Lagardère inherited some very powerful assets, including NFL player Reggie Bush, the NBA's Joakim Noah, retired basketball legend Magic Johnson, Indiana University men's basketball coach Tom Crean, as well as television rights to the US Open and French Open tennis tournaments along with the Boston Marathon. Crucially, Lagardère also inherited Donald Dell, one of the sports business industry's founding fathers, a shareholder in BEST, who agreed to stay on at the new entity to aid the French company's move into the American market he helped to build.

With the purchase of BEST, the empire that Arnaud Lagardère inherited from his father in 2003 took on a truly global panorama. A longstanding behemoth of the French business world, Lagardère's acquisitions of World Sport Group in Asia, and Sportfive and IEC in Sports in Europe in recent years meant that BEST, genuine challengers to US sports industry titans such as IMG, Octagon and Wasserman Media Group, was the final piece in the puzzle.