The Future of Production: Which Way to Go?

When Tuesday 20 October 2026, Speakers Stage Ravel

Moderator Will Strauss (SVG Europe)

Panel Carlos Silva (TNA Wrestling), Lowell Conn (Protocol Sports Marketing), Sarah Jakob (LiveU) and Dominik Scholler (Bundesliga Media)

What is driving change

- **Cost, above all for emerging rights holders.** Lowell Conn described newer properties as "a one-man band" that cannot spend like the Bundesliga. Cutting production costs by 15 to 30% without a visible drop in quality can give them 20 to 30% more runway to reach critical mass.
- **More content with the same resources.** A live feed for linear TV is no longer enough: customers also need content for OTT, TikTok, YouTube and Twitch, while budgets do not grow to match (Sarah Jakob).
- **A touring operation.** TNA Wrestling has no home venue and is live 52 weeks a year across 20 to 30 venues in the US, Canada and Europe, so production planning also covers hotels, travel and moving between venues, with no off-season to reassess.
- **A shortage of skilled crew.** A Bundesliga match uses at least 16 cameras and top matches more than 30. Dominik Scholler noted that many German camera operators are in their 50s and likely to retire in the next 10 to 15 years, while outdoor, weekend and late-night work does not appeal to young people.

What the panel is doing

- **Bundesliga.** The international product for Bundesliga 2 is produced in the cloud, with graphics generated automatically from match data, so it essentially needs only a commentator. Scholler said this would not have been possible on traditional broadcast infrastructure. The league is also testing automated cameras steered by match data, including at the recent Super Cup.
- **Canadian Premier League.** Protocol's sister company produces the league's 150 matches a year across eight teams. Every camera and audio feed is sent back individually to a central hub in Toronto, and having one control room means the same EVS operator works more than 100 matches.
- **One facility, three feeds.** For Hype, a new grappling property, the event sent a clean feed to Protocol's facility, which added commentators and presenters and produced a home feed for Ecuador, a Brazilian feed and an English global feed.
- **TNA Wrestling.** TNA stays on site for live, live-to-tape and pay-per-view shows, built around an in-house expert team and best-in-class suppliers. Carlos Silva's rule: "If you get fancy, you fail." TNA is acquiring a smaller wrestling promotion and plans to test new technology there first.
- **Commonwealth Games, Glasgow.** The host broadcaster used LiveU field encoders with roaming reporters across the city for behind-the-scenes coverage, from athlete arrivals to mixed-zone interviews, and LiveU's cloud distribution platform delivered more than 10,000 hours of content to broadcasters worldwide.
- **Wider access to production.** Jakob said lower-cost tools are bringing niche sports, youth games and women's games to audiences that traditional TV would not have reached.

Remote production: economics and people

- **Not mainly about saving money.** Conn argued that anyone who says remote production is all about saving a lot of money is wrong; the case rests on the wider value it adds to the product.

- **Not all or nothing.** Many major leagues already use remote production for parts of the operation, though not necessarily for the primary feed.
- **Moving people, not removing them?** Challenged by the moderator, Conn said the on-site crew remains as long as cameras are manned, but a hub in a city like Toronto gives access to talent and replaces travel with a daily commute.
- **Design for the crew on site.** Camera operators working into a remote hub still need tally, so they know when their camera is live. Conn stressed that systems must create comfort, security and reliability for on-site freelancers, not only cost savings.
- **More output per person.** Silva summed up the shared goal: more content at lower cost, while keeping the people and giving them technology that lets them produce around 30% more.

AI in production

- **Transmission.** LiveU bonds several mobile networks, using multiple SIM cards across operators, to send live video up to 4K. Its latest encoder uses AI to monitor network performance and switch to a stronger network mid-broadcast.
- **Localisation.** The Bundesliga produces in German, with international output in English only. It sees AI as the way to reach fans in other languages, potentially starting with graphics, then subtitles, then audio.
- **Opportunity before savings.** Asked for a return on AI, Scholler said that for now it is about enhancing the media product rather than cutting costs.
- **Automated cameras.** They are progressing but work best on wide shots. Close-ups remain hard in a game as unpredictable as football, and rain, fog and pyrotechnics can still confuse them. Cameras that need creativity and expertise will stay with camera operators.

Quality

- **Not negotiable.** Conn said a less sophisticated product is not acceptable: audiences have too much content to choose from, so quality has to be high.
- **Innovation is the exception.** Silva accepts a dip for innovative shots, such as a camera on a wrestler's back for 10 to 15 seconds, while the core package keeps improving.
- **Prove the basics first.** Conn added that innovation is risky without the right resources: reach a base level of quality, then innovate, and test thoroughly before going live.
- **Editorial over picture.** The moderator noted that ref cams wobble but are worth it for what viewers hear and see. The Canadian Premier League added a video review system this year and is still working on referee audio.
- **Creators.** Jakob said the top 5% of creators run increasingly professional productions, as sponsors depend on them. German streamer Elias Nerlich, who works with brands such as Adidas, cannot afford to lose a stream and the viewers promised to sponsors.

How to choose a production model

- **Conn:** start with the practical questions, such as location and access to talent, and how viable the vision is.
- **Jakob:** work back from the fan and the channels you need to reach; a digital-first product may only need cloud production, and simultaneous matches may make remote the only option.
- **Silva:** know your playing field and how your audience will watch, then set the budget.
- **Scholler:** be clear on objectives and requirements, and decide per match if needed. A Bundesliga 2 game can be fully remote, while Der Klassiker between Bayern and Dortmund still needs experienced teams on site.