



# Virtual Season Tickets Bring Hope to Pro Sports & Content Owners, and Opportunity to Content Thieves

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Virtual yoga classes. Virtual dinner parties. You can even find virtual pub trivia nights and virtual watch parties.

Now, thanks to COVID-19, the sports industry is taking the virtual season ticket (VST) to new heights. Allowing fans to watch live streaming coverage of all of a team's events (or selected groups of events) for a season, the VST provides the chance for supporters to immerse themselves in the events while social distancing measures remain in place.

As professional sports competitions fire up without fans, or with limited fan attendance, the VST offers a viable alternative source of income for content owners, teams and broadcasters.

Long before the pandemic, some experts dubbed VST **the largest new revenue source for professional sports** we'll see in years, if not generations. Today, some are hailing it as **the future of sports broadcasting**. In the United Kingdom and Europe, people may think of rabid football fans as the singular market for the VST. But think more and you'll find a market for golf, cycling, tennis and a few dozen other sports of interest to defined fan groups. In North America, tens of millions of fans follow 122 professional teams and among all those people, chances are good that many, if not most, will never visit their favorite team's home venue.

## VST offers help – and opportunity for content thieves

The opportunity for the VST is real because the problem is real and the stakes are high. Lost gate receipts due to COVID-19 are enormous. For example, last month, NBC Sports estimated the U.S. National Basketball Association could **lose \$500 million in ticket revenue** (including post-season games). With unemployment at record levels in many parts of the world, more consumers will be requesting refunds as well.

In addition, with no fans at venues, gone are the in-stadium revenues. As is the ability to track fans' game-day routines and expenditures, essential to creating coveted personalized fan experiences.

The hope is that VST can fill the void from lost gate revenue. But as this market grows, so too does the number of video services transmitting the sporting events. Consider the NFL Sunday Ticket, which last season carried all regional Sunday-afternoon games produced by CBS and Fox. In the United States, AT&T Inc. (DirecTV unit) and JetBlue distributed the package. In Canada, it was the streaming service DAZN; in Mexico and Latin America, SKY Mexico; in South America and parts of the Caribbean, Vrio; and in The Bahamas and Bermuda, several cable providers.

**And, as we all know in our business, what follows? Growing interest from content pirates, which translates directly to lost revenue.** Think about it this way: **The global value of sports media rights** has been estimated at \$50 billion USD. As with any technology solution, security risks – which impact directly on the bottom line – accompany even the most robust solution.

## The solution: right now, no latency

At Friend MTS, we work hard to not just keep up with technology trends, but to stay one step ahead. We've dedicated significant time, energy and resources over the years to helping professional sports organizations, premium content owners, and content distributors safeguard their revenues and content by detecting, deterring and disabling the content pirates threatening their business and revenue.

ASiD, the forensic watermarking service from Friend MTS, works – and works fast. It embeds the ASiD subscriber-level watermark on video distributed by OTT platforms, then locates pirated streams and extracts the watermark payload to identify the individual subscriber / account that is responsible for redistributing the content. By being based on client-composited watermarking technology, ASiD is able to extract the watermark payload from very short portions of video, in very fast timescales, as compared to other watermarking technologies.

With most sports now being viewed at home and many events accessed through paid subscriptions, the speed at which this content reaches the viewer's screen is a key requirement to increasing engagement and producing a better experience for all sports fans. Unlike other watermarking technologies and solutions, ASiD is able to support this requirement by adding zero latency to both broadcast and OTT content distribution workflows making it the obvious choice where minimal content latency is essential.

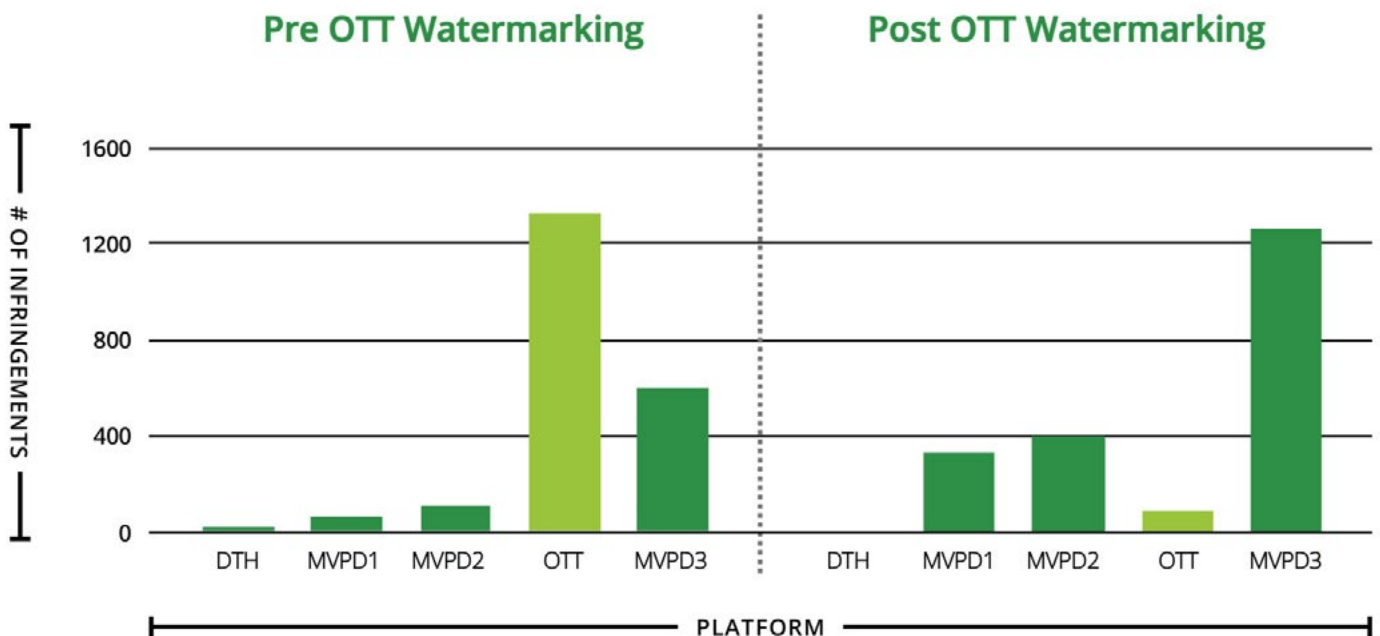
## Our ASiD service is:

- deployable within hours on most OTT platforms, and starts working immediately.
- able to stop illegal redistribution within minutes.
- secure, robust and proven at scale in the real world, making it the only real choice to protect live sports and other premium or exclusive content.
- the most widely deployed and actively used subscriber watermarking solution in the world today.

## Real sports, real results

Proven, measurable benefits include case-study results showing a 97% reduction in OTT infringements in just one week by a major OTT platform with the implementation of ASiD. A Tier 1 broadcaster reduced set-top box piracy of protected channels by 98% in the same period.

### Case Study: How Effective is ASiD?



Coronavirus or not, the VST is going to play an important role in revamping ticket monetization concepts. If the VST is in your future, talk to us today about how ASiD for OTT [can help protect the revenue and content at the heart of your business.](#)