



INTERPOL

# INTEGRITY IN SPORT

## Bi-weekly Bulletin

19 October 2021 - 8 November 2021



Photos International Olympic Committee

## INVESTIGATIONS

### Australia

#### **Inquiry into foreign ownership in A-League flagged as Criminal Intelligence Commission investigates**

Two of the government's high-profile integrity agencies have begun a partnership to investigate foreign ownership and sponsorship of sporting entities in Australia.

Sport Minister Richard Colbeck has flagged the work may ultimately lead to a formal public inquiry, as the government examines integrity risks and human rights records of investors.

A recent Four Corners investigation into the A-League showed that five of the 12 A-League men's clubs are foreign-owned or controlled and these links are a focus of the work, but Senator Colbeck has flagged an inquiry could cover all sport in Australia.

Sport Integrity Australia (SIA) and the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission have begun the work, SIA chief executive David Sharpe revealed at Senate estimates on Wednesday night, to "identify any risks that may occur" from foreign investment.

"Part of the assessment that is being conducted with the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission is to look at all foreign investment into sport," he said.

"That's sponsorship as well as ownership.

"You probably would have seen an ABC report around six of the A-League soccer clubs that have foreign investment. And very much that is front and centre of some of the inquiries."

The A-League's long established reliance on foreign capital has come under the microscope following this year's change of ownership from Football Australia to Australian Professional Leagues, a body owned by the A-League clubs.

Overseas investment in football "is front and centre of some of the inquiries but there are many other sports that have foreign investment", Mr Sharpe said.

Football has enjoyed a boom in cross-border capital inflows from Russia, China and the Middle East in recent decades, and some owners have drawn criticism due to their association with corrupt regimes or states with poor human rights records.

Only this month, Premier League club Newcastle was bought by a consortium backed by Saudi Arabia's sovereign investment fund.

The English government has remained relatively quiet on the Newcastle takeover, although it held meetings about the sale with the Premier League.

Foreign-controlled football clubs may be increasingly common, but they are not ubiquitous. Germany's Bundesliga requires its professional clubs to be majority-owned by members.

A formal inquiry into foreign ownership in Australian sport would be a significant regulatory incursion and draw parallels to the work of the Foreign Investment Review Board, which already has responsibility to review high value or significant investments from foreign sources.

At Senate estimates on Wednesday night, answering questions from Greens senator Lidia Thorpe, Senator Colbeck warned human rights in relation to investors was a concern.

"Like you, I think we would all be concerned with respect to ensuring that investment in sport is from appropriate sources from a whole range of perspectives — whether that be directly in relation to the integrity of sport itself — or with respect to other elements such as those that you're raising including human rights."

Senator Colbeck added that he had discussed the issues with Foreign Minister Marise Payne.

"As a government, we're really keen to ensure that peoples' human rights are upheld."

Sport Integrity Australia declined to comment further.

Source: 28 October 2021, ABC News Australia

<https://amp.abc.net.au/article/100575492>

## Sierra Leone

### Sierra Leone's women's coach suspended over sexual abuse claims

The head coach of Sierra Leone's women's football team Abdulai Bah has been suspended with immediate effect over allegations of "professional misconduct".

The Sierra Leone FA (SLFA) said in a statement that Bah, who has denied any wrongdoing, has stepped aside pending investigations.

The decision came a few days after the SLFA said it would investigate allegations of sexual harassment and intimidation of players in its women's national teams.

The suspension of Bah came just hours before the Sierra Queens played a crunch African Women Cup of Nations qualifier against The Gambia, with his assistant now in temporary charge.

The SLFA vice president Alie Badara Tarawallie said they suspended Bah after they received copies of text messages relating to alleged sexual harassment.

"We take the allegations seriously and we're going to investigate them thoroughly," Tarawallie told BBC Sport Africa.

"The SLFA will not condone any form of sexual harassment and intimidation, and whosoever is found wanting will be brought to book.

"We're encouraging people to come forward with any credible evidence against any individual within and outside the FA, but we are also discouraging people not to cook up stories."

'Untrue and unfounded'

A former coach of Sierra Leone's male African Nations Championship (Chan), Bah has accepted to step aside but says he's done nothing wrong.

"I must say I was utterly shocked and spellbound in disbelief," the coach said in a statement.

"The allegations against me are completely untrue and unfounded. As a professional, I have always maintained the highest standards required.

"As a family man, I will never molest or use my position to gain any physical and emotional advantage against young women in the national team who are young enough to be my children.

"I have accepted the SLFA directives to step aside until further investigation is carried out. I will however hope this investigation will be carried out swiftly to prove my innocence."

"It is my hope that investigation into such matters don't take forever as my only source of livelihood is from football which is being affected by claims and allegations that have no basis."

Bah, who took charge of the Sierra Queens in August 2020, is in The Gambia for the African Women Cup of Nations first round return leg qualifier on Monday.

His assistant Hassan Malik Mansaray has taken temporary charge of the team, who head into the match trailing 2-0 from the first leg tie played last week.

Meanwhile, Bah has also been ordered to step aside from his duties as head coach of Old Edwardians with immediate effect pending the SLFA investigations.

Source: 25 October 2021, BBC

Football

<https://www.bbc.com/sport/africa/59044251>

## South Africa

### 2015 match-fixer Jean Symes criminally charged, says anti-corruption chief

Former Lions cricketer Jean Symes has been charged by the Hawks with perjury for his role in the 2015/16 Ram Slam match-fixing scandal.

This was revealed by Cricket South Africa's Anti-Corruption Unit head Louis Cole at the Cricket South Africa Cricket for Social Justice and Nation-building (SJN) hearings on Monday.

In what was revealing testimony, Cole exposed the various role-players in the match-fixing scandal that saw Symes and several other individuals getting different bans for their varying roles.

The ring-leader, Gulam Bodi, was not only banned from all cricketing activities for 20 years, but was also sentenced to five years in prison under the Prevention and Combating of Corrupt Activities Act of 2004 that came into being because of the Hansie Cronje match-fixing scandal that took place at the turn of the millennium.

Symes is the second individual criminally charged for his role in the match-fixing matter after Bodi, which is still under criminal investigation.

Symes is also serving a 10-year ban for his role in the match-fixing issue, with Cole saying that Symes, who changed his representation from David Woodhouse from Tabacks (now Andersen) to Will Clark, submitted two conflicting affidavits that led to him being charged by the Hawks.

"We met with Mr Clark and we received a new signed statement from Mr Symes, which was a direct contradiction to his first statement," Cole said.

"As a matter of interest, he's now been charged with perjury by the Hawks based on the two affidavits he submitted to us."

Sport24 approached Gauteng Hawks spokesperson Katlego Mogale and comment will be added once it is available.

Source: 25 October 2021, News24 / Sport24

Cricket

<https://www.news24.com/sport/cricket/proteas/2015-match-fixer-jean-symes-criminally-charged-says-anti-corruption-chief-20211025>

## SENTENCES/SANCTIONS

### China

#### Two Chinese badminton players banned for two years for match-fixing, betting

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, Nov 5 (AFP): Two Chinese badminton players have been banned for two years for breaking rules on match-fixing and illegal betting, the sport's governing body said Friday.

Zhu Jun Hao fixed the outcome of a match in 2019 by intentionally losing the first game, an investigation found. He went on to win the match.

The player also bet on the Orleans Masters match, according to a Badminton World Federation (BWF) panel that probed the case.

He also gave inside information to an unauthorised person.

Zhang Bin Rong bet on matches on 36 occasions at tournaments in China, Switzerland and France in 2019, the BWF said.

These actions violated rules that ban badminton players from placing wagers on the sport.

Both men, who are regional-level players, chose not to appeal.

Source: 6 November 2021, The Arunachal Times

Badminton

<https://arunachaltimes.in/index.php/2021/11/06/two-chinese-badminton-players-banned-for-two-years-for-match-fixing-betting/>

## Spain

### Dos futbolistas de Tercera aceptan dos meses de prisión por corrupción en apuestas deportivas

La corrupción en el fútbol con fines económicos ilícitos en apuestas deportivas vuelve a los tribunales. En esta ocasión en categorías inferiores con la segunda condena firme en la Comunitat Valenciana desde que se introdujo el delito de corrupción en el deporte en el Código Penal por llevar a cabo conductas encaminadas a alterar de manera deliberada y fraudulenta el resultado de un encuentro o competición deportiva.

Dos futbolistas del Club Deportivo Acero, de la Tercera División Española, han sido condenados por conformidad esta misma mañana a dos meses de prisión por tratar de alterar el resultado de un partido disputado en febrero de 2016, contra el Club Deportivo Recambios Colón Valencia, en el Port de Sagunt.

Los dos capitanes del club saguntino han reconocido haber ofrecido mil euros al portero de su equipo que iba a disputar el citado partido como titular para que se dejase marcar un gol en el primer tiempo. El guardameta se negó hasta en tres ocasiones y alertó a su entrenador, quien viendo la "actitud sospechosa" de uno de los capitanes durante el desarrollo del partido, decidió sustituirlo.

No obstante, y aunque el Deportivo Acero acabó perdiendo el partido por 0-1 con un gol anotado en la segunda parte - en la apuesta constaba que el gol debía ser en la primera parte - el mero ofrecimiento de dinero con la intención de alterar fraudulentamente el transcurso del partido ya es constitutivo de delito.

El Ministerio Fiscal solicitaba inicialmente una pena de tres años de prisión para cada uno de los dos futbolistas acusados, pero tras el acuerdo de conformidad alcanzado entre las partes, entre las que se encontraba la Liga de Fútbol Profesional y la Federación de Fútbol de la Comunidad Valenciana como acusaciones, se les ha rebajado la condena a dos meses de cárcel. Además no deberán ingresar en prisión al sustituir la misma por el pago de 1.080 euros y una multa de 500 euros.

Los hechos se remontan al 28 de febrero de 2016, en el encuentro de Tercera División entre el Club Deportivo Acero y el Club Deportivo Recambios Colón Valencia, disputado en el estadio Fornas del Port de Sagunt. Según los hechos probados, tras el reconocimiento de los dos futbolistas acusados, en días previos al partido le trasladaron al portero que iba a jugar como titular en su equipo la "oportunidad" de recibir dinero si se dejaba marcar un gol en el primer tiempo.

Hasta en tres ocasiones le ofrecieron dinero por adulterar el transcurso de dicho partido, primero 300 euros, después 500, y un último intento de mil euros. Trataron de convencer al cancerbero argumentando que había mucho dinero en juego y esgrimiendo los problemas que tenían para cobrar lo que su propio club les adeudaba.

Pero el guardameta se negó "de forma rotunda" a participar en el amaño y puso los hechos en conocimiento del entrenador del equipo. Durante el encuentro, uno de los ahora condenados mostró una actitud sospechosa, "facilitando continuamente la posesión del balón al equipo contrario", hasta que fue sustituido, según detallaba el fiscal en su escrito de conclusiones provisionales, mientras que el otro acusado no llegó a participar al estar sancionado.

No ha quedado acreditado que finalmente los condenados recibieran beneficio económico alguno y el resultado final del partido, que perdió el Deportivo Acero por 0-1 no se vio afectado por las maniobras de los acusados.

Aunque antes de la vista oral los acusados seguían defendiendo su inocencia, dada la elevada pena a la que se enfrentaban, tres años de cárcel, han optado por reconocer los hechos y aceptar una pena mínima por la que no deberán ingresar en prisión, según han indicado fuentes jurídicas.

Un juzgado de lo Penal de València ha dictado esta mañana sentencia 'in voce' en la que condena a ambos capitanes del Club Deportivo Acero a dos meses de prisión por un delito de corrupción en el deporte recogido en el artículo 286 bis 3 y 4 del Código Penal, con la circunstancia atenuante de dilaciones indebidas. Asimismo se les sustituye la pena de cárcel por el pago de 180 días de multa, a razón de seis euros diarios, y otros 500 euros de multa. La condena conlleva dos meses de inhabilitación para el ejercicio del deporte profesional.

Se trata de la segunda condena en la Comunitat Valenciana por un delito de corrupción en el deporte relacionado con el amaño de partidos después de que en octubre de 2019 un jugador del UD Benigànim ya fuera condenado, por el mismo juzgado que ahora condena a los futbolistas del CD Acero, a seis meses de prisión y 700 euros de multa por un amaño denunciado en 2016 por el propio club y LaLiga de forma conjunta.

Source: 25 October 2021, Levante

<https://www.levante-emv.com/deportes/2021/10/25/futbolistas-tercera-aceptan-meses-prision-58795748.html>

## LEGISLATION

### Ireland

#### Ireland's Strict New Gambling Rules Envision Heavy Penalties

James Browne, Ireland's Minister of State at the Department of Justice, has unveiled new regulatory rules for the country's gambling market. According to the Ministry, this much-needed change is needed to modernize the outdated local gambling laws.

Under the new legislation, Ireland will form its first-ever gambling regulator who will have the power to penalize gambling operators who break the local regulatory rules. Should they disobey the law, bookmakers risk a fine as high as \$23 million or 10% of their turnover – whichever is higher. The fines will be collected by the Irish exchequer.

The regulator will be able to set rules for what is allowed and what isn't when it comes to gambling marketing and advertisements. It will have full power to regulate gambling's media presence and set when gambling advertisements can appear on media. Additionally, with an aim to combat addictive gambling, Ireland will ban all kinds of tempting wagering practices and ads such as the offerings of free bets.

Furthermore, the authority will be authorized to void operators' licenses and block them from providing their offerings in Ireland. It will also be possible to block or freeze payments and bank accounts. Under the new regulations, Ireland will make it impossible for bettors to play on credit or use their credit cards in gambling offerings.

The authority will be responsible for determining license length for operators and setting betting limits. It will be allowed to allocate a social impact fund into gambling research that forms statistics and helps for the prevention of harmful gambling practices.

#### The Government Seeks a CEO to Lead the Entity

The Irish government is currently working on the formation of the regulator. It has set a firm deadline that envisions the new entity beginning its operations before 2023.

Once running, the regulator will be responsible for making three-year strategic plans. It will be required to report to the government each year.

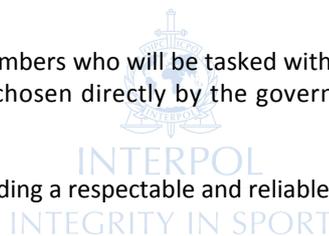
The regulatory body will be comprised of seven members who will be tasked with ensuring the integrity of the country's betting industry. The authority's chief executive will be chosen directly by the government and will have a term no longer than a maximum of four years.

Minister Browne spoke about the importance of finding a respectable and reliable CEO as soon as possible.

"The aim of putting a CEO designate in place is to help guide and establish the authority, so that when the legislation is passed both are in situ at the same time," Browne explained. With a budget of \$580,000, Browne's goal is to find a CEO before the end of the year.

Source: 22 October 2021, *Gambling News*

<https://www.gamblingnews.com/news/irelands-strict-new-gambling-rules-envision-heavy-penalties/>



## BETTING

### Australia

#### Star casino faces public hearings after alleged crime links were revealed

Senior figures from listed gaming giant Star Entertainment will be grilled at public hearings into allegations the company failed to prevent organised criminals and money launderers infiltrating its Australian casinos.

The Age and The Sydney Morning Herald have confirmed that senior barrister Adam Bell, SC, whose exhaustive public examination last year of Star's main rival, Crown Resorts, led to Crown being declared an unfit company to hold a gaming licence in NSW, will examine Star's operations at public hearings next March.

The hearings are likely to involve Star Entertainment executives, including chief executive Matt Bekier, and board members being summoned to answer questions about their knowledge and management of money laundering risks within the casino group.

Earlier this month, The Age, the Herald and 60 Minutes exposed how Star Entertainment may have enabled suspected money laundering and organised crime within its Australian casinos. The reports also revealed how Mr Bekier and Star chairman John O'Neill were warned in 2018 that Star's anti-money-laundering controls were failing.

The media reports also detailed concerns, including those raised by federal independent MP Andrew Wilkie, that a planned routine five-year review of The Star Sydney's casino licence would be held behind closed doors.

After the reports, NSW Customer Service Minister Victor Dominello, who is in charge of gaming regulation in the state, said he backed a public inquiry into Star.

The NSW gaming regulator, the Independent Liquor and Gaming Authority, has now backed a proposal by its lead independent investigator, Mr Bell, to hold public hearings. The hearings will form part of the ongoing Australia-wide overhaul of the casino sector triggered by a media expose of Crown Resorts in 2019, which led to subsequent public inquiries into Crown and its major shareholder, James Packer, in NSW, Victoria and Western Australia.

The planned public hearings into Star will examine the allegations detailed in the media reports, including the contents of two confidential KPMG inquiries presented to Mr Bekier and other senior executives and directors in May 2018. The inquiries found Star "may not be adequately detecting customers" engaged in money laundering and had "inadequate resourcing in place" to combat criminal infiltration.



The public hearings are a major blow to Star, which has sought to position itself as the cleanskin of Australia's gaming sector after Crown's reputation was shredded by Mr Bell at the NSW Bergin inquiry.

Crown's initial failure to remove executives and board members who had overseen years of sub-standard anti-money laundering controls, and its decision to publicly play down allegations of money laundering failures, led to the company's later savaging in the Bergin inquiry and counsel assisting Victoria's royal commission into Crown, Adrian Finanzio, SC.

In statements recently released to the Australian stock exchange, Star Entertainment told shareholders it would confidentially address the media allegations, some of which it described as misleading, with regulators and law enforcement authorities. The company also insisted it had acted on the recommendations of the KPMG reports by adopting an updated anti-money-laundering and counter-terror-financing program "as a priority in October 2018, and undertaking a program of work to enhance its ... compliance framework, under the board's oversight".

Over the past fortnight, this masthead has also revealed how anti-money-laundering agency Austrac had obtained internal Star reports that reveal how the listed gaming giant failed to confront money-laundering and terrorist-financing risks in its Sydney and Queensland casinos.

It was also revealed that Star casino's high-roller gaming manager, Mark Walker, maintained a secret and longstanding relationship with accused corporate criminal Michael Gu while the gambler allegedly laundered millions of dollars through Australian casinos.

NSW police also recently alleged in court documents that a suspected large-scale drug trafficker, Mende Trajkoski, was until this year a Star high roller who turned over up to \$175 million at Star's Sydney casino over 14 years, despite earning a minimal income. Mr Trajkoski is one of several Star high rollers involved in alleged organised crime and whose gambling activity raised significant red flags which Star may have ignored.

Star's board, including chairman John O'Neill and CEO Mr Bekier, has not responded to detailed questions about what action, if any, Star has taken in response to revelations about Mr Walker's conduct, as well as separate revelations that Star permitted

Chinese high rollers to access hundreds of millions of dollars in funds in a manner that raised serious anti-money-laundering concerns. Star and its board have also declined to respond in detail to questions about alleged criminal infiltration of its casinos, citing privacy concerns.

Last week, Queensland Attorney-General Shannon Fentiman also confirmed the state's gaming regulator, the police and Austrac were investigating allegations relating to Star, which has casinos in Brisbane and the Gold Coast, saying allegations about the company ignoring risk warnings were serious.

The revelations about Star Entertainment in the media wiped more than 23 per cent, or \$1 billion, off its market value in two days, although the share price began recovering soon afterwards.

*Source: 19 October 2021, Sydney Morning Herald*

<https://amp-smh-com-au.cdn.ampproject.org/c/s/amp.smh.com.au/national/star-casino-faces-public-hearings-after-alleged-crime-links-were-revealed-20211019-p5919k.html>



## GOOD PRACTICES

### International Boxing Association

#### AIBA creates Boxing Integrity Unit as part of vital reforms

The International Boxing Association (AIBA) has announced reforms following a series of meetings in Belgrade at the Men's World Boxing Championships, including plans to introduce a Boxing Integrity Unit.

Proposals were developed by a group of independent experts on governance, chaired by Swiss professor Ulrich Haas.

The body will address competition manipulation, abuse, harassment, eligibility check of candidates among other issues.

Operations are now in place to form the Unit in time for the AIBA Elective Congress, which is to be scheduled for the second quarter of 2022, where it will be given its final approval.

Other reforms are being proposed prior to the AIBA Congress on December 12, where they will be submitted for approval.

These include a change to the composition and size of the AIBA Board of Directors and improved eligibility checks for candidates.

"For too long, AIBA was on the back foot for issues of governance and sporting integrity," said AIBA President Umar Kremlev.

"I am very proud of the way this has changed, with our new culture of reform ensuring real progress towards best practice in governance and the delivery of fair fights.

"Being surrounded by the world's best boxers here in Belgrade, it is only right for our sport's leadership to do its best.

"AIBA has acknowledged the problems of the past.

"We have brought in independent experts to help guide us and now we must boldly embrace the future."

More recommendations are expected to be considered by the Board when the independent Governance Reform Group submits a final report later this month.

"The list of top priorities mirrors the most urgent measures that are going to be recommended in our final report," said Haas.

"The report is in the process of being finalised and its goal is to significantly improve AIBA's governance.

"The list of top priorities and the final report are based on widely-accepted benchmarks for the highest levels of integrity and good governance, including those of Association of Summer Olympic International Federations and International Partnership Against Corruption in Sport.

"While the effective practical implementation of our recommendations must be carefully monitored with independent credibility, a decision by AIBA to adopt the measures proposed by our group can certainly serve as a basis for real and positive change."

Boxing's position at the Paris 2024 Olympics hangs in the balance as the International Olympic Committee is expected to make a decision soon, according to its President Thomas Bach.

Previous AIBA regimes were criticised by sports integrity expert Richard McLaren for alleged corruption within officiating at the Rio 2016 Olympics, as well as expressing concerns for the organisation's governance and financial integrity.

Source: 5 November 2021, *Inside the Games*

Boxing

<https://www.insidethegames.biz/articles/1115073/aiba-boxing-integrity-unit>

## Sweden

### Swedish sports establishes unified anti-corruption programme

Swedish sports regulatory bodies have agreed to form a new anti-corruption programme promoting internal cooperation to aid investigative work into match-fixing and further threats.

The development of the programme will be led by Riksidrottsförbundet (RF)– Sweden’s Sports Confederation tasked with developing protective measures to safeguard the country’s pro-sports against match-fixing threats and corruption.

“The inquiry’s proposal means greater opportunities for sports to work with the issue, but also means higher demands on us to be able to handle it. With the establishment of the programs and the work based on these, the special sports federations are preparing to meet those requirements,” says Jakob Uddeholt, coordinator for match-fixing, the Swedish Sports Confederation.

RF’s new directive has been supported by the governing bodies of Sweden’s ski basketball, tennis, volleyball, table tennis and Ice hockey associations/federations.

Though the majority of Swedish pro-sports are protected by individual anti-match-fixing programmes, the framework supporters stated that the national sporting scene required a collaborative framework for preventative work and to support ongoing match-fixing investigations.

Taking on its remit, RF stated that it would develop a new unified education programme, to teach athletes on the threats posed by match-fixing and illegal betting.

Furthermore, the confederation promises to establish a central platform for Swedish governing bodies to exchange data, knowledge and best practices in order to maintain sporting integrity.

Source: 1 November 2021, Insider Sport

<https://insidersport.com/2021/11/01/swedish-sports-establishes-unified-anti-corruption-programme/>

## ODDS AND ENDS

### Brazil

#### At risk: betting-related match-fixing in Brazilian football

Researchers from the Department of Movement and Sports Science have recently published an article on the vulnerability of Brazilian football regarding betting-related match-fixing, in the academic journal of Crime, Law and Social Change. Alongside the Bi-Weekly Bulletin, the full pdf version of the article has been attached to this email.

Source: 8 November 2021, Journal of Crime Law and Social Change

Football

<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10611-021-09971-0>

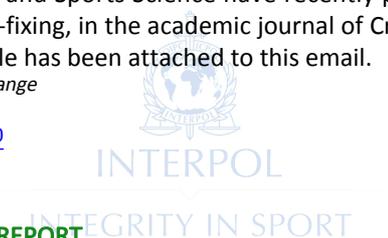
### GLMS

#### GLMS MONITORING AND INTELLIGENCE Q3 2021 REPORT

GLMS is pleased to share our 2021 Third Quarter Monitoring & Intelligence Report, in which you will find key facts and figures from GLMS’ monitoring and intelligence work over the 3rd Quarter, in service of our members and partners, including alerts and notifications, integrity reports and reasons for triggering alerts across various sports.

Source: 26 October 2021, GLMS

[https://mcusercontent.com/d3dd17a9afdcf674100aa8954/files/593697cd-bff9-2e69-a67b-f20dbf8c1d8a/21\\_GLMS\\_Q3\\_2021\\_final\\_reduced.pdf](https://mcusercontent.com/d3dd17a9afdcf674100aa8954/files/593697cd-bff9-2e69-a67b-f20dbf8c1d8a/21_GLMS_Q3_2021_final_reduced.pdf)



## Global

### Global Report - Suspicious Betting Trends in Global Football

Starlizard Integrity Services, in collaboration with Stats Perform, have released their fourth annual Suspicious Betting Trends in Global Football Report (2021 edition) in which they analyse over 60,000 football matches played across the world in 2020 in order to paint a picture of suspected match-fixing.

The key findings from this year's report are as follows:

- Despite concerns around the short-term risks in football being increased as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, 217 (0.35%) matches in 2020 were identified as suspicious, a reduction in both real and percentage terms from the 456 (0.56%) matches in last year's report.
- This is the third successive year that the proportion of suspicious matches identified has reduced, and it is now over 50% less than our inaugural report from 2018 when 0.73% of matches were identified as suspicious.
- The proportion of suspicious matches in 2020 peaked in the spring when betting focus was concentrated on friendly matches and lower profile competitions. However, in the autumn months, as fixture calendars returned to relative normality, proportions dropped to well below those of previous years.
- 42% of all suspicious matches were at the highest level of domestic football in the country in which they took place. 36% of suspicious matches took place at the second highest level of domestic football.
- As with previous editions of the report, friendly matches continue to pose significant issues for football authorities. 1.19% of analysed friendlies were suspicious, which is an increase from 0.67% in last year's report. Concerns around friendly matches are heightened when they take place in countries with a historically increased risk of suspicious competitive matches.
- Suspicious matches in women's football continue to be rare, with only one identified amongst more than 3,700 matches analysed.

Source: 19 October 2021, Stats Perform Integrity and Starlizard Integrity Services  
Football

[https://www.starlizard.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Suspicious\\_Trends\\_2021.pdf](https://www.starlizard.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Suspicious_Trends_2021.pdf)



## Global

### Multi-club ownership in football challenges governance at many levels

New research by Play the Game shows that multi-club ownership (MCO) is growing in football. 156 clubs from around the world are part of 60 MCO groups, and the phenomenon raises new questions of governance for everyone from international football federations to clubs, players, and fans.

Football is swamped with acronyms, but a new abbreviation has now become part of the game's lexicon. Multi-club ownership (MCO) has become symbolic of the game's globalisation with clubs owned or connected by owners from around the world and this growing interconnectedness has implications for the sport's governance.

Formal and informal links between clubs around the world have existed for decades. The Parmalat conglomerate ran by Calisto Tanzi controlled Italian club Parma and the Brazilian side Palmeiras, while English company ENIC owned stakes in Glasgow Rangers, Slavia Prague, AEK Athens, Vicenza Calcio, Basel and Tottenham Hotspur.

ENIC's ownership triggered a UEFA investigation into MCOs in 1999 when AEK and Sparta qualified for European competition. Subsequently, a rule banning two clubs with the same majority shareholders were banned from playing each other in the same European competition was brought in. Since then, what was then an oddity has ballooned into a phenomenon involving clubs all round the world.

The multi-club market is constantly shifting with stakes bought and sold, but open-source research by Play the Game at the start of October 2021 found 60 MCO groups with holdings in two or more clubs.

This research uncovered a network of 156 clubs from around the world, with owners or significant shareholders having stakes in two or more football teams. As tables 1 and 2 below shows, the largest number of clubs in MCOs is in the United States, but 106 clubs from 25 European countries ranging from England, Italy and Spain to Cyprus, Latvia and Luxembourg are also in MCOs.

UEFA's own research identified "just over" 100 European clubs involved in MCOs and three-quarters of cases involved a majority shareholding. In the remaining quarter of cases, the stake was below 50 per cent.

#### The rise of MCOs in Europe

In Play the Game's research, England had the largest number of clubs involved in an MCO as the high value of TV rights and opportunities for sportswashing attracts foreign investors.

A number of Premier League teams are part of MCOs including Manchester City, which is part of the 10-club City Football Group controlled by the Abu Dhabi royal family, to Arsenal, whose owner Stan Kroenke also controls Major League Soccer club Colorado Rapids and US franchises in American football, ice hockey, lacrosse and esports.

In Italy, the growth of MCOs has prompted regulatory action. Two clubs with the same owner are prohibited from playing in the same league. In the summer of 2021, the Italian federation, the FIGC, acted after the promotion to Serie A of Salernitana, which is owned by Claudio Lotito, who also owns Lazio. The FIGC forced Lotito to place his ownership of in a trust and pledge to sell his stake by Christmas.

Aurelio De Laurentiis also owns Serie A side Napoli and Bari, who play in Serie C, while Maurizio Setti controls Verona and Mantova, and the FIGC recently brought in new legislation to deal with the issue.

"Not only will absolute control of the company be categorically excluded, but no participation will be possible either," said Gabriele Gravina, president of the FIGC, which has banned MCOs but given existing owners until 2024/25 to resolve their cases.

In Denmark, eight clubs are now part of MCO groups after overseas investors left Naestved and Vendsyssel. Those departures caused some financial chaos and the Danish Football Union has started a review into foreign ownership in the country's football clubs according to Offthepitch.com.

Foreign investors have been increasingly active in Belgium in the decade since Indonesian conglomerate Bakrie Group acquired lower league club CS Vise in 2011. Bakrie sold up three years later after buying A-League club Brisbane Roar, but there are now at least a dozen clubs in Belgium in MCOs.

In the neighbouring Netherlands, recent liberalisation of the rules now allows foreign ownership and Pacific Media, which controls clubs in Belgium, Denmark, England, France and Switzerland, took control of Dutch side Den Bosch in September.

In some cases, discerning the level of control can be difficult. Saudi Arabian businessman Turki Al-Sheikh owns Spanish side UD Almeria and in December was appointed as president of Sudanese club Al-Hilal. This role is only honorary but Al-Sheikh has reportedly been the financial backer between signings of foreign players to Al-Hilal this year.

UEFA rules prohibits MCO clubs to play each other

UEFA has recognised the change between ownership and control and changed Article 5 of its competition rules. The controlling interest of 50.1 per cent brought in after the ENIC case was replaced by a rule that prohibits two clubs playing each other if the same person or group can “exercise by any means a decisive influence in the decision-making of the club.” How that control is regulated appears open to interpretation.

In the 2020/21 Europa League, Milan and Lille played each other twice as the French team’s owner Gerard Lopez was involved in a lengthy battle for control of the club with its main backer, fund manager Elliott, which also controlled the Italian side.

No impropriety is suggested and both clubs qualified from their group, but the games were not subject to any intervention from UEFA, which had earlier allowed two Red Bull subsidiaries – Leipzig and Salzburg – to compete in the 2017/18 Champions League after an investigation.

MCOs affects the competitiveness of the market

The commercialisation brought by larger MCOs such as Red Bull is not always readily accepted by some supporter groups, but their concerns extend into the impact on governance.

Antonia Hagemann, chief executive officer of Supporters Direct Europe, says:

“It creates different tiers of clubs: the parent and a feeder club. If you are a fan of a parent club then you are lucky, but not if you are a fan of a feeder club.”

“It could also be the end of transfers as we know it as there could only be transfers between clubs. As a player you can start off with a feeder club and move up to a parent club, but this promotes inequality and poisons the competitiveness of the market. If you have this group of clubs that trade between themselves and shift players back and forth it is cheaper and puts them at a competitive advantage.”

At some MCOs, there is a clear attempt to establish a group philosophy in terms of pooling resources and a common playing style, which can allow players to move more easily from smaller to larger clubs.

Although international players union FIFPRO has said any clauses in contracts that force players to move to another club in an MCO against their will would be “abusive”, this type of intra group trading has benefits for the owners.

Shifting players between clubs within the same MCO means there is no need for transfer fees, or any fees can be set by the group for a financial benefit, such as shifting losses onto one club to potentially evade taxes.

Financially stronger clubs snap up weaker clubs

Over the years, there have been many examples of teams suffering after becoming part of larger concerns, including the collapse of Parmalat in 2003 with Calisto Tanzi jailed for fraud and the Italian club becoming insolvent.

More recently, the investment in MCOs has come from US investment groups and Fernando Roitman, the founder of CIES Sports Intelligence, says:

“At the highest level, there is an increase in the quality of investors but if you go lower down the pyramid, you see more shady investments, and these should be looked at.”

Taking control of small, weak clubs is easier and often little can be done when complications arise. In March 2021, entrepreneur Flavio Becca, who controls Swift Hesperange in his native Luxembourg and Royal Excelsior Virton in neighbouring Belgium, was sentenced to two years in prison and fined 250,000 Euros for abusing company assets but remains in control of both clubs.

Heritage Sports Holdings (HSH) took over Gibraltar United and in 2018 bought a stake in Italian side Rimini with financing for both based on cryptocurrencies. HSH was also involved with another Italian club, Mantova, but a year later Gibraltar United – one of the British territory’s oldest clubs – collapsed amidst claims of unpaid wages for players.

This summer, an MCO created by Armenian group Noah halved in size. Three players at Noah Jurmala in Latvia – all from abroad - were banned and fined 1,000 Euros apiece for match fixing, while another subsidiary, German club KFC Uerdingen, nearly collapsed due to financial problems. Noah has since exited Latvia and Germany but retains control of Yerevan FC in its native Armenia and ACN Siena in Italy.

Yet the MCO model looks likely to persist with many smaller clubs struggling to survive in the wake of the COVID-10 pandemic. Financially stronger larger clubs are well-placed to snap up fiscally weakened clubs, and in recent months Andrea Radrizzani and the Fenway Group, owners of English Premier League clubs Leeds United and Liverpool respectively, admitted they are considering acquiring other clubs.

### MCOs could threaten UEFA

Another development expected is consolidation between groups. Of the 60 MCO groups identified by Play the Game, 40 groups had stakes in just two teams, but Olivier Jarosz, managing partner at sports consultancy Club Affairs, warns that larger groups will appear and pose a threat to the game's governing bodies:

"UEFA have to regulate because potentially [MCOs] are competition," says Jarosz.

"If there are a handful of MCOs with a lot of clubs then that is power. Unity is power."

The number of known MCOs is highest in Europe and the USA but Play the Game's research also found 50 teams further afield from Australia to Bolivia, Cambodia, China, Ecuador, Mexico, Sudan, Uganda and the United Arab Emirates.

This increase in pancontinental MCOs increases the chance of two clubs qualifying for FIFA's Club World Cup, which would also create a problem, but how UEFA or FIFA can regulate MCOs remains difficult.

Previous regulation has been from a competition perspective but Alex Phillips, former head of governance at UEFA, says that the increase in MCOs does not have to be bad if regulated differently.

"You have to ask what the purpose of an MCO is," says Phillips.

"If it's to evade taxes and launder money then it's obviously bad but if it is investment then it doesn't have to be. From a financial perspective, it can make a lot of sense. But regulators should regulate from a transfer perspective and regulate the number of contracts each club can offer. If you limit contracts, clubs need to rely on their academies."

This, he argues, would stop clubs stockpiling players and instead of alienating fans could create a greater bond.

MCOs are unlikely to go away any time soon and how the game's administrators deal with regulating challenge will affect the relationship between fans, players and clubs in the years ahead.

*Source: 27 October 2021, Play the Game*

*Football*

[https://playthegame.org/news/news-articles/2021/0673\\_multi-club-ownership-in-football-challenges-governance-at-many-levels/](https://playthegame.org/news/news-articles/2021/0673_multi-club-ownership-in-football-challenges-governance-at-many-levels/)



## INTEGRITY IN SPORT EVENTS

### Finland

#### A session built on trust and cooperation INTEGRISPORT NEXT – Finland

On November 2, 3 and 4, the Awareness Raising Session in Finland, hosted by the Finnish Center for Integrity in Sports (FINCIS) and coordinated by CSCF - Foundation for Sport Integrity, had exceptional participation and active collaboration from more than 50 participants that met to debate and understand the phenomenon of sport manipulation in the framework of IntegriSport Erasmus+ within the EU co-funded project.

The feeling during the session was built on trust and cooperation from the different participants to raise awareness and level up the support and identify the biggest threats against integrity in sport and to work towards the same goal: keeping the sport safe and clean.

During the 3-day session, the members of the different organisations had an open discussion on the manipulation of sports competitions (match-fixing) related to criminal investigations and prosecution activities and how this phenomenon has been affecting Finland. Also, recognised experts and members participated in the session with different presentations sharing experience, knowledge, and views regarding the current situation, plans, strategies, and practices related to these issues in the country and Europe.

#### Session development

On the first day, participants from sport organisations such as IntegriSport Next E+ experts from CSCF Foundation for Sport Integrity and the Finnish Center for Integrity in Sports – FINCIS held presentations about the general description of the manipulation of sports competitions, national case studies, and national policy in Finland.

The second day was open to all interested parties, and it was an opportunity to share the project's findings during the preparation phase and national and international perspectives about the manipulation of sports competitions from the CSCF Foundation for Sport Integrity director and its group of experts, the Police Board of Finland, the Global Lottery Monitoring System – GLMS as project partner, as well as FIFPRO, as a supporting project partner. In addition, key local speakers included representatives from Veikkaus, Urheiluviedonlyöjät, Football Players Association of Finland, and the Prosecution District of Southern Finland.

“Finland has been forward thinking regarding fighting and preventing sport manipulation whether it is about investigation, education or cooperation since the famous investigation, JIT VETO. The Finnish experts were involved in the drafting procedure of the Macolin Convention, established FINCIS as the first response organisation on sport integrity and Finland also has a very active national platform. On behalf of IntegriSport Next, I am glad to support the Finnish stakeholders' effort in

combating match fixing and provide knowledge on the phenomenon for a second time after the very successful Integrisport Erasmus+ project.” Norbert Rubicsek J.D. Director – CSCF Foundation for Sport Integrity

On the third and last day, a day dedicated only for representatives of Law Enforcement, Judicial Authorities, and other stakeholders from the public sector, we had the participation of the National Bureau of Investigation explaining the challenges and learnings from the JIT VETO case and the Spanish Football Federation sharing experiences from a specific case study. Both cases gave a well-rounded perspective of the different procedures and approaches in the fight against this phenomenon.

Following those presentations, at the end of the day, a peer-to-peer meeting was held. It was an ideal space which served as a scenario to share good practices and openly debated with the participants in a round table their point of view regarding investigation and detection of cases of manipulation of national and international sports competitions. For this meeting, we had representatives with extensive experience in the field including:

- NBI: Arttu Granat, Detective Sergeant
- Finnish Center for Integrity in Sports: Jouko Ikonen, Chief Investigative Officer
- Spanish Football Federation: Alfredo Lorenzo, Integrity and Security Director
- INTERPOL: Claudio Marinelli – Criminal Intelligence Officer
- CSCF Foundation for Sport Integrity: Norbert Rubicsek - Director

“According to the situation picture about combatting the manipulation of sports competitions we published earlier this year, the things requiring the most improvement in Finland are recognising and monitoring the manipulation of sports competitions. Through this training, we will enhance the cooperation between sports and authorities and improve the participants' ability to recognise the risks of manipulating sports competitions,” says Jouko Ikonen, FINCIS Chief Investigative Officer.

Finally, as an example of one of the objectives of IntegriSport Next Erasmus+ to serve as an instrument to promote cooperation between partners and their different stakeholders, we had the pleasure of receiving Mr. Henn Vallimäe and Mr. Kalle Roos, CEO and Coordinator (matchfixing), respectfully, of the Estonian Center for Integrity in Sports (ESTCIS). ESTCIS participated during the Estonian ARS organised by our partner, the Estonian Police and Border Guard Board, and have now taken part in the Finnish session to learn and exchange knowledge on this topic.

It should be noted that ESTCIS grants a legal establishment to the National Contact Point (NCP) when it comes to sports manipulation cases. They have been a part of the Copenhagen Group since 2020 and it is said that soon the ESTCIS will be the coordinator of the National Platform. We appreciate the interactive session and inclusion from all the participants who were part of this activity in Finland.

The next Awareness Raising Session will be held in Sweden on November 24 and 25, 2021.

For more information, please visit:

[www.cscfsport.com](http://www.cscfsport.com)

Twitter: @CSCF\_Integrity

Facebook: @CSCFSportintegrity

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LinkedIn: CSCF - Sport Integrity Group

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