



INTERPOL

INTEGRITY IN SPORT

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Photos International Olympic Committee

INVESTIGATIONS

Macau (China)

Macau police arrest 2 suspects over cross-border gambling syndicate linked to 'junket king' Alvin Chau

Macau's judiciary police have arrested two businessmen in connection with an illegal cross-border gambling and money-laundering syndicate linked to former "junket king" Alvin Chau Cheok-wa.

The two men, aged 49 and 34, refused to cooperate after they were arrested at a hotel on Friday in connection with a criminal organisation for illegal gambling and money laundering, judiciary police revealed on Sunday.

The pair were accused of running and controlling an online illegal gambling syndicate.

Officers searched the suspects' workplaces and residences in Macau's Novos Aterros do Porto Exterio (NAPE) and uncovered computers, servers and about HK\$4.1 million (US\$526,091) in cash.

According to local media, the two suspects were believed to be Levo Chan, chairman and executive director of Tak Chun Group, and Billy Choi, CEO of Hong Kong-listed Ying Hai Group.

Police said the case was directly linked to another illegal cross-border gambling and money-laundering syndicate involving Suncity Group's former CEO Chau and 10 others, who were arrested in November last year.

The 11 suspects are currently detained without bail, while Suncity announced the closure of its junket business in mid-December.

The force said that it had obtained sufficient information to show that the group involving the two new suspects had worked with the syndicate linked to Chau.

Chong Kam Leong, a Macau Judiciary Police spokesman, said: "Even though our two operations [in November and now] were targeted at two different groups, according to our investigation, there is sufficient evidence that shows the two groups together participated in illicit and criminal activities."

He added: "We targeted our investigation at the very criminal group that the suspects were involved in, not at any specific junket entities."

Chan is also co-chairman and chief executive of gaming and hotel services firm Macau Legend Development, with a 33.2 per cent stake in the Hong Kong-listed company, which owns a tourism complex called Macau Fisherman's Wharf in the NAPE district.

The firm, which runs three gambling venues in Macau – Landmark, Babylon and Legend Palace – under a so-called services agreement with licensee SJM Holdings, recently said that it had planned to submit a bid for one of six casino concessions to be issued under the upcoming retendering for local gaming licences.

Chan also opened Tak Chun's first Macau VIP Club in Galaxy Entertainment Group's StarWorld Hotel in 2007 with the venue being expanded in 2018 to take up the whole 11th floor and featuring 16 tables in seven private rooms.

Chan and Choi were also said to be behind a form of illicit under-the-table betting for high rollers, known in the industry as a "multiplier", according to police.

The process involves bets placed at the table being used to represent a private bet made between the player and a junket industry associate that could be multiple times the "official" one, with a gaming tax only being paid on the latter.

Meanwhile, Chau's arrest was part of an investigation launched in August 2019 into the creation of betting platforms outside Macau to attract mainland Chinese into gambling illegally online.

Investigators suspect that Chau had acted as the crime syndicate's leader and also accused him of working with a person named Zhang Ningning to establish illegal casinos in the mainland.

Authorities in Zhejiang province said they believed the syndicate had consisted of 199 shareholder-level representatives and more than 12,000 agents tasked with promoting gambling, with a client base of more than 80,000 Chinese bettors.

Before his arrest, Chau was ranked seventh by media group Inside Asian Gaming in a list of the 50 most powerful people in the continent's gambling sector, having helped Suncity grow from operating high roller tables in Macau casinos into a sprawling business conglomerate.

Before Suncity's closure, the company and Tak Chun were Macau's largest casino junkets with market shares of 40 and 19 per cent respectively.

The crackdown on the syndicates was believed to be part of Chinese President Xi Jinping's decision to clean up underground gaming, an industry which Beijing considered to be a financial security issue involving trillions of yuan and illegal lending.

Source: 30 January 2022, South China Morning Post

<https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/law-and-crime/article/3165305/macau-police-arrest-2-suspects-cross-border-gambling>

SENTENCES/SANCTIONS

Bangladesh

FIFA imposes worldwide ban on Arambagh

World football governing body FIFA on Thursday imposed a worldwide ban on Arambagh Kriya Sangha for their involvement in match-fixing in the 13th edition Bangladesh Premier League, confirmed Bangladesh Football Federation on Friday.

FIFA actually approved an appeal made by the Bangladesh Football Federation to make the local football governing body's decisions worldwide, BFF general secretary Abu Nayeem Shohag told the media in a video message.

The BFF disciplinary committee passed the verdicts in August 2021 by imposing bans on Arambagh officials and players for different periods.

BFF later appealed to FIFA to make the decision worldwide and FIFA approved it on Thursday.

The punishments included, lifetime bans on Arambagh's four former officials – president Minhazul Islam, team manager Gowhor Jahangir Rushu, assistant manager Arif Hossain and Indian fitness trainer Maidul Islam Sheikh – from all football activities.

The club's former Indian support staff, physiologist Sanjay Bose and game analyst Azizul Sheikh were each handed a 10-year ban.

Arambagh goalkeepers Apel Mahmud, Abul Kashem Milon, defenders Al-Amin, Md Roky, Zahid Hossain, Kazi Rahad Mia, Mostafizur Rahman, midfielders Omar Faruk, Rakibul Islam, forwards Mehedi Haan Fahad and Miraz Mollah were banned for one-year each.

Nigerian forward Chizoba Christopher Iyikwobe was handed a two-year ban while a local defender Shamim Reza and Australian defender Smith Bradie Christian were banned for three years each.

Arambagh were relegated from the top-tier BPL after finishing 12th out of 13 teams in the 13th edition of the league.

Source: 5 February 2022, New Age Sport

<https://www.newagebd.net/article/161846/fifa-imposes-worldwide-ban-on-arambagh>



Zimbabwe

Brendan Taylor banned under ICC Anti-Corruption Code and Anti-Doping Code

Former Zimbabwe captain Brendan Taylor has been banned from all cricket for three and a half years after he accepted breaching four charges of the ICC Anti-Corruption Code and, separately, one charge of the ICC Anti-Doping Code.

Mr Taylor admitted to being in breach of the following provisions of the ICC Anti-Corruption Code:

Article 2.4.2 – Failing to disclose (without unnecessary delay) the receipt of any gift, payment, hospitality or other benefit that (a) the participant knew or should have known was given to them to procure a breach of the Code or (b) that was made or given in circumstances that could bring the participant or the sport of cricket into disrepute.

Article 2.4.3 - Failing to disclose to the ACU (without unnecessary delay) receipt of gifts/hospitality with a value of US\$750 or more regardless of the circumstances in which they were given.

Article 2.4.4 – Failing to disclose to the ACU (without unnecessary delay) full details of the approach received to engage in corrupt conduct under the Code including in relation to Zimbabwe’s then upcoming series against Sri Lanka and/or Bangladesh.

Article 2.4.7 – obstructing or delaying an ACU investigation, including concealing, tampering with or destroying any documentation or other information that may be relevant to that investigation and / or that may be evidence of or may lead to the discovery of evidence of corrupt conduct under the ICC Anti-Corruption Code.

Mr Taylor chose to admit the charges under the provisions of the ICC Anti-Corruption Code and agreed a sanction with the ICC in lieu of an Anti-Corruption Tribunal hearing.

His violation under the ICC Anti-Doping Code, which is separate and independent of the anti-corruption charges, resulted from an In-Competition test conducted on 8 September 2021 following Zimbabwe’s match against Ireland. Mr Taylor tested positive for the stimulant Benzoyllecognine, a cocaine metabolite, which is specified as a Substance of Abuse under the Code.

Mr Taylor has accepted a one-month period of ineligibility for the violation under Article 2.1 – the minimum allowed under the Code. Mr Taylor’s period of ineligibility was reduced to one month because he was able to establish that he had ingested the substance out of competition, that it was unrelated to sport performance, and because he is currently undergoing a rehabilitation treatment programme.

This one-month suspension will run concurrently with the suspension of three and a half years under the ICC Anti-Corruption Code. Mr Taylor will be free to resume his involvement in the game on 28 July 2025.

Alex Marshall, ICC General Manager – Integrity Unit, said: “Brendan is a former international captain who represented Zimbabwe for 17 years. Over such a long career, he participated in numerous anti-corruption and anti-doping education sessions and knew exactly what his obligations were under the ICC Anti-Corruption and Anti-Doping Codes.

“It is disappointing that a player of his experience chose not to fulfil those obligations, however he has accepted all charges, which has been reflected in the sanction. I would echo Brendan’s message to other players to report approaches as soon as they happen so any corrupt activity can be disrupted at the earliest possible opportunity. We wish Brendan well in his rehabilitation.”

The anti-corruption decision (which has been redacted to protect the identities of the ICC’s witnesses and other third parties) is available [here](#).

Source: 28 January 2022, International Cricket Council Cricket

<https://www.icc-cricket.com/media-releases/2465561>

BETTING

Global

236 suspicious betting alerts reported by IBIA in 2021

26 January 2022: The International Betting Integrity Association (IBIA) reported 236 cases of suspicious betting to the relevant authorities during 2021, with 69 alerts in the fourth quarter (Q4).

The annual figure is a 13% reduction on the 270 cases reported in 2020. The 2021 figure is consistent with recent years, with the average number of annual alerts at 240 during 2018-20. The 2021 alerts spanned 13 sports and 49 different countries, with tennis and football continuing to dominate. Europe also continued to provide the highest number of alerts with 50% of the annual total.

Khalid Ali, CEO of IBIA, said: "Another challenging year for the sector has passed with the spectre of Covid and its impact on sporting events declining, and hopefully a potential endgame in sight. It is therefore welcomed that the alerts for 2021 showed a downward trend and a return to pre-Covid numbers. Challenges however persist, notably with the growth of private sports events and establishing integrity protocols to the levels seen in traditional sports bodies. The association is working with a number of stakeholders in this area to improve integrity provisions. "Indeed, the dangers of betting corruption remain, and as the Optimum Betting Market report published last year highlighted, that equates to around \$25m per annum in lost revenue for the regulated betting sector globally. It is therefore welcome that the requirement for operators to be part of an integrity monitoring system have gathered pace across the US, and have been endorsed in Sweden, to add to existing requirements in the Netherlands, Germany and the Czech Republic. The approach in Ontario is particularly worthy of attention and is a best practice model. The association looks forward to working with a wider range of operators on integrity as a result."

Other key data for 2021:

- 80 - Total tennis alerts, a decrease of 18% on the 98 reported in 2020
- 66 - Football alerts, an increase of 8% on 2020 and the highest annual number reported
- 27 - Alerts on sporting events in Russia, the highest number for a single country in 2021
- 11 - Successful sporting or criminal sanctions during 2021 from IBIA alerts
- 10 - Alerts reported in North America, a 54% decrease on the 22 reported in 2020

Over the five-year period 2017-21, IBIA reported 1,222 alerts across 19 sports and 101 countries. The International Betting Integrity Association is the leading global voice on integrity for the licensed betting industry. It is run by operators for operators, protecting its members from corruption through collective action. Its monitoring and alert platform is a highly effective anti-corruption tool that detects and reports suspicious activity on its members' betting markets. The association has longstanding information sharing partnerships with leading sports and gambling regulators to utilise its data and prosecute corruption. It represents the sector at high-level policy discussion forums such as the IOC, UN, Council of Europe and European Commission.

The association publishes quarterly and annual reports covering the integrity alerts reported through its monitoring and alert platform, which can be viewed on the IBIA website here. The association can be contacted via info@ibia.bet.

END

About the International Betting Integrity Association

The International Betting Integrity Association is the leading global voice on integrity for the licensed betting industry. Our members share a common goal of combating betting corruption to protect the integrity of sport and their businesses. Established in 2005 and formerly known as ESSA, we are a not-for-profit association whose members include many of the world's largest regulated betting operators, active across six continents. Members undergo a rigorous due diligence process and must adhere to our code of conduct committing them to responsible betting practices.

The International Betting Integrity Association's Monitoring & Alert Platform is a highly effective anti-corruption tool that detects and reports suspicious activity on its members' betting markets. The bespoke system tracks transactional activity linked to individual consumer accounts, clearly distinguishing it from commercial monitoring systems focused on simple odds movements. The association has longstanding information sharing partnerships with leading sports bodies including FIFA, UEFA, ITIA and the IOC and many gambling regulators to utilise this data and prosecute corruption. The association maintains a policy of transparency and publishes quarterly integrity reports analysing activity reported on the Platform.

Source: 26 January 2022, International Betting Integrity Association

<https://ibia.bet/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Q4-and-annual-2021-integrity-stats-PR-Jan-2022-FINAL.pdf>

GOOD PRACTICES

Global

GLMS and IOC sign agreement to combat competition manipulation

01 February 2022. The Global Lottery Monitoring System (GLMS) and the International Olympic Committee (IOC) have signed a cooperation agreement for the fight against the manipulation of sports competitions through effective information sharing and coordinated education activities.

“This agreement will enhance cooperation between GLMS and IOC to protect sport integrity and allow for a more cohesive approach between the sports and lottery worlds”, said Luca Esposito, GLMS General Secretary and Executive Director of the World Lottery Association.

Friedrich Martens, Head of the Olympic Movement Unit on the Prevention of the Manipulation of Competitions at the IOC, added, “Beyond their traditional financial support to the Olympic movement, we are glad that Lotteries have been also strongly supporting us in our efforts to keep sport and, notably our pinnacle event, the Olympic Games, free from manipulations. We are glad to sign this agreement with GLMS which will allow us to further strengthen our cooperation”.

GLMS, the non-profit global association that represents the sports betting integrity interests of lotteries worldwide, and the IOC, will coordinate their global activities to address sports manipulations and other sport integrity issues in a timely manner.

Both organisations are observers to the statutory Committee of the International Convention on the Manipulation of Sports Competitions, (Macolin Convention) and have already been working together on various editions of the Olympic Games and educational activities. The new agreement will contribute to developing synergies between the lottery sector and the sporting world within this domain.

Source: 1 February 2022, Global Lottery Monitoring System

<https://glms-sport.org/news/glms-and-ioc-sign-agreement-to-combat-competition-manipulation/>



ODDS AND ENDS

IQONIQ

Isn't it IQONIQ?

On 27 July 2020, IQONIQ, “a new fan engagement platform exclusively targeting the world of sports and entertainment”, announced that it had received a 100 million euro cash injection from a Luxembourgian entity called Lux Media Investments, in order “to secure the company’s continuous development and global expansion”. Given that IQONIQ had already concluded multiple partnership agreements with a number of famous football clubs and sports organisations, it looked as if a major new actor had established itself in the fast-expanding environment of ‘fan engagement platforms’ – a possible rival-in-the-making for the behemoth of that business, Socios.com, perhaps?

At least superficially, the big idea behind IQONIQ was indistinguishable from the principles on which Socios.com and others had founded their ultra-aggressive approach to this brand new market. Its mission statement, as formulated a few months later in an ‘Ask me anything’ web session by its founder and CEO, Turkish-born Kazim Atilla, could have been used almost verbatim by any of its competitors.

“The IQONIQ App is a revolutionary fan engagement platform operating in the sports and entertainment industry, and developed by the IQONIQ Group SARL”, he said. “The IQONIQ app enables sports clubs, athletes, and entertainers to better monetize and grow the value of their global fragmented fan base and social media assets. IQONIQ provides fans with a rich, rewarding and personal relationship with their heroes and clubs, on the universal, seamless and gamified loyalty platform. It also gives the brands a better solution to market their brand and products to the ‘right’ customer”.

IQONIQ intended to provide this “rich, rewarding and personal relationship” by using blockchain technology to offer its own ‘fan tokens’. Token-holders would be able to ‘engage meaningfully’ with the sports clubs and organisations they supported, all of this through an App which promised to create a revolutionary ‘ecosystem’ for sports fans.

But first, these fans first had to buy the tokens using the platform’s own cryptocurrency, ‘IQQ Fan EcoSystem’ (IQQ). A peculiarity of IQQ was that it could not be purchased in US dollars, euro or other so-called ‘fiat’ (traditional) currencies, but only in other cryptocurrencies such as Bitcoin, Ethereum and the stablecoin USDT. This meant that, in order to sell their own tokens, IQONIQ first had to secure a listing on the exchanges where Bitcoin, Ethereum and USDT can be traded. It was not yet the case.

This, however, had not discouraged its Luxembourgian investor to provide them with 100 million euro of seed capital, or, indeed, multiple clubs and sports organisations to sign partnerships with Atilla’s company.

Olympique de Marseille had been the first football club to make IQONIQ its “official digital fan engagement platform”, in February 2020, signing a deal which was supposed to run until the end of June 2023. IQONIQ, an “official premium partner” of OM, would also be its sleeve sponsor for the duration of the contract. Given that Atilla’s company was registered in Monaco, it is perhaps not surprising that the principality’s flagship club, AS Monaco, followed suit a month later. Other big names of European football entered into similar partnerships with IQONIQ in quick succession in August and September 2020: Russian champions Zenit St Petersburg, Crystal Palace FC, AS Roma (which made the platform its sleeve sponsor) Real Sociedad (of whom IQONIQ became the main sponsor for the 2020-21 season), Valencia CF, and to crown this spree, La Liga as a whole. Not that IQONIQ limited its interest to football, as, by the end of the year, it also counted Euroleague Basketball, the Drone Champions League, the European Handball Federation and the McLaren F1 team among its partners.

Downwards and downwards

IQONIQ had promised they would launch their app in August 2020, but were not quite ready by then. In fact, it was only at 10:00, on 31 March 2021, that the Bitcoin.com Exchange was “thrilled to announce the listing of IQQ”, two weeks after the new cryptocurrency had started trading on another exchange, Bittrex Global. Binance, the world’s leading cryptocurrency exchange, whilst documenting rates for IQQ, never listed it for trade or service. Something was afoot; something which experienced or better-informed traders realised very quickly indeed.

At the time of its IOC – Initial Coin Offering – on 14 April 2021, IQQ was quoted at the equivalent of 23 US cents. Within a month and a half, the token’s value had dropped to 5 cents. In January 2022, it is basically zero. Trading — on the only platform which still lists IQQ today, Bittrex – after a lively start, dropped off a cliff in a matter of days, and has more or less completely stopped, amounting to 0 US dollars on several days in January.

It does not take an expert to realise that IQONIQ was an unmitigated disaster; yet their demise didn’t make the news. None of the prestigious football partners who’d emblazoned shirt sleeves, jerseys and official merchandise with the IQONIQ logo even mentioned that the ‘revolutionary fan engagement platform’ which was to change the sports ecosystem radically had gone bust.

For it had gone bust, if discreetly. The announcement took the form of a short notice which was published on Christmas Eve, 2021, in the Journal de Monaco, the principality’s official bulletin. It read: “following an extraordinary general meeting held on 18 October 2021, it has been decided to wind up the company early, as from 30 September 2021”. A local administrator was

entrusted with the liquidation of the company's assets. The company which aimed "to become the Number One Fan Engagement Platform for the Sport and Entertainment Industry within the next 3 – 5 years", in the words of its CEO Kazim Atilla, was no more. Its website, iconiq.com, is still live, but their App has vanished from the Apple and Google stores. Their name no longer appears anywhere in world sport.

Clearly, some people – but not necessarily everyone – lost a great deal of money in the demise of what an industry specialist told Josimar was "a sham, if not a scam", something they may have avoided if they'd done their homework, as Kazim Atilla had what is called 'previous'.

Red flags everywhere

As reported by BeinCrypto.com in April 2021, Atilla's full name had appeared in the filings of a case brought in 2014 by the US Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) against notorious con artist and Ponzi scheme virtuoso Rodney D. Tringham, a man who counted rock superstar Bruce Springsteen among his victims, and had already been given a 13-year jail sentence by a US court in 2011. Atilla was listed as one of the people "being in Tringham's web". That it was not a case of homonymy was substantiated by the fact that he was named in conjunction with a company called Infinite Investments, which appears to be an offshoot of the Infinite Group, the organisation which, according to Atilla's own LinkedIn page, he founded in 2004. Another apparent offshoot of this group, Malta-based Infinite Invest Ltd, appeared in the Paradise Papers.

Another red flag should have been waved when IQONIQ announced that it had received that 100 million US dollar funding from Luxembourg-based Lux Media Investments, a company which does not identify any of its executives or its shareholders on its website. Its sole shareholder, according to the Luxembourg registry of companies which Josimar has consulted, is one Piet Sarloos, a Greek resident who describes himself as "president at Lux Capital Group of Companies" (itself domiciled in Sydney, Australia). The accounts it filed with the Luxembourgian authorities since it was registered in February 2017 do not show any income whatsoever from that date until December 2020, the last period for which such accounts are available. Lux Media Investments does not appear to have employed any staff either during that period. Yet Lux Media Investments poured 100 million US dollars into IQONIQ.

Last, Atilla was the founder and CEO of a short-lived real estate company, InfinAgora, which went through millions of euro of investors' money within two months of its launch in 2015. InfinAgora's unique selling-point (publicised in and by a number of prominent Dutch media at the time) was to provide a 'secure online platform for business networking and doing business in a reliable way' in the real estate market. InfinAgora fell to earth as quickly as it had risen. According to Dutch monthly magazine Quote, which looked at the company's accounts for 2013, InfinAgora had received 10 million euro from investors before declaring itself insolvent. As there was no cash left in the company's bank account by the time it folded, that was very much that. As it now is for IQONIQ.

Source: 25 January 2022, Josimar

<http://josimarfootball.com/isnt-it-iqoniq/>



Other

Few European countries have plans for regulating football club ownership

Professional football clubs in Europe are getting new owners at an increasing speed. However, only a handful of European countries try to regulate club ownership and the focus is mainly financial. Steve Menary outlines the state of affairs on tests of club owners and directors.

In what could pass for a new version of the popular board game Monopoly, Europe's football clubs are being bought and sold with increasing regularity. Since the start of the 2021/22 season, barely a week has passed without ownership of a professional club changing hands.

Some acquisitions, such as the purchase of English Premier League club Newcastle United by an arm of the Saudi Arabian government, dominated global media headlines; others barely registered outside their own country. At the same time only a handful of European countries try to regulate club ownership.

The Newcastle deal was widely criticised by human rights groups, but the takeover was waived through on October 7 2021 despite the existence of an Owners & Director's Test in England that is supposed to vet new owners.

New test for club owners on the way in English football

The test has for years been widely criticised for being ineffective after failing to prevent a host of problems including the demise of professional clubs like Bury and Macclesfield. Six weeks after the Newcastle deal was agreed, a fan-led review of football governance proposed an independent regulator that would oversee a stronger test for club owners in English football.

The new system would involve a business plan review, a check of financial resources, enhanced due diligence on the source of those resources, and an integrity test based on existing assessments developed by the UK Financial Conduct Authority, Prudential Regulation Authority, Ofcom, and the Home Office.

The test will include a 'good character and relationship aspect' but has to be approved by the UK House of Parliament and whether the new legislation could block a sale similar to the Newcastle take-over remains to be seen.

"It's better than the current system, but anything about human rights concerns is missing," says Niall Couper, chief executive officer of the pressure group Fair Game, which includes 34 clubs looking to change the way the game is run.

"There are some clubs that are opposed to the proposal, but others have spoken to us off the record and support the idea as it will bring proper scrutiny of the owners and a directors test. It could make the UK a more appealing place to invest," says Couper.

The test, which would apply to anyone buying 25% or more of a club, would also apply to proposed new directors, with a due diligence element developed in tandem with the Home Office and the National Crime Agency, but whether this would have prevented the Saudi takeover of Newcastle is unclear.

"How do you prevent what happened at Newcastle?" says Martin Endemann, senior project manager at Football Supporters Europe. "It's not a question of stability. Providing they don't get relegated, they are probably the most financially stable club in the world but there are moral issues."

"We at FSE welcome any rules that make it difficult for dodgy operators or states to own football clubs, but that's where it becomes difficult."

If approved by the UK parliament, the proposals could come into force for the 2023/24 season and, despite the concerns over lack of focus on human rights, may make England a pioneer in regulating club ownership.

French rules are a deterrent to unsuitable owners

In France, the Direction Nationale du Contrôle de Gestion (DNCG) was formed in 1990 after 14 clubs had become insolvent in the three previous years. Since 2017, the DNCG has required owners to provide financial guarantees that they have the resources to run a club for a year.

The DNCG cannot block a takeover, but failure to comply can incur fines up to €250,000 and exclusion from cup competitions. Clubs not deemed by the DNCG to have sufficient backing can have their professional licence removed and face relegation to the regional leagues. In recent years, at least nine clubs including Bastia, Cannes, Grenoble, Le Mans, and Strasbourg have been demoted after falling foul of the DNCG.

"There are investors looking to invest in French clubs as they are probably amongst the cheapest in the big five leagues," says Jean-Francois Merdrignac, an associate specialising in intellectual property at the French office of global lawyers, Linklaters. "The

DNCG rules keep clubs in France cautious about their finances.”

These rules can also be an effective deterrent to unsuitable owners. In 2019, the London Football Exchange proposed a takeover of Nantes, but the crypto currency group did not even arrange a meeting with the DNCG to discuss their finances and the takeover did not happen.

Know Your Owner test established in the Netherlands in 2018

In the Netherlands, the Know Your Owner test was also developed by the local federation, the KNVB, after a bad experience. A decade ago, Dutch club Vitesse Arnhem was acquired by Georgian businessman Merab Jordania, but allegations persisted that the deal was engineered by Chelsea owner Roman Abramovich. This would have breached the KNVB's rules on multi club ownership that were in effect at that time.

Know Your Owner came into force in 2018 ahead of Dutch rules on club ownership being relaxed and applies to anyone buying 25% or more of a Dutch club. The emphasis – and cost – lies with the prospective buyer to meet the rules, which are derived from the financial industry.

The rules state: “The process starts with establishing the identity of the customer and, in the case of a legal entity, the identity of the Ultimate Beneficial Owner, meaning any natural person who has an interest or control in the legal entity of 25% or more.”

Few Dutch clubs are owned by foreign groups, but that is now changing with Den Bosch and Den Hague bought last year by overseas investors.

In neighbouring Belgium, there are no quotas on non-EU players and the country's clubs are a target for overseas investors who already own bigger clubs elsewhere and look to buy Belgian sides and loan players to what are in effect feeder clubs

With the recent acquisition of RWD Molenbeek by US businessman John Textor, seven of the eight clubs in Belgium's second tier 1BProLeague are now foreign owned. Including the top tier Jupiler League, 16 out of Belgium's top 26 clubs have overseas owners.

Some sources suggest that Know Your Owner could be introduced in Belgium, but the Belgian football federation claims the existing rules are sufficient.

In a statement, a spokesperson says: “New club shareholders/owners are screened by the Belgian Football Federation and clubs are required to provide information allowing, among other things, to identify the ultimate beneficial owner.”

Malta under pressure to vet new owners

The Belgian approach is also supported by new national rules on combating money laundering, which came into force in July 2021. This is also influencing plans to vet club ownership in Malta, where the local football association, the MFA, is pushing ahead with structural changes.

INTEGRITY IN SPORT

The status of Maltese clubs is being changed from membership organisations into companies that can be bought by investors. To support this, the MFA is developing a system to vet new owners before the changes come into effect in 2023.

President Bjorn Vassallo, a former director of Europe at FIFA, explains: “We need to safeguard whoever is a good person or a good administrator by putting in these layers of safeguards.”

A crucial driver behind the introduction of this new owners test was Malta being placed on the Financial Action Task Force's list of 'grey' economies' in June 2021. The FATF is an intergovernmental body that serves as a watchdog over global money laundering and terrorist financing, and it believes that Malta is at a 'higher risk of money laundering and terrorism financing'. The increased monitoring of financial transactions is having a huge impact on all aspects of the Maltese economy including football.

Best model may be fan ownership

Outside of the EU, particularly in Eastern Europe, the idea of preventing or monitoring new money being injected into football is anathema to many football associations. There is often so little investment in clubs in poorer football economies that some associations privately believe that placing restraints on investors – regardless of their background – could cripple clubs.

Alex Phillips, former head of governance at UEFA, says this argument is “not defensible.” He adds:

“Football clubs existed before dodgy money. Clubs are community assets and generally own their own stadiums, so they don't need new investment as that is only to service consumption on players wages and transfers. Virtually all the investors that have recently come from outside of football will be gone in five, 10, 15 or 30 years. Ownership is just a lease, and they will eventually sell out.”

Phillips tacitly supports the new English proposals, in particular the need to identify the ultimate beneficial owner but says that the best system – at present – lies in Germany, where fans own the controlling stake in clubs.

He adds: “If fans have the majority of the voting rights, this is the best option to limit the problem of owners who are bad for football. It’s not perfect, but it’s the best there is. By its very nature, it prevents a bad owner from taking full control of the voting rights and looks after the long-term interests of the club.”

In Spain, four clubs – Athletic Bilbao, Barcelona, Osasuna, and Real Madrid – are still owned by their membership although fans are represented by a president, who can wield great power, such as Florentino Rodríguez at Real.

Phillips advocates allowing properly constituted supporters trusts should be permitted to purchase up to 0.5% of a club’s shares on an annual basis.

“Trusts should not take dividends, but they would start to gain more control of the voting rights,” says Phillips who admits that this could be a long process at some of the continents bigger clubs.

Supporters trusts have resurrected some failed clubs often only to be bought out later but the collapse of SC Bastia in 2017 led to an innovative new form of club ownership in France.

The Société Commerciale avec pour objet l'Intérêt Collectif is a commercial company with shareholders including private companies and supporters with a mission of collective interest. Bastia have regained their professional licence after returning to Ligue 2 and the success of SCIC is still being evaluated.

With Europe’s football clubs now in their third season disrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic, buy-outs by private investors look set to continue apace, and for supporter groups tired of seeing community assets traded with such regularity, addressing club ownership has never been more necessary.

Loukas Anastasiadis, membership development manager at Supporters Direct, says: “These people do not want regulation, but you can’t be entirely free or entirely regulated. You need to be somewhere in the middle.”

Those investors looking to take control of clubs are likely to disagree and, at present, many football authorities do not appear to have the appetite or power to address regulating club takeovers or ownership.

Source: 1 February 2022, *Play the Game*

Football

https://playthegame.org/news/news-articles/2022/0687_few-european-countries-have-plans-for-regulating-football-club-ownership/



Philippines

Gambling with lives

A report on the links between sex-trafficking, prostitution and gambling companies registered in the Philippines was presented last week to the Filipino Senate. Its conclusions are shocking. Tens of thousands of young women, sometimes underage girls are employed and abused in a sex industry aimed almost solely at the huge number of Chinese workers who have flocked, most of them illegally, to Manila to work for offshore bookmakers, of which at least eight are current commercial partners of Premier League football clubs.

“When a country’s borders are made porous by the malfeasance of those charged with protecting them, it is not the wealthy and the powerful who are put at risk. It is the already vulnerable who are made even more vulnerable – those who fall victim to human traffickers and are smuggled out to white slavery rings, those who lose their livelihoods because of the influx of foreign workers on spurious visa arrangements, women and girls who are prostituted to serve the sexual appetites of an exploding market composed of Chinese workers in the Philippine Offshore Gaming Operator (POGO) industry.”

The opening paragraph of the report tabled by Senator Rosa Hontiveros on Wednesday 26 January at the Senate of the Philippines was meant to shock. It had long been held as fact that the astonishing growth of the e-gambling industry in the archipelago over the last fifteen years was associated with sex trafficking, as it is with money-laundering, drugs dealing and other criminal activities, many if not most of which involve Chinese gangs – triads – whose presence and influence is felt especially strongly in the gambling enclave of Macau.

Some Manila casinos, for example, have long doubled as brothels. Now, for the first time, following a two-year investigation led by National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) Deputy Director for Special Investigation Service Vicente De Guzman and Makati Police Investigation Unit Chief Major Gideon Ines, there is proof of this correlation. To quote from the ‘key findings’ of the report, “There is a clear link between the rise of the POGO industry and the increase in cases of prostitution [and] human trafficking”, and “there is a proliferation of prostitution dens coinciding with the increased number of POGO operations in Manila”, which had “made the country a destination for foreign trafficked women on a scale not seen before”.

The Filipino NBI conducted a number of raids on these ‘prostitution dens’, which they found ‘catered exclusively to Chinese clients, the majority of whom are POGO workers’. Officially, there are 35,000 Chinese POGO workers in the Philippines, but their exact number is unknown, as many will have flouted immigration rules to enter the territory of the Philippines, using tourist visas and then disappearing without trace to be employed by Chinese-controlled gambling businesses, some of which use brands whose names will be familiar to fans of the English game. It is possible, however, to get an idea of the scale of this influx of illegal workers by looking at the sheer number of Chinese nationals who pass the Filipino border: according to the Senate report, no fewer than four million did so between 2017 and 2020, a number which shot up so extravagantly during that period that it is impossible to link it with tourism alone.

The story of «Carina»

The report explains in detail how Filipino border control forces have facilitated POGO-related labour-trafficking by processing the incomers without any checks, in exchange for bribes known as pastillas (as the rolled-up banknotes are made to look like local candy wrappers). 90 percent of the immigration personnel working at Manila’s international airport are said to be taking part in this pastilla scheme, each employee being paid about 40 US dollars per ‘processed’ arrival. It was known that this extraordinary influx of Chinese POGO employees, of which there may well be half a million in Manila alone, and some of whom were sent to the Philippines on false pretenses, to settle their own gambling debts or against their will, had a huge impact on the housing market of the Filipino capital, making it much more expensive to rent a home there. We now know it also caused an explosion in the number of women caught in the web of prostitution, sources (including the International Labour Organisation) quoting figures of 500,000 to 800,000 sex workers active in a country where prostitution is officially illegal, and almost all of whom are at the mercy of pimps.

Some of the cases mentioned in the report make for shocking reading, such as that of ‘Carina’, a fifteen-year-old Filipino who testified before the Senate Committee and explained how her predominantly Chinese clients paid 6,000 Philippine pesos (about 120 US dollars) to have sex with her. ‘Carina’ was not the youngest girl to be abused that way; one girl who was housed – imprisoned – in the same ‘safehouse’ was just fourteen, and contracted a venereal disease. The girls, contacted through the WeChat app, would be asked to change into ‘office clothes’ before they met their clients in order not to attract suspicion when they visited them in hotels. Chinese and Russian prostitutes, who charge more (up to 900 US dollars), are also employed in the sex industry.

The report does not mention any specific POGOs by name, but suggests that it is the whole of the POGO gambling industry which is associated with sex-trafficking and prostitution. The victims of gambling are not solely the addicts who might lose their job, their family, their home or even their lives to their addiction: they are also those Chinese workers who are forced to contribute to the gambling sector (eight Filipino police officers were arrested on 26 January for robbing Chinese POGO employees); and they are also the young women who are forced into selling their bodies for the benefit of others.

The responsibility, here, must be shared by a whole industry – an industry which finds it very easy for its partners to look the other way. This includes their partners of choice: Premier League clubs, who provide them with the best possible platform to advertise their offer, given the popularity of the English game in Asia and the impossibility of these brands to promote themselves in countries where gambling on football matches is illegal.

As of today, eight of the Asian-facing e-gambling operators who have partnership and sponsorship deals in place with Premier League clubs hold licences granted in the Philippines by the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corporation, or PAGCOR. They are i8.bet (Everton), SBOTOP/SBOBET (Leeds United), Fun88 (Newcastle, Tottenham), ManBetX (Wolves), HTH (Manchester United, Leicester), LoveBet (Leicester), Leyu.com (Chelsea) and W88 (Crystal Palace, Leicester), one of the very few betting brands which could be directly linked to a named Filipino licensee, in this case Marquee Holdings Ltd. 188BET, a partner of Liverpool FC, also appears to be linked to POGO Caspo Inc, and Josimar has evidence suggesting that Mansion Bet, also known as M88, a partner of Newcastle United from 2019 to 2021 and of AFC Bournemouth in 2019-20 is owned by another POGO, Bigcat Software Solutions, Inc.

As shown below, Josimar has also established that Yabo, former official betting partner of Manchester United, Bayern Munich and Paris Saint-Germain among others, who vanished after a huge police operation dismantled their operation in mainland China, was one of the operating names of another POGO, Tianyu Technology.

The identity of the ultimate owners of those brands and companies is unknown, including to the Premier League clubs which agreed deals with them through intermediaries such as former Tottenham Hotspur employee Matt House's Sportquake, the UK's top broker in this field. Agents such as the Isle of Man-based 'white label' provider TGP Europe Ltd (who 'power' SBOTOP/SBOBET and Fun88 among others), who have enabled these brands to obtain gambling licenses in the United Kingdom, have yet to respond to multiple enquiries made by Josimar over the last seven months. The UK Gambling Commission strenuously explains that it cannot discuss 'individual cases'. Premier League clubs hide behind a perceived obligation not to discuss the exact nature of their commercial partnerships or have simply chosen not to respond to Josimar's questions. The Premier League itself considers that these matters should be discussed with its clubs.

In the meantime, every day, teenage girls are raped in hotel rooms in Manila.

Source: 31 January 2022, Josimar

<http://josimarfootball.com/gambling-with-lives/>



United States

If owners really paid coaches bonuses to lose, the NFL is in big trouble

The Super Bowl, the NFL's ultimate coronation and by far the most watched event in America, is a little over a week away. Yet you wouldn't know it because Brian Flores's explosive lawsuit against the league and its clubs alleging racial discrimination in its hiring practices continue to take the NFL zeitgeist by storm.

The Flores complaint, which lays out the disturbing history of racism in the NFL, includes extensive data supporting the notion that qualified Black candidates have long been passed over in droves for head coach, coordinator, and general manager openings. The NFL currently has just one Black head coach in Mike Tomlin. One, despite 70% of NFL players being Black. One, even though many of these players strive to become coaches and executives in the league upon retirement. Thirty-two teams. One Black head coach.

But the other piece of Flores's complaint may be even more difficult for the league to ignore. Flores alleges that Dolphins owner Stephen Ross offered to pay him \$100,000 per loss in 2019 in hopes of securing the No 1 draft pick in the 2020 draft. Flores claims his refusal to comply was the beginning of the end of his time in Miami. The Dolphins won five games that season despite unloading a litany of key players, including safety Minkah Fitzpatrick and left tackle Laremy Tunsil.

Ross denied these claims in a statement that read, "I take great personal exception to these malicious attacks, and the truth must be known. [Flores's] allegations are false, malicious and defamatory."

Ross's statement, late Wednesday night, came a full day and half after the allegations were made public. The NFL was hastier with its reaction, claiming Flores's 58-page lawsuit was "without merit" just two hours after it was released. The notion of not investigating an owner who is alleged to have attempted to undermine the very fabric of competition was appalling. But after Flores's media blitz where he emphatically repeated the claims for the world to hear the league reversed course and has now opened an investigation. Former Browns head coach Hue Jackson piled on, claiming that team owner Jimmy Haslam incentivized losses and was quite satisfied with Jackson's 1-36 record during 2016 and 2017, which led to them gaining the No 1 draft pick in 2017 and 2018. The Browns have denied the charge calling any such claims "completely fabricated".

Paying a coach for poor performance may or may not be about race though the idea of a white owner thinking the Black coach would be acquiescent to his demands is quite plausible given the history of the NFL, and well, America. And many have noted in the last few days that when Black head coaches are given jobs, it's often on teams with little chance of competing. This, the theory goes, allows teams to say they are committed to diversity but also means they can replace the Black head coach with a white one once things go wrong and a high draft pick has been secured.

If any aspect of tanking under the behest of an owner is proven to be true, the NFL will be rocked in a way it has never experienced.

Suck for Luck and Tank for Trevor might make cute hashtags and inspire fun social media banter. And sure, there reaches a point in every season where Jets fans, the first example that comes to mind, are ready to throw in the towel. But there's a difference between viewing your position in the NFL draft order as a silver lining and intentionally plotting to lose.

Tanking is the term we use but really this act of defying basic principles of competition deserves a far more potent moniker. NFL players put their bodies through the wringer in ways we can't even imagine. The ramification is a career span that averages just 3.3 years. Every game is an audition. The idea that a player would spend a season or even a play intentionally trying to lose so a wealthy owner can get richer by selling more season tickets and jerseys with a splashy draft pick is repulsive.

49ers long snapper Taybor Pepper, who spent the 2019 in Miami under Flores, shared his thoughts in a now deleted tweet:

"I've been quiet about my experience in Miami and still probably won't go into details until my football career is over. Knowing that my EMPLOYER was actively trying to sabotage the season, again, makes me sick to my stomach. WHERE IS/WAS THE INTEGRITY."

There is no integrity if owners are out there incentivizing their coaches to lose. Zero. If true, the league as we know may be a thing of the past. The NFL is usually mired in some sort of controversy – Colin Kaepernick, concussions, domestic violence. Somehow, the league always weathers the storm, and keeps piling up the revenue. But if what Flores and Jackson are alleging (and perhaps others will come forward) is true it's a slap in the face to every person involved in the league from fan to player to concession worker.

These allegations are not dissimilar to the 1919 Black Sox scandal, when the Chicago White Sox were accused of taking bribes from a gambling syndicate to throw the World Series. That scandal created turmoil for Major League Baseball and led to the first appointment of a commissioner to restore integrity.

It's impossible to predict the exact fallout the league could be facing if these claims are backed with evidence. The league could enact massive fines and strip picks from the Dolphins in addition to forcing Ross to sell the team. It could also disincentivize teams from tanking by moving from a draft to a lottery like the NBA.

But the deeper issue is the game itself. The beauty of sport and especially the NFL with its salary cap is that nothing is predetermined. But if we find out that it has been rigged all along, how can we consume the league in the same way? The NFL's ability to survive scandal after scandal is almost a sport of its own. Somehow the league continues to thrive in large part thanks to high-budget TV broadcasts, fantasy football, the league's marketing machine and its global ambitions, but most of all because of its product. If that product is proven to be tainted, the NFL will finally be faced with a scandal it can't slither out of. And even if the tanking allegations are not proven true or Flores settles the lawsuit, the seeds of mistrust have been planted.

Source: 3 February 2022, The Guardian

Football

<https://amp.theguardian.com.cdn.ampproject.org/c/s/amp.theguardian.com/sport/2022/feb/03/nfl-tanking-allegations-owner-payments-brian-flores-hue-jackson>



MATCH FIXING

India

Cricketer Brendan Taylor's confession puts focus on Indian bookies, dirty money and lack of a law

Ravinder Dandiwal, one of the alleged masterminds of the fake Sri Lanka UWA Cricket League which was busted near Mohali, was out on bail 10 days after being arrested in July 2020. Dandiwal was charged under the Indian Penal Code's (IPC's) Section 420 that penalises cheating.

Over the years, several other Indians have figured in cases of cricket corruption, most like in the recent case involving Zimbabwe cricketer Brendan Taylor, as alleged bookies and match-fixers aimed to corrupt players, but none have received exemplary punishment. The lack of specific sports laws in India has helped those who made approaches to players get away lightly.

A year and half later, Dandiwal's lawyer RS Sarao revisits the case that had scandalised the cricketing world. By holding a cricket league, published to take place in Sri Lanka but actually happening in a village near Chandigarh, Dandiwal had to pull a fast one on online punters. It was an elaborate con as unknown players wearing Covid-19 masks posed as international cricketers. It was only after The Indian Express broke the story of the fake league that Punjab Police arrested the kingpin. But they couldn't hold on to him for long.

Sarao says the court granted bail after the defence argued there was no grounds to prove cheating. "We countered with the question as to who was cheated. The complainant had alleged that he (Dandiwal) had organised fake matches. The court took a lenient view and granted bail," says the lawyer.

The fake league wasn't Dandiwal's first dubious venture. Earlier, The Sydney Morning Herald had reported that Victoria Police had named him as the "central figure" in a fixing scam. Had Dandiwal faced courts in Australia, the country's strict sports laws could have seen him face up to 10 years of prison time.

In India, the story is different. Recently an order of a bench of the Karnataka High Court upheld the argument of players and team officials, who were accused of match-fixing in the Karnataka Premier League, that the alleged corruption did not amount to cheating as defined under Section 420 of the Indian Penal Code.

"For invoking offence under section 420 IPC, the essential ingredients to be present are deception, dishonest inducement of a person to deliver any property or to alter or destroy the whole or any part of a valuable security," the high court pointed out. "It is true that if a player indulges in match fixing, a general feeling will arise that he has cheated the lovers of the game. But this general feeling does not give rise to an offence," the judge had stated. The court also said the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) is the authority to initiate disciplinary action.

Lack of a law



Nandan Kamath, a sports lawyer who runs the firm LawNK, says the Karnataka High Court's order is not surprising and in line with precedent.

"The judiciary only interprets the laws that exist and match manipulation is not itself a crime. The court cannot designate something as a crime or expand interpretation of an offence like cheating just because the behaviour is morally abhorrent or unethical. The one big difference in what happened in the United Kingdom when Pakistan players Salman Butt and Mohammad Amir were prosecuted for spot-fixing is that betting is a legal and licensed activity in the UK. So, on the charge of cheating, they were convicted under the Gambling Act for dishonestly causing loss to people who were placing legal bets. In India, where sports betting is treated as illegal, persons placing bets are themselves breaking the law and cannot claim to be victims of cheating. On a related note, the Karnataka High Court did not accept the argument that those fixing matches were dishonestly inducing persons to buy tickets to watch the match as the loss was not direct in nature," Kamath said.

He gives an example of a law enacted closer home, in Sri Lanka, in 2019.

The Prevention of Offences Related to Sports Act got the nod from Sri Lankan parliament in 2019. It criminalises betting and gambling with the intention to corrupt a sport, disclosing inside information and underperforming in exchange of money or reward.

There has been a push in India for punishing match-fixers by making it a criminal offence and legalising betting to weed out black money.

The Lodha Committee, which was tasked with bringing in reforms to the BCCI had recommended that spot-fixing be made a criminal offence. Before that, the Justice Mukul Mudgal committee, which probed the 2013 IPL spot-fixing scandal, had recommended legalising sports betting.

Kamath says that making match manipulation a criminal offence must be on the regulatory agenda and not confused with legalising betting as a solution for sports corruption. "Fixing and sports betting are two separate issues that are co-dependent but not co-related. It is a betting fraud that is causing match-fixing. The argument often used is if you legalise betting, match-fixing will get fixed. But I do not agree. Legalising betting does not make the whole industry come under the legal market as much of the fixing-related betting is off the books and will remain so. In fact, it is probably the other way round. Making match-fixing an offence could probably pave the way for legalising betting," Kamath argued.

The International Cricket Council's (ICC's) then anti-corruption unit chief Alex Marshall's statement three years ago that 'it is mostly corrupt Indian bookies' who have been approaching players was not off the mark. In the absence of a strong law which can act as a deterrent, the connection between Indian bookies posing as businessmen, cricket and dirty money remains strong.

Indian bookies

The latest cricketer to take the bait from the corrupters based out of India is former Zimbabwe skipper Taylor.

Before Taylor, there was Zimbabwe great Heath Streak, a veteran of 65 Tests, whose legacy was forever tainted after he was banned for eight years for sharing team information with an 'Indian gentleman' and introducing him to players.

Earlier, another Zimbabwe cricketer, former skipper Graeme Cremer, had reported to ICC an offer to fix Test matches against the West Indies in 2017. Rajan Nayer, an official with the Harare Cricket Association, offered Cremer \$30,000 from the pockets of three Indian businessmen who travelled to Zimbabwe. Their official reason to travel to the African country was to discuss sponsorship for a proposed T20 tournament.

One of the businessmen Nayer had met was on the radar of the ICC anti-corruption unit.

The offer to Cremer came at a time when Zimbabwean players had not been paid their match fees for a few months because of a cash crunch. Taylor, in his statement on Twitter, talks about not being paid for six months at the time (October 2019) he was approached by the Indian businessman 'to discuss sponsorship and potential launch of a T20 competition'. An amount such as \$15,000 to make a trip to India for a meeting proved to be too tempting for an unpaid cricketer who snorted cocaine.

There's a similar storyline in Streak's fall from grace.

Streak, as head coach of Zimbabwe, had given up his salary along with the other support staff, to offset player pay cuts during the 2019 World Cup qualifiers, the Cricketer Monthly reported. Zimbabwe failed to qualify and Streak lost his job. The Indian businessman, who wanted to organise a T20 league in Zimbabwe, had got in touch with Streak when he was national coach. Two bitcoins worth \$35,000 and an iPhone were some of the inducements the former all-rounder received.

Streak is one of the few well-known players to pay the price for getting involved with the wrong people in cricket. But recent instances of bookie-player nexus revolve around lesser-known cricketers who represent Associate nations.

Business card a front

The poorly-paid cricketers are the ones bookies find easier to target because of their anonymity. ICC investigations have led to cricketers from the United Arab Emirates, Hong Kong and Oman being banned for corruption. Their names won't strike a chord like those of Taylor and Streak but some of their sins are graver.

An Indian hand, a bookie that uses his business card as a front, is often the conspirator.

Three Pakistani-origin Hong Kong players, who were charged for underperforming during the 2014 World T20 Qualifiers, were in contact with a jeweller of Indian origin based in Hong Kong. Two of these players were regularly in touch with the jeweller who is referred to as 'P', telephone records obtained during the ICC investigation show. 'P' was in touch with 'X', a known match-fixer from Pakistan. Suspected Indian bookies are always lurking around the corner and on rare occasions, have even successfully targeted established players.

Bangladesh all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan was first contacted by a suspected corruptor during the 2017 edition of the Bangladesh Premier League. Shakib was banned for two years, of which one year was suspended, for his failure to report approaches; during an ODI tri-series involving Sri Lanka and Zimbabwe in 2018 and during the Indian Premier League in the same year when he represented Sunrisers Hyderabad.

The man who asked the Bangladesh captain for inside information and discussed bitcoins and dollar accounts over WhatsApp messages went by the name of Deepak Aggarwal.

Source: 27 January 2022, *The Indian Express*

Cricket

<https://indianexpress.com/article/sports/cricket/illegal-bookies-escape-punishment-7741679/>

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