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Photos International Olympic Committee

INVESTIGATIONS

Brazil

Brazilian 'ghost' game offered on 200 betting markets worldwide

May 20 – The integrity of a match reportedly played between two Brazilian clubs on March 25, and which was offered on the betting markets attracting a reported £1.4 million in wagers, is being investigated.

The game between Andraus Brasil at their home ground in Campo Largo, Parana, against Gremio Serrano, from Paraiba, supposedly took place despite football having been suspended in the region before the match was scheduled.

It appears that some form of a game took place but it was certainly not an official match and the players are unknown. More than 200 bookmakers opened betting markets for the match.

Andraus' lawyer Marlus Dalledone is reported as saying the match did take place but has yet to provide proof. He said the match was organised so Andraus could scout players from Serrano.

Serrano's lawyer Lucas Bezerra told The Sun newspaper that the match was played with players who were not theirs and that they did not send a team.

As football went into lockdown worldwide there have been a number of matches that have been offered on bookmaker websites but which are unclear as to whether they were actually played and if so, by who. Games in Ukraine and Russia offered to punters showed signs of match-fixing with fingers pointing at the data gatherers that feed the bookmakers sites as having been part of the fix.

It is not clear if the game supposedly played in Brazil showed signs of irregular betting patterns.

Helio Cury and Michelle Ramalho, the presidents of the Parana and Paraiba Football Federations, said an investigation would be opened.

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Source: 20 May 2020, *INSIDE World Football*

Football

<http://www.insideworldfootball.com/2020/05/20/brazilian-ghost-game-offered-200-betting-markets-worldwide/>

Denmark

Ex-Aston Villa star Jores Okore at centre of police probe into alleged match-fixing after influx of bets on yellow card

The 27-year-old now plays for Danish Super League club Aalborg who were involved in the match in question.

Okore was booked for a high challenge on rival Oliver Lund late in their 1-0 win over Odense last October.

And Danish bookies reportedly contacted police after suspiciously large sums were bet on Okore being booked in the game.

North Jutland police said: "In February we received a so-called match-fixing report relating to Aalborg Football Club. "On the basis of a violation of the Criminal Code dealing with fraud, we launched an investigation into the case."

Police chief Troels Kjaergaard added: "We have been investigating the case since we received the notification in February. It is still pending."

Aalborg managing director Thomas Baelum said: "We are aware of the enquiry. We are fully available to get to the bottom of the case.

"Hopefully the conclusion will be that no illegal event has taken place.

"As a club we are completely distance ourselves from match-fixing, and we look forward to having the case closed."

Ivory Coast-born Okore is an eight cap Danish international and he joined Aalborg from FC Copenhagen in 2017.

He made 43 Villa appearances during his time in England and scored once.

Source: 21 May 2020, *The Sun*

Football

<https://www.thesun.co.uk/sport/football/11667940/aston-villa-jores-okore-police-probe-match-fixing-betting/>

Spain

Villarreal and Getafe deny match-fixing

(Reuters) - Spanish soccer clubs Villarreal and Getafe have denied any wrongdoing after national media reported on Friday that police are investigating possible match-fixing in a 2-2 draw between the two clubs in La Liga last year.

“Villarreal and its first team wish to show their absolute rejection of the accusations made today and categorically deny being involved in any way in fixing the game against Getafe on the final day of last season,” said a club statement.

“As it has done on repeated occasions, the club condemns any conduct that damages the essence of sport and competition and stresses that the values of transparency, ethics, integrity and fair play are fundamental to its philosophy.”

Getafe also released a statement saying the club “wish to categorically deny any involvement with this matter and this type of conduct”.

Newspaper El Pais reported that the match was being looked at as part of Operation Oikos, which was launched last year and led to 11 people being arrested on suspicion of forming a match-fixing group to profit from betting on games.

La Liga confirmed it had opened a confidential dossier as part of Operation Oikos but added that details of the case would not be made public until it goes to trial.

The court based in the city of Huesca that El Pais said was investigating the case could not be reached for comment.

“Operation Oikos came about due to an accusation by La Liga, which has joined the case as a private plaintiff, and will take all legal measures necessary to clarify the facts that are under investigation,” La Liga said in a statement.

Getafe had to beat Villarreal to stand a chance of qualifying for Europe’s elite Champions League club competition ahead of Valencia. Villarreal had nothing to play for.

Valencia’s 2-0 win at Real Valladolid on the same day, however, meant that in the event Getafe could not have qualified for the Champions League even if they had beaten Villarreal.

Five former Osasuna directors and two former Real Betis players were given jail sentences last month following an investigation into match-fixing in 2013 and 2014, the first ever convictions for sporting corruption in Spanish football.

Source: 15 May 2020, Reuters

Football

<https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-soccer-spain-matchfixing/villarreal-and-getafe-deny-match-fixing-idUKKBN22R2WE>



SENTENCES/SANCTIONS

China

'Dota 2' Team Newbee Banned From Chinese Competitions For Match Fixing

Newbee, the esports organisation best known for winning The International 4 Dota 2 tournament, have been banned from professional Dota 2 in China by the Chinese Dota 2 Professional Association for match fixing.

The ban sees them unable to compete in all Chinese Dota 2 Professional Association affiliated leagues, including the CDA-DPL Professional League, all IMBATV events and all MarsTV events.

The Newbee players have also received bans from these competitions, with the Chinese Dota 2 Professional Association confirming that this is a lifetime ban for all involved and they have been removed from the Chinese Dota 2 Professional Association along with the Newbee organisation.

While this is not yet a worldwide ban for the team, the Chinese Dota 2 Professional Association has passed the information over to Valve, and it certainly wouldn't be a surprise to see them hand out a ban themselves based on previous cases.

The five players of Newbee, Xu "Moogy" Han, Yin "Aq" Rui, Wen "Wizard" Lipeng, Yan "Waixi" Chao and Zeng "Faith" Hongda will likely now struggle to sustain a career in professional Dota.

Faith is perhaps the best known player on the team, having won The International 2 with Invictus Gaming in 2012 and coming second at The International 7 with Newbee in 2017. After such an illustrious career where he has won \$1,758,817 in prize money it seems crazy that he would be involved with match fixing.

While the specific matches that were fixed have not been revealed, it is believed that they took place in the China Dota2 Professional League Season 2 and the DPL-CDA Professional League Season 1.

Unsurprisingly the team has been disqualified from the DPL-CDA Professional League Season 1 in which they were currently competing. The side had only won one series in the competition so far, so were unlikely to win, but now will finish in last place.

For years Newbee has been one of the biggest organisations in the world of Dota. In 2014 they won The International 4 after forming shortly before the competition as somewhat of a Chinese super team. They took the grand finals in convincing fashion in one of the shortest finals ever at The International. While they never managed to reach the same heights again they did make it to the final of The International 7 and were incredibly close to becoming the first two time TI champions. However, Team Liquid managed to take them down and that left OG to become the first two time TI champions at The International 9 last year.

Source: 15 May 2020, FORBES

eSports

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/mikestubbbs/2020/05/15/dota-2-team-newbee-banned-from-chinese-competitions-for-match-fixing/#5e8ab3764dbe>



Vietnam

11 Vietnamese footballers punished for match fixing

The Vietnam Football Federation Monday suspended 11 players of the U21 Dong Thap team for six months to five years for match fixing.

The suspended players include midfielder Tran Cong Minh and defender Vo Minh Trong, members of the national U19 football team that qualified for the AFC U19 Championship last year. They have been fined VND 2.5 million (\$107) and slapped with six-month ban from activities hosted by the federation (VFF).

Eight other players awarded the same penalties as Minh and Trong are: Nguyen Nhat Truong, Nguyen Anh Phat, Le Nhut Huy, Giang So Ny, Tran Huu Nghia, Cao Tan Hoai, Duong Vu Linh and Kha Tan Tai.

The heaviest penalty was awarded to 21-year-old Huynh Van Tien, as he was found to have initiated the match fixing and enticed other players in the team to join him. Tien was fined VND5 million and given a five-year ban from VFF football activities.

During the opening match of the U21 national qualifiers between U21 Dong Thap and U21 Vinh Long last year, 11 players of the former bet VND150 million that the game would end with two goals or less. With the final score reading 1-1, they won back their bet money and an extra VND133 million, which they split among themselves. Dong Thap later qualified for the U21 national tournament, where they reached the semifinals.

In recent years, several footballers in Vietnam have been banned for involvement in match fixing.

At the 2005 Southeast Asian Games, seven Vietnamese football players, including rising talents, were caught throwing one match. One player was sentenced to four years in jail and the others received suspended sentences.

Nine years later, several players with the Ninh Binh Football Club were banned for betting on matches in the AFC Cup.

Source: 12 May 2020, VN EXPRESS

Football

<https://e.vnexpress.net/news/sports/football/11-vietnamese-footballers-punished-for-match-fixing-4098130.html>

LEGISLATION

Global

Fighting the manipulation of sports competitions must be a political priority

Council of Europe member States must adopt “relevant laws and sanctions to uphold the integrity of sports competitions against manipulation”, according to PACE’s Culture Committee. This type of ‘organised crime’ can “only be tackled effectively through a common political commitment and legally binding international co-operation in the fields of information exchange, data protection, law enforcement and criminal justice”.

While highlighting the concrete measures taken by several governments, the committee considers that sport integrity matters “remain generally low on the political agenda”, and deplores that in five years only six member States of the Council of Europe have ratified the Council of Europe Convention on the manipulation of sports competitions.

With regard to this international legal instrument, the unanimously adopted draft resolution, based on a report prepared by Roland Rino Büchel (Switzerland, ALDE), denounces the attempt by Malta to amend the definition of ‘illegal sports betting’ within the Convention under the provisions of its Article 38 as yet another tactic “to win its cause and to neutralise the existing definition, thereby significantly weakening the system established by the Convention”. According to the adopted text, requesting an amendment would “paralyse the effective implementation of the Convention”.

However, the draft resolution welcomes the fact that to date, 32 national platforms are operation despite several without a formal framework. Many countries have updated their legislation to comply with the Convention and co-operation through informal networks is active. The text also welcomes the recent conclusion of the meeting of EU Council sports ministers calling on the EU and all its member States to complete their respective ratification processes and accede to the Convention “as soon as possible”. It urges the Union institutions to look for a rapid solution to remove the obstacles preventing EU member States ratifying the Convention so that its Follow-up Committee can start operating with a maximum number of States Parties.

“The time to act is now,” the text concludes, since further delays will “only benefit criminal networks and undermine the values of sport, which will also jeopardise the values of democracy, the rule of law and human rights”. This is particularly dangerous in the context of the current drastic impact of COVID-19 on the financial sustainability of sports, “carrying a high potential risk of further expansion of money laundering, illegal betting and manipulation of sport competitions”.

Source: 15 May 2020, Parliamentary Assembly

All Sports

<https://pace.coe.int/en/news/7890/fighting-the-manipulation-of-sports-competitions-must-be-a-political-priority>

Sweden

Sweden's Spelinspektionen Submits Match-fixing Regulations for EC Approval

Swedish gambling regulator Spelinspektionen has submitted new rules on match fixing to the country's National Board of Trade, for the board to notify the European Commission of the changes, and has conducted an impact assessment of the rules.

The new rules would limit betting to the top four divisions of football. Also, betting on Swedish Cup would be limited to matches featuring teams from the top four tiers. Markets for matches involving foreign clubs would only be permitted when each participating team is from the top four tiers of each country's footballing pyramid. Operators would only be able to take bets on international matches from under-21 level upwards.

Last month, when it announced the plans to ban betting on lower-league matches, Spelinspektionen also proposed banning betting on training matches or friendlies entirely, but opted to continue to allow international friendlies.

In addition, betting must not be offered in the event of a rule violation such as a yellow card or penalty in football, while betting must not be offered on individual performance of anyone under 18 years of age.

Also, licensees will be required to produce annual reports on potential match-fixing activity.

The new rules on match fixing can only take effect after the EU Commission has given its opinion, which takes just over three months. Spelinspektionen said the rules could come into effect no earlier than the end of 2020.

"Match fixing is considered as one of the biggest threats to sports today and as a result of this as well against betting and the companies that provide betting. There are, as far as can be judged, great risks in offering bets on games at low divisions in football," Spelinspektionen said.

"Monitoring from both sports federations and the media is lower and the athletes do not make money and are thus more vulnerable. There is also a risk of athletes or whole associations coming in contact with match fixing at lower levels and then taking the problem up through the pyramid with any sporting success," it added.

Spelinspektionen also said it was aware of the risk that the restrictions could apply in encouraging more players to play on unlicensed sites.

"The unlicensed gaming market is never further away than a click on your computer or phone," it said.

Source: 22 May 2020, *European Gaming*

Football

<https://europeangaming.eu/portal/compliance-updates/2020/05/22/71046/swedens-spelinspektionen-submits-match-fixing-regulations-for-ec-approval/>



BETTING

Spain

La Guardia Civil advierte que la fama del fútbol y deporte español atrae a organizaciones mafiosas de amaños

La Guardia Civil advierte que la fama internacional del deporte español y especialmente del fútbol lo hace especialmente atractivo para las organizaciones de amaños de partidos con apuestas ilegales.

Esta es una de las conclusiones de un reciente informe de la Guardia Civil destinado a las unidades de investigación al que ha tenido acceso la SER.

Según esto, las apuestas, en muchos casos ilegales, se hacen especialmente en Asia, que concentra el 70% del mercado mundial de apuestas.

El informe destaca que el amaño de partidos y la manipulación de las competiciones es una actividad muy rentable y de escaso riesgo para los delincuentes puesto que a la dificultad de la detección se une una escasa penalidad.

Mafias organizadas

Las tramas criminales organizadas, algunas con estructura tipo mafia, llegan a emplear la extorsión a deportistas o a responsables de entidades deportivas, incluso adquirir clubs para implementar sus manipulaciones.

Modus Operandi

En el mundo del fútbol el abanico de apuestas va desde que se producirá un gol en los próximos minutos, o el resultado final, o el que habrá en un minuto determinado, o quién marcará primero, la primera expulsión, o cuantos corners o penaltis habrá.

El tenis también es diana de su actividad donde incluso se puede acordar con el jugador el por ejemplo: perder el primer saque, quien hará más "breaks" o si se perderá o no un servicio.

La persona encargada del contacto inicial suele ser un antiguo deportista que haya alcanzado un cierto nivel y tendrá ascendente entre los afectados.

"Mulas"

Otro grupo necesario son los apostantes que suelen ejercer funciones de "mulas". Son los encargados de realizar las apuestas, principalmente por internet.

Para las apuestas por internet lo más habitual es que el grupo criminal se haga con identidades de terceras personas, identidades que compran o sustraen.

Es menos habitual el uso de apostantes reales que obtienen beneficios pagando a la organización por conocer los partidos amaños.

Se relacionan por Whatsapp o Telegram. En algún caso los apostantes incluso desconocen el amaño de los partidos y lo que hacen es contratar supuestos servicios de asesoría, ofertados por la red de fraude, para orientar sus apuestas.

En estos casos los usuarios pagan por estar en estos grupos donde la organización vende lo que denominan "un verde" (o green), es decir consejos de supuestos especialistas que "adivinan" los resultados pero que en realidad conocen el amaño.

Monitorización

Las propias casas de apuestas y otras entidades públicas y privadas monitorizan la evolución de las apuestas y si detectan manipulación la pueden suspender.

Otro aspecto es el carácter internacional de las organizaciones criminales, con grupos itinerantes o apostadores distribuidos en varios países.

El informe recoge los datos de la Dirección General de Ordenación del Juego en 2019 que sitúa en 7.074 millones el dinero vinculado al juego y apuestas por internet.

Source: 19 May 2020, SER

All Sports, Football

https://cadenaser-com.cdn.ampproject.org/c/s/cadenaser.com/ser/2020/05/19/deportes/1589884415_311541.amp.html



DOPING

Italy

DOPING TRAFFICKING RING WITH PROFESSIONAL ATHLETES DISMANTLED IN ITALY

The Italian Carabinieri Corps (NAS Carabinieri), supported by Europol, targeted a criminal network trafficking illegal medicines and doping substances.

On the action day on 14 May 2020, Italian law enforcement authorities arrested four suspected traffickers. The Carabinieri carried out 210 house searches targeting 74 competitive athletes registered to sports federations, 11 gym owners and 4 owners of food supplement stores, located all over Italy. Italian authorities are investigating another 64 individuals for their suspected involvement in the criminal activities; 30 others have been charged with less serious crimes. The seizures included 936 packs of medicines used for doping purposes, 4 437 tablets and 7 778 vials of various doping products for a total estimated value of more than €100 000.

The operation was a follow-up of a previous investigation into bodybuilders from Turin who were found in possession of a large amount of anabolic drugs, which were advertised on mobile apps. When first using the app, the potential clients were directed to an encrypted chat to complete the purchase. All payments were made via money transferring services. The packages were then shipped through express courier services, who were unaware of their contents.

Europol supported the operation by facilitating information exchange and providing analytical support. On the action day, Europol activated the Virtual Command Post at its headquarters to coordinate the action and facilitate live information exchange. This tool was used also to cross-check operational information in real-time against Europol's databases and provide leads to investigators in the field.

Source: 15 May 2020, EUROPOL

All Sports

<https://www.europol.europa.eu/newsroom/news/doping-trafficking-ring-professional-athletes-dismantled-in-italy>



GOOD PRACTICES

Sports Betting service providers

IBIA calls for new global standards for data collection

The International Betting Integrity Association (IBIA) has called on all parties in the sports betting data supply chain to develop a set of global best practice standards for all providers.

The integrity watchdog argued this cross-provider coordination would help protect the integrity of sport, as well as ensure high standards of data, and in turn betting products generated through use of that data.

"Upholding the reliability and credibility of sporting event data is of paramount importance for my members and the challenges posed by the pandemic have further highlighted the necessity for robust data chains," IBIA chief executive Khalid Ali (pictured) explained.

"There is a clear benefit for everyone involved in the data supply chain in ensuring that such data is a product of high levels of accuracy and transparency."

Ali said the IBIA and its members had been considering the issue internally for some time, but believed now was the time to go a step further by having a proper industry-wide debate.

"To that end, IBIA is asking all stakeholders, notably data providers, to proactively engage with the association and its members to develop and implement agreed best practice standards around the sale, collation and distribution of sports data for betting," he added.

Data provider Stats Perform, an affiliate member of IBIA, said it fully supported and commended the association for leading the call for uniform standards.

"As a truly global sports entity, with considerable business across the media and professional sports sectors as well as betting, trust in sport is paramount to us, as well as being vital for all our customers and the sports industry itself," the supplier's chief betting officer Andrew Ashenden said. "Over many years we have invested in an unparalleled integrity and quality control infrastructure and that investment continues to be at the heart of our operations."

"Data integrity issues wherever they originate are harmful for the industry and we are looking forward to contributing our expertise via the IBIA and its members on the development of global best practice," he continued. "We have always maintained that collaboration in this space across sporting federations, governing bodies, third party integrity providers, regulators, operators and data suppliers is vital."

Stats Perform's head of integrity Jake Marsh added that the business had the strongest quality assurance and integrity processes in place across its data supply chain.

"We look forward to working with all their members and other stakeholders on best practices in order to help protect the integrity of sport and betting."

IBIA's calls come days after it issued a joint warning, alongside the Tennis Integrity Unit (TIU), of an increased risk of manipulation in the sport, as tournaments and matches resume following the novel coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic.

It therefore urged all operators, both among its members and across the wider industry, and data providers to ensure match-fixing attempts could be quickly identified and prevented.

Source: 21 May 2020, iGB

<https://www.igamingbusiness.com/news/ibia-calls-new-global-standards-data-collection>

Sweden

MGA collaborates with the Swedish Football Association to protect integrity

The Swedish Football Association (SvFF) has established a data-sharing agreement with the Malta Gaming Authority (MGA) in order to ensure that football in the country 'adheres to laws and regulations' relating to its sporting events.

MGA's agreement will see the two firms work towards ensuring that football is a discrimination-free sport at Sweden's National level, whilst also helping the sector fight against match fixing and corruption.

The MGA's Sports Integrity Manager, Antonio Zerafa stated: "The Data-Sharing Agreement between the MGA and the SvFF allows for the relationship between the two entities to not be limited to discussions of best practices only, but to also allow for the transfer of data in relation to investigations of manipulation in sports competitions.

"Undoubtedly, this further strengthens the MGA's commitment to assisting Sports Governing Bodies in their fight against match-fixing."

MGA, which regulates the majority of the region's gaming sector, has prioritised sporting integrity over the last few months. Alongside its new deal with SvFF, the authority has signed data sharing partnerships with the likes of the Tennis Integrity Unit (TIU), the International Cricket Council (ICC), and the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in an attempt to fight against sporting manipulation through cooperation and an effective exchange of information.

Sweden's top domestic league, the Allsvenskan, is looking to start its season on 14 June after the campaign was postponed indefinitely due to the global health pandemic. However, the plan will only go ahead if it is passed by Sweden's Public Health Authority.

Source: 14 May 2020, INSIDER Sport
Football

<https://insidersport.com/2020/05/14/mga-collaborates-with-the-swedish-football-association-to-protect-integrity/>

ODDS AND ENDS

Australia

Changes in online gambling during the COVID-19 pandemic

This study explores the potential for increased online gambling as a result of COVID-19 social distancing measures.

Questions were included in an omnibus survey employing an online panel sample, with data collected in early April 2020.

The results showed that almost a quarter of respondents had participated in online gambling in the previous month. Ten percent had increased their participation in at least one form of online gambling, while 14 percent had decreased their involvement. Those betting on sporting events in Australia were the most likely to increase their participation in online gambling.

When demographic factors were examined, being male, aged under 30 and in full-time employment were all associated with increased participation in online gambling in the last month.

Source: Rick Brown & Amelia Hickman, 13 May 2020, Australian Institute of Criminology
All Sports

<https://aic.gov.au/publications/sb/sb25>

Portugal

APAJO Expects Sports Betting Revenues in Portugal to Reduce by 75%

Due to the new Coronavirus causing danger to the health and livelihood of our society, sporting events all over the world are being cancelled and postponed causing major economic problems for the Portuguese sports betting world.

And as sporting and competition events are crucial for the sports betting industry, revenues will now, unfortunately, reach a crucial fall of an estimated 75%, according to APAJO. Once football matches and other sports events resume, [wetten.com/pt/](https://www.wetten.com/pt/) expects betting volumes in the country to recover back to normal fairly quickly.

Ripple Effect on the Global Economy

Now, with a lot of countries going in complete lockdown, the harsh effects of the virus will have an even bigger impact on the international economy.

As the only way, you can operate a business and make a living is if you are providing an essential service or selling essential products, these businesses are also limited by what they can trade. They can only trade essential products and nothing else, which is also causing non-essential service providers and product manufacturers to be affected by the dire economic consequences of the virus.

Great Losses for Sports Betting

With all sports competitions, including EURO2020, being cancelled all over the world, the online betting sector has suffered great losses. With no clear prospects of a full recovery soon according to APAJO (Portuguese Association of Online Gambling), players should be concerned as steps will be put in place for recovery in due course.

Associates of APAJO have warned that in March the online sports betting have suffered a loss in the region of 70%-75%, which can escalate to 100% during the month of April, due to sporting competitions and events being cancelled and postponed.

Gabino Oliveira (The President of APAJO) also stressed the fact that limitations will be much larger in Portugal as the Coronavirus has hit the country very seriously.

Betting Sector in Portugal At Risk

In addition to suggestions already announced, the proactivity of operators, regulator and government will determine the survival of this recently added sector and its job opportunities in Portugal. As the sector has only been active in Portugal now for under 4 years, major steps will have to be put in place to ensure future growth and stability to get the sector back to its strength.

The Silver Lining

With the gaming sector being a very important part of Portugal's tourism industry, there is some hope, with €3 billion packages already being approved in Portugal for the economy, there are at least some positive views.

The gambling industry in Portugal employs thousands of workers, so these measures are important to in order to provide a safety net for operators, both online and offline.

Curbing Illegal Gambling

Also, a very important factor to be considered is the dangers of illegal gambling, as it may attract players in this time when all sporting competitions and events are cancelled or postponed. Illegal gambling operators should not be benefitting from this epidemic as it would weaken the economy of the legal sector even more. It is therefore imperative that measures are put in place to curb illegal practices and for regulators to continue pressuring illegal activity.

These operators not paying taxes to the government or providing safety towards gamblers could also be very dangerous to local players as well as tourists interested in Portugal's gaming and safety overall.

Source: George Miller, 12 May 2020, *European Gaming*

All Sports

<https://europeangaming.eu/portal/latest-news/2020/05/12/70430/apajo-expects-sports-betting-revenues-in-portugal-to-reduce-by-75/>

United Kingdom

Covid 19 and its impact on gambling – what we know so far

Overview

The Covid-19 crisis continues to affect everyone across Great Britain. The lockdown has also brought significant consumer behavioural change and major impacts on the gambling industry.

Our responsibility during the crisis is to protect consumers and we are focused on understanding how the risks posed to them are changing. To help understand these risks and trends, and to inform public knowledge, we are collecting additional data from operators[1] and consumer research[2] – allowing us to build a clearer picture week by week.

1. General consumer trends

Current consumer trends provide important context at the moment for looking at the gambling market, in terms of how we feel, the money in our pocket and how we are spending our time.

Research by Savanta reports 20% of the population recognising a decrease in their mental health and fear of catching the virus remains high, peaking at 61% in late March. There has also been a significant financial impact, where the same research notes that 40% of people have seen their disposable income decrease.

Naturally while spending most of our time in the home, we have also seen changes in the way people engage with news and entertainment. This is particularly so among people who gamble. According to YouGov data, those who had gambled in the past four weeks were more likely than the national average to have:

- Spent more online on entertainment (17% of gamblers compared to 11% of all adults)
- Watched TV more (58% of gamblers compared to 42% of all adults)
- Viewed more news online (53% of gamblers compared to 49% of all adults)
- Consumed more on-demand entertainment (51% of gamblers compared to 35% of all adults)

2. Gambling Market Impacts

On 20 March all retail gambling venues closed – meaning that, at a stroke, activities that normally generate 50%[3] of the overall market (excluding lotteries) stopped.

Operator data collected by the Commission comparing March 2020 with March 2019, provides an initial insight into the changing shape and size of the market. April data, to be reported shortly, will provide an even clearer picture. [4]

a. Overall, fewer consumers are gambling but some people, who are gambling already, are trying new products

The crisis does not appear to have attracted many new consumers to gambling. According to YouGov research from 16-17 April[5], only 0.2% of all adults surveyed stated that they had started gambling for the first time during the last four weeks.

Operator data on overall active player accounts[6] indicates a 3% decrease, driven in part by real event betting (active players down 11%[7]), where clearly the chance to bet on top quality sport has disappeared.

The YouGov research shows that a third of past four-week gamblers say they have tried one or more gambling activities for the first time during lockdown[8]. Operator data shows that certain products are seeing active player increases compared to this time last year (some from low comparative bases of players), which are generally those with a faster play cycle, such as slots.

This shift is against the backdrop of relatively stable advertising awareness, where the YouGov research[9] shows that 32% of adults recalled seeing marketing for online bingo, casino or slots games in the last four weeks. This is comparable with 39% in our pre-lockdown research[10].

b. Overall gamblers are playing products at the same rate or less, but a majority of those who have participated in 3 or more gambling activities in the last 4 weeks are spending more time or money. We are also seeing an increase in the number of sessions over an hour.

Although operator data indicates that the overall number of active customer accounts has decreased slightly between March 2019 and March 2020, this decrease is not seen across all products.

The volume of activity on certain products appears to be growing[11] in that time, albeit that within many products the number of active players are growing faster than the number of bets[12]. This indicates an overall growth in the product, although implies a decrease in the average number of bets per customer. This is not true of slots where the average is maintained.

This is consistent with our YouGov Covid-19 tracker research which shows that the majority (three quarters) of recent gamblers indicate that they have not increased the time or money they have spent on gambling.

The profile is different for engaged[13] gamblers where two thirds (64%) have increased either the amount of time or money they have spent on at least one gambling activity, including National Lottery products.

At an overall level year on year to March 2020, the average session length reported by operators has decreased by 4 minutes (down to 22 minutes). Within that though the number of sessions which lasted over 1 hour increased by 23%. This meant that almost one in eight sessions now lasted in excess of 1 hour.

3. Next Steps

Our key principles, as we continue to try and understand better changes that are happening, are to try and increase our confidence in and understanding of the data that we have and seek further information on data points of interest or trends of concern.

We will look to do that by continuing to place questions on the YouGov tracker to both increase sample size and look at new questions, such as consumer shift from retail to online.

We will also seek further data from operators. This will seek understand what operators are doing and what they are seeing, for example around recognised consumer segments of potential concern, such as young men who play a number of products.

Finally, to maintain transparency, we will publish data and our findings on an ongoing basis.

Source: 15 May 2020, Gambling Commission

All Sports

<https://www.gamblingcommission.gov.uk/news-action-and-statistics/Statistics-and-research/Covid-19-research/Covid-19-and-its-impact-on-gambling-%E2%80%93-what-we-know-so-far.aspx>



MATCH FIXING

India

Match-fixing scandal | Supreme Court notice to Sanjeev Chawla on plea challenging bail granted to him

The Supreme Court on Wednesday sought response from Sanjeev Chawla, alleged bookie and key accused in one of the cricket's biggest match-fixing scandals that involved former South African captain Hansie Cronje, on a plea filed by Delhi police challenging the bail granted to him.

A Bench of Chief Justice S.A. Bobde and Justice L. Nageswara Rao was hearing through video-conferencing an appeal filed by the police challenging the May 6 order of the Delhi High Court which had upheld a trial court's decision granting bail to Chawla.

"Issue notice returnable two weeks," the Bench said in its order. Chawla, who was extradited from London in February, was granted bail by a trial court here on April 30 on furnishing a personal bond of 2 lakh with two sureties of the like amount.

According to the police, Chawla was allegedly involved in fixing of five matches and Cronje, who died in a plane crash in 2002, was also involved.

Cronje — the sullied hero who died young

The police alleged that Chawla played a key role in conspiring with Cronje to fix a South African tour to India in February-March, 2000. Chawla has denied the allegations.

The British court documents say that Chawla is a Delhi-born businessman who moved to the United Kingdom on a business visa in 1996 and continued to make trips to India. In its May 6 order, the high court said that when the scenario of a trial taking place was "stark", the liberty of a person "cannot be left in limbo" on the belief that he was a flight risk.

The high court, while dismissing the police's plea challenging the bail granted to Chawla in the case in which FIR was lodged 20 years ago, had said that instant case highlights the need for use of technology, like GPS tracking system used in USA, to track under-trials in cases where there is a fear that they may flee.

Before the high court, the police had sought cancellation of bail primarily on the ground of gravity of offence and also that guidelines for release in view of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic were not to be applied in the instant case as was done by the trial court.

Chawla's counsel had opposed the plea in the high court and said there was no evidence to suggest that Chawla was likely to abscond.

Source: 13 May 2020, THE HINDU

Cricket

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/match-fixing-scandal-supreme-court-notice-to-sanjeev-chawla-on-plea-challenging-bail-granted-to-him/article31574948.ece>



CORRUPTION

Indonesia

'Full of rats': Olympic champ claims corruption common practice in sports ministry

After admitting his role in a bribery case implicating former Youth and Sports Minister Imam Nahrawi, retired Indonesian shuttler Taufik Hidayat later claimed that such corrupt practices were very common in the ministry.

Taufik, who won a gold medal at the 2004 Athens Olympics, retired as a badminton player in 2013. Between 2016 and 2017, he served as the deputy chairman of Satlak Prima (Gold Program), a national sporting program under the ministry for elite athletes that was dissolved in 2018.

"No matter who serves as the minister, it will never change unless half of the ministry is reformed. It [the ministry] is full of rats [corrupt officials]," Taufik said in an interview with mentalist-cum-YouTube-personality Deddy Corbuzier.

The former shuttler claimed it was very easy for the ministry's officials to embezzle billions of rupiah earmarked for various program, such as through hotel discounts during the national training camp program.

He explained the ministry had to book hotel rooms to house 500 to 1,000 athletes for the program. While a hotel room usually costs Rp 500,000 (US\$33.70) a night, the officials can get discounts from booking many rooms at the same time.

"They can embezzle Rp 100,000 for each room, multiplied by 1,000 people a day. The program can last for more than a month. Imagine how much they can get!" said Taufik.

Read also: Olympic medalist admits to delivering bribes to former sports minister

While claiming that he had experienced and witnessed such illicit practices, Taufik added that he had no tangible proof of such crime.

Youth and Sports Ministry secretary Gatot S. Dewa Broto regretted Taufik for making such claims. He went on to say that Taufik had put his name as a badminton legend at stake for accusing the ministry of corruption.

"We are in the fasting month of Ramadan. We forgive Taufik for talking like that. We just need to prove [that he's wrong] by doing our work," Gatot said on Wednesday, as quoted by kompas.com.

During a hearing against Imam last Wednesday, Taufik admitted to the court that he acted as an intermediary in the bribery case implicating the former minister.

Taufik said he had delivered Rp 1 billion to Imam's personal assistant, Miftahul Ulum, in January 2018. Miftahul is also a suspect in the case.

Taufik, however, claimed he did not know that the money was a bribe and denied that he had accepted some of the illicit money in the crime.

The Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) indicted Imam for accepting Rp 11.5 billion in bribes and other gratuities worth Rp 8.64 billion from the ministry and Indonesian Sports Council (KONI) officials pertaining to the disbursement of a state grant for the organization. (nal)

Source: 13 May 2020, *The Jakarta Post*

Badminton

<https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2020/05/13/full-of-rats-olympic-champ-claims-corruption-common-practice-in-sports-ministry.html>



Switzerland

Swiss attorney general faces possible impeachment over handling of FIFA corruption probe

ZURICH (Reuters) - Swiss Attorney General Michael Lauber faces the start of proceedings on Wednesday that could lead to his impeachment after criticism of his handling of an investigation into alleged corruption surrounding soccer's governing body FIFA.

Lauber has been accused by anti-corruption campaigners of botching a fraud trial over payments linked to the 2006 World Cup in Germany.

The five-year statute of limitations in the case expired last month before the Federal Criminal Court could rule, increasing calls for Lauber to resign.

An independent watchdog has also sharply criticised his conduct of the investigation into allegations of corruption at FIFA, whose headquarters are in Zurich.

A committee of 17 lawmakers will consider whether there are reasonable grounds to suspect Lauber broke rules or was grossly negligent. They can summon him for questioning next week before deciding whether to open formal proceedings.

Lauber, who would be the first national official impeached since the federal state of Switzerland was established in 1848, has defended his handling of the case, saying FIFA itself was not a target of the inquiry, and has appealed to the Swiss administrative court against the watchdog's findings.

Lauber issued no new comment on the eve of Wednesday's proceedings.

"If we decide to carry out this procedure, we have to do it correctly, beyond reproach, to safeguard our institutions," Andrea Caroni, chairman of the parliamentary judicial committee, told Reuters.

"The attorney general and his office have a huge responsibility for the Swiss criminal justice system and our international standing ... This office – and its independence - are very important for the national and international reputation of Switzerland as a country of rule of law."

WATCHDOG'S CRITICISM

Lauber's office has handled high-profile money laundering and corruption cases linked to Brazilian state oil firm Petrobras, Malaysian state development fund 1MDB and FIFA, but has brought few charges in matters that brought convictions in other countries.

AB-BA, an independent oversight authority, said this year that Lauber had repeatedly told falsehoods and breached a code of conduct while handling the investigation into alleged corruption around FIFA.

He held undocumented meetings with FIFA Secretary General Gianni Infantino during the corruption investigation, misallocated resources and tried to block the AB-BA's inquiry into the affair, AB-BA said.

As punishment it cut Lauber's nearly 300,000 Swiss franc (\$309,000) salary by 8% for one year.

Lauber's office said the AB-BA decision did not "represent a conclusive finding and must stand up to judicial review."

But some anti-corruption campaigners say his position is untenable. "The only question is how will he go. The clock is ticking," said University of Basel law professor Mark Pieth.

Ursula Schneider Schuettel, a member of the judiciary committee meeting on Wednesday, said proceedings were likely go to a parliamentary vote before Lauber could be dismissed.

"I will support any motion for possible impeachment proceedings, but eventually it would be better for everyone if Mr Lauber resigned," she said.

Source: John Reville, 12 May 2020, Yahoo Sports Football

<https://sports.yahoo.com/swiss-attorney-general-faces-possible-132343498.html>