



INTERPOL

INTEGRITY IN SPORT

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Photos International Olympic Committee

INVESTIGATIONS

Cyprus

No will to tackle match fixing says watchdog chief

The chairman of the sports ethics committee said on Monday he did not believe politicians and club officials were serious about tackling corruption in football, which seems to be rife across the board.

Andreas Papacharalambous said existing legislation could not tackle match-fixing and it did not appear that politicians were in any hurry to fix this.

"I do not believe any political leadership wants this committee to function, nor club officials," Papacharalambous told Alpha television.

The head of the committee, which should have numbered five members but is down to two after three resignations, said it would not be difficult to tackle the problem "if we want to."

Cyprus has seen many reports of match fixing in recent years, but the authorities have so far failed to identify any suspects, let alone get convictions.

One case concerning a referee and a former referee who is also the chairman of a second division side is currently in court.

Papacharalambous said that every time they ruffled any feathers, those involved appeared to have political coverage and support.

His committee is unable to function under the existing law but despite receiving promises from parties that they would do everything they could, nothing has been done.

"If there is no proper legislation, I have no job here," Papacharalambous said.

The much-touted phone tapping law that was meant to afford police with a valuable weapon in tackling crime has so far failed to yield any results.

Papacharalambous met President Nicos Anastasiades recently who pledged to either appoint new members or replace the entire committee.

"My position is that you cannot replace a section of the committee," he said.

"We are very far from tackling corruption," Papacharalambous added, blaming governments, parties and club officials for the sorry state of affairs.

*Source: 8 February 2021, CyprusMail
All Sports*



Ghana

Ex-Asante Kotoko midfielder Muniru Sulley wanted by INTERPOL for match fixing offenses

Former Asante Kotoko midfielder, Muniru Sulley is wanted by the International Criminal Police Organization, INTERPOL over alleged match-fixing offenses, according to a report filed by sportsworldGhana.com.

The former CFR Cluj midfield enforcer is wanted by the Accra branch of INTERPOL after a request from their counterpart in Nouakchott, Mauritania.

In an INTERPOL letter dated January 29, 2021, and addressed to the Controller General of the Ghana Immigration Service (GIS), the Police disclosed that Muniru is under investigation for alleged football match-fixing and were seeking to know whether he was in Ghana between the period of October and November 2020.

The INTERPOL also requested for the player's travel history to assist with their investigation.

Muniru has joined the Porcupine Warriors on a free transfer ahead of the 2020/21 Ghana Premier League season.

However, after failing to impress at the club, Muniru mutually parted ways with Asante Kotoko in January this year.

*Source: 3 February 2021, Modern Ghana
Football*

<https://www.modernghana.com/sports/1059216/e-asante-kotoko-midfielder-muniru-sulley-wanted.html>

Iran

Iran handball rocked by match-fixing claims

Several Iranian media reported that the match between Foolad Mobarakeh Sepahan and Farazbam Dehdasht Khaiez in the last day of premiere league's Group B, raised strong suspicious that the game might be fixed.

Foolad Mobarakeh had already qualified for the next round as the second team of the group, while Farazbam needed at least one point to make it to the next round.

The match ended with a 24-24 draw on Jan. 7 and Farazbam qualified as the third team.

However, Zoghal Sang Tabas club, another team that had a chance to advance to the next stage but failed as they stand fourth, immediately filed a complaint to the Iranian Handball Federation regarding alleged match-fixing at the match between Foolad and Farazbam.

Suspicious scenes in the mentioned match have been published in social media and Iranian press, which show that some players move away from each other in a strange way during the game to let the ball go into the goal and some other intentionally throw the ball out!

The Disciplinary Committee of the handball federation examined the match and subsequently passed its judgment on all disciplinary matters relating to the match-fixing.

The federation suspended two players of Farazbam team for six months and one player of Foolad Mobarakeh for three months. In a strange decision, the federation also announced that instead of three teams, four teams from each group will advance to next round, and Zoghal Sang qualified for the next stage as a result of the decision.

However, President of Iran Handball Federation Alireza Pakdel did not confirmed match-fixing at the mentioned match and considered it as 'negative cooperation' between some players which is nonsense.

"Zoghal Sang team expressed some issues about the match, and the handball federation and even the Ministry of Sports' officials investigated the case. There were some negative cooperations between some players that had some bad effects on the match. However, we don't consider it as an organized and scheduled match-fixing," Pakdel said in an interview with Tehran Times.

"The priority in handball, and sports in general, is to observe fair play issues. In our handball community, there are a lot of honest athletes and coaches who are not deserved to be questioned by such unethical rumors. There is no match-fixing in the Iranian handball," he added.

Source: 8 February 2021, Tehran Times

Handball

<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/457934/Iran-handball-rocked-by-match-fixing-claims>



Ireland

The suspected gangster at the heart of world boxing

Daniel Kinahan has been named in the Irish courts as heading one of Europe's most brutal drug gangs.

He's also been a personal adviser to world heavyweight champion Tyson Fury.

The BBC investigates how a company Kinahan helped set up has become one of the most powerful in the sport.

Source: 3 February 2021, BBC

Boxing

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/extra/1y3kadznaf/the-suspected-gangster-at-the-heart-of-world-boxing>

Kenya

Kenya: Concerns Raised as Match-Fixing Infiltrates Local Football

Western Stima Football Club would appeal to any crook keen on fixing matches in Kenya.

Founded in 1997, the top-flight team is based in Kisumu from where it honours league matches at the Moi Stadium.

Under the guidance of veteran coach Henry Omino (may he rest in peace), Stima has in the past few seasons not only curved a reputation as mid-table team in the top-flight league, but also a bogey side to top clubs in the competition, and specifically AFC Leopards.

The Football Kenya Federation (FKF) Premier League side can also pride itself in nurturing some of the best talents in Kenyan football in recent times, such as Gor Mahia midfielder Kenneth "Junior" Muguna, who doubles up as a dependable player for the senior men's national football team, Harambee Stars.

But then, the club's foundation and ambition was recently shaken to the core in June 2020 when parent company, Kenya Power, while bogged down by financial shortcomings occasioned by the coronavirus pandemic, abruptly pulled the plug on an estimated annual Sh30 million sponsorship without notice.

This termination also affected second-tier sides Coast Stima and Nairobi Stima, in the process rendering about 300 employees, most of them youthful, jobless.

Western Stima, and its chairman Laban Jobita, are yet to recover from that financial setback.

"I've not received my monthly salary for five months now. Neither have my players," the club's former coach Paul Ogai told Nation Sport in a recent interview.

Match-fixing scandal

The 35-year-old Ogai was fired last week alongside two players in a decision attributed to poor results. He was Replaced by veteran coach Abdalla Juma.

But their departures were clouded by a match-fixing allegation which authorities on the local football scene appear keen to sweep under the carpet.

The racket blew up on January 23, when police in Kisumu announced a man keen to pre-determine the outcome of FKF Premier League match pitting Stima against Kenya Commercial Bank (KCB) had walked into their trap at a Kisumu hotel.

The man initially was identified himself as Ronnie Mwinnie, but further investigations indicated he was also known as Ronnie Santos, alias Ronald Mugisha, or Ronald Fred, a Ugandan national.

"The said person informed the players that he needed Stima to lose the league match against KCB," Police confirmed in their report.

Jobita later told Nation Sport the suspect had given express instructions to select players and members of the technical bench to lose the game by four unanswered goals.

Of this lot, Stima was specifically supposed to allow two goals into the net the team was defending by half-time.

For good measure, the Ugandan, who police say had an expired immigration status, was ready to offer a number of players in the team Sh10,000 for "lunch" upfront, plus an extra Sh600,000 upon completion of work done. But the deal reportedly backfired when some of the players reported to Jobita who in turn tipped off police to set up the trap.

"We've witnessed an interesting pattern of results this season, including conceding and winning two penalties in the same match against Tusker. I am told this man wanted to influence all my defenders. He manages two players in the team and that is where he got the leeway."

Tusker beat Stima 5-2 on December 12, 2020, in the match Jobita is referring to. The game will be remembered for the four penalties awarded by the match referee, two for either team. Stima converted theirs through goalkeeper Samuel Odhiambo.

'I am innocent'

Ronnie, who opted not to comment on this matter when contacted by Nation Sport, later posted a number of messages on his official Facebook page, stating his innocence over the match-fixing allegations, only to later delete them all.

"I am innocent. Whoever set me up will not win, just wait and see," one of the messages read. Incidentally, a number of Ugandan based footballers publicly expressed their support for him on the same platform.

This scenario would negotiate an interesting turn days later when the alleged match-fixer walked to freedom days later with police opting not to prefer any charges against him, claiming Jobita, who was the complainant in the case, had lost interest.

And when Nation Sport reached out to Jobita this past week, he confirmed his willingness to let the matter slide on the premise that it had brought "bad" publicity to the club, hence complicating his chances of landing a new sponsor.

The other side of the story is that the arrest of this suspect instigated a flurry of calls from influential people who put pressure on the police to release him.

Whoever these people are, they not only are influential but seemingly had the means.

The suspect was arrested with around Sh200,000 in cash, a figure that would likely entice Stima players who have been playing on empty stomachs in the wake of the financial troubles. It now also appears the alleged fixer is in a position to buy himself out of potential trouble.

To put this into perspective, Jobita was only able to pay his players and technical bench members Sh1,000 each following the 2-0 win against Leopards at Kasarani earlier in the season. But here was someone reportedly willing to 'motivate' the same group of players with Sh600,000 for a loss, which realistically speaking, is easier to achieve.

Further Investigations by our team reveal Ronnie, as he prefers to be referred to, is a known radio presenter in Kampala who hosts a sports show on one of Uganda Broadcasting Corporation's vernacular channels.

Born and raised in the Western Uganda town of Mbarara and an alumnus of St Leo's College, he also passes off as a manager of footballers.

Those who know him say he has managed to place his players mainly in the Ugandan, Kenyan, and Zambian top-flight leagues.

Jobita confirmed in an earlier interview that he is a representative of two players at Stima.

He has in the past been linked to former Gor Mahia forward Milton Karissa and his compatriot Yunus Ssentamu.

Thus, and not surprising perhaps, a number of Ugandan footballers publicly extended their support to him when news of his arrest in the lakeside city filtered in.

And in another twist of events to this saga, Ogai says he was sacked by Jobita for suggesting the players mentioned in the match-fixing scandal should not play again for the club until investigations are completed.

"I don't understand why the suspect was arrested and released just like that. Can you find a thief in your house picking your valuables and then decide to let him go?" the coach posed.

A Royal Football Association (KNVB) trained coach with a UEFA 'C' category qualification, Ogai argues the match-fixing menace in Kenya is bigger than we think. He stops short of linking this vice to the betting craze which the government is to stamp out.

"Why would someone specifically want my team to lose the match by four goals? If it was a rival team financing our defeat, they would be comfortable with any loss, why four goals?" he posed.

The coach added: "I have been analyzing our games and realized we used to concede most of our goals between minutes 20 and 30. Or in the second half between minutes 70 and 80. That was strange."

Unusual bets

The move comes at a time results of matches in the Kenyan football league, and even those of the men's national team, received unusual interest on the international scene, and especially in Asia.

A football administrator confided to Nation Sport that there have been unusual bets placed on matches played in Kenya by bettors from as far as Malaysia.

Some of the recent matches considered "suspicious" include Gor Mahia's loss to Vihiga in a league match, Kenya's 1-1 draw at home to Comoros, plus Harambee Stars 1-4 drubbing at the hands of Eritrea in the semis of the 2019 Cecafta Senior Challenge Cup in Kampala.

Worryingly, it appears both Football Kenya Federation (FKF) and local authorities are unwilling or unable to stamp on the match-fixing menace, with yet another top-club in the competition said to be consistently giving away matches.

Two years ago, it took the intervention of the sport's world governing body Fifa for four players attached to Kakamega Homeboyz be banned for match-fixing.

The four included Ugandan George Mandela who was banned for life, plus Festo Omukoto, Festus Okiring, and Moses Chikati who were each banned for four years.

"In particular, given his central role in the conspiracy, the player George Mandela, from Uganda has been banned from taking part in any kind of football-related activity at national and international level (administrative, sports or any other) for life," Fifa's statement read in part.

"The other individuals have been banned from taking part in any kind of football-related activity at national and international level (administrative, sports or any other) for a period of four (4) years."

Contacted, FKF media officer Ken Okaka was non-committal, only explaining that the football body will be "following up" the matter concerning Western Stima.

Separately, Ugandan keeper Ismael Wetanga, now attached to top South African club Mamelodi Sundowns, once claimed to have received a Sh2 million bribe to fix a match during his spell at Sofapaka.

"I have big dreams as a goalkeeper and \$20,000 (about Sh2 million) cannot cancel those dreams. I refused the offer," he said in an interview.

Government talks tough

A media officer attached to a local club also claimed to have been approached by some European based agents with a deal to delay the announcement of goals scored in matches involving his team by a couple of minutes.

"Most of the games in the Kenyan league are not televised and it can happen that I am the only journalist in the field when we have a fixture against the likes of Sony Sugar or Chemelil at the Sugar belt.

"I was approached and told to not immediately update the scores on social media but instead inform them first. They were willing to pay me for that. Only to realise that they were betting on the same matches on the "team to score next" option. How they got my number, I do not know," he said.

But the government has been keen to regulate the betting industry in recent times with Interior CS Fred Matiang'i speaking tough on the matter.

Betting and match-fixing are considered identical twins.

"We have about 500,000 of our young people who are blacklisted by some of the lending agencies because they borrowed and cannot pay. Most of them borrowed because of betting. This is a sector we must regulate. I want to be very frank with you, we are prepared to face the consequences that may be to ensure that this sector is regulated effectively," said Matian'gi in June last year.

Speaking in Eldoret after the Ronnie incident, Sports Cabinet Secretary Amina Mohamed said the government would treat match-fixing with the same venom as doping.

"We will not tolerate match-fixing and you will see things happening. Match-fixing will be treated in the same way as we are treating the doping menace," she said while on a tour of the under-construction Kipchoge Keino Stadium.

Thanks to challenges such as less interest from the corporate world and the government, the standards of football in Kenya at the moment are a pale show of those in the eighties and nineties, when Gor Mahia won a continental title and the men's national football team consistently qualified for the Africa Cup of Nations.

The embarrassing returns by Kenyan teams has contributed led to football fans switching allegiance to "supporting" European teams, and especially those competing in the English Premier League. Thus, the match-fixing menace, if not nipped in the bud, has the capacity to end whatever is left of the game locally.

Source: 8 February 2021, All Africa

Football

<https://allafrica.com/stories/202102090194.html>

Kenya

Kenya Premier League: Ugandan accused of match-fixing freed

A Ugandan national who was implicated in an attempted match-fixing of a Kenya Premier League match has been released by a magistrate's court.

This is after the complainant in the case said he was no longer interested in pursuing the case.

Benard Kwanza, an investigating officer told Senior Resident Magistrate Winfred Onkunya that the complainant had informed him that he had opted to drop the case.

It is however unclear what informed the change of thoughts of the senior official of Western Stima Football club who had lodged the complaint about the Ugandan. He had claimed the Ugandan had promised the team Sh60,000 to lose the match.

"The complainant has decided not to pursue the matter further and we, therefore, request the court to close the miscellaneous file," said Kwanza.

The developments came a week after the same court gave the officers a green-light to detain the suspect for five days to enable them to complete their investigations.

According to court records, the Ugandan had allegedly attempted to bribe officials of Western Stima Football club to lose a match that had been scheduled to be played at Nakuru,

He had allegedly lured a senior official of Western Stima and offered him money to influence the outcome of the match.

The manager allegedly informed the suspect that he needed to discuss the matter with his players. He, however, reported the matter to the police.

On Monday, however, the Ugandan walked to his freedom after the court declared that there was no reason to continue holding him if the complainant had opted to drop the case.

Source: 3 February 2021, Standard Sport

Football

<https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/sports/football/2001402157/kenya-premier-league-ugandan-accused-of-match-fixing-freed>

SENTENCES/SANCTIONS

Russia

Russian Tennis Player Banned for 30 Months

The International Tennis Integrity Agency (ITIA) has today confirmed that unranked Russian player Nikita Gudozhnikov has been banned from the sport for 30 months, following his failure to co-operate with an ITIA investigation.

The case was ruled on by Anti-Corruption Hearing Officer Ian Mill QC and in addition to the ban, Mr Gudozhnikov has also been fined \$7,500. The sanction means he is prohibited from playing in or attending any tennis event authorised or sanctioned by the governing bodies of tennis for a period of 30 months from yesterday's decision (4 February 2021).

Failing to co-operate is a breach of section F.2.b. of the Tennis Anti-Corruption Program (TACP) rules, which state:

"All Covered Persons must cooperate fully with investigations conducted by the TIU including giving evidence at hearings, if requested. After a Covered Person receives a TIU request for an initial interview or otherwise becomes aware of any TIU investigation involving the Covered Person, the Covered Person shall (i) preserve and not tamper with, damage, disable, destroy or otherwise alter any evidence (including any personal devices described in Section F.2.c.i.) or other information related to any Corruption Offense and (ii) not solicit, facilitate or advise any other person to fail to preserve, tamper with, damage, disable, destroy or otherwise alter any evidence or other information related to any Corruption Offense."

The International Tennis Integrity Agency is an independent body established by the International Governing Bodies of Tennis to promote, encourage, enhance and safeguard the integrity of professional tennis worldwide.

End

Notes to editors:

The International Tennis Integrity Agency (ITIA) subsumed the Tennis Integrity Unit (TIU) on 1 January 2021. All data previously held and used by the TIU is now held within the ITIA and will be used in accordance with our Privacy Policy

Source: 5 February 2021, The International Tennis Integrity Agency (ITIA)

Tennis

<https://elinkeu.clickdimensions.com/m/1/84431288/p1-b21036-e8e95a221f824f95a6789bb061d60826/1/248/1cf3d9d9-26ed-4d80-979e-970bac37ffa3>

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United Kingdom

Former Leeds United player Pawel Cibicki banned from football pending investigation

Former Leeds United player Pawel Cibicki has been suspended from football by the Polish FA pending an investigation into alleged match fixing.

Cibicki, who left Elland Road on a permanent basis in January last year, has been banned indefinitely pending the outcome.

The 27-year-old currently plys his trade for Polish side Pogon Szczecin in the Ekstraklasa - the country's top division - but is being investigated for his time with Swedish outfit IF Elfsborg, where he was on loan from the Whites.

The Swedish FA confirmed the news on Friday and say it relates to an incident surrounding a yellow card which was picked up against Kalmar FF during the 2018-19 campaign.

Cibicki made 10 appearances for Leeds in an otherwise unsuccessful spell in West Yorkshire after joining from Malmo in a deal worth £1.5m in 2017.

Source: 5 February 2021, Evening Post

Football

<https://www.yorkshireeveningpost.co.uk/sport/football/leeds-united/former-leeds-united-player-pawel-cibicki-banned-football-pending-investigation-3125751>

LEGISLATION

Netherlands

Dutch regulator announces new match-fixing guidelines

Rules on money laundering and match fixing have been amended by the Dutch authorities ahead of the opening up of the country's gambling market from April.

The Kansspelautoriteit gaming authority has adapted the Act on the Prevention of Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing (WWFT) as it has only previously applied to Holland Casino, as the country's only licence holder for casino games.

WWFT guidelines have been clarified in areas such as identification and verification and crediting and debiting gaming accounts following a consultation and ahead of the Remote Gaming Act (Koa) coming into effect on 1 April 2021.

Kansspelautoriteit said the most important change that has taken place after the consultation is to add the risk of manipulation of sports matches, or match fixing, to the guidelines.

Under a section on unusual payment, the WWFT states that transactions identified as money laundering or worth more than €15,000 must be reported to the Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU), the government agency that investigates cases related to money laundering or terrorist financing. In the same section, the rules say that transactions that arouse a suspicion of match fixing must also be reported as they are often linked to money laundering.

Notification must be made within 14 days of the operator being aware of the unusual nature of the transaction. Rules concerning reporting, confidentiality and anonymity are also covered by the guidelines.

Kansspelautoriteit will also give gambling operators tools to comply with the obligations, which it said can also be used as an aid in drawing up documents for the application for a Koa permit from 1 April.

Initially, KOA was scheduled to enter into law on 1 July 2020, with the market to open six months later at the start of 2021. However, in November 2019, the act's start date was pushed back six months, meaning the market would open on 1 July 2021.

In September 2020, the launch was pushed back again, with the date the act was set to come into effect moved to 1 March 2021, after preparations to launch had been disrupted by the novel coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic.

A further delay announced last month means the law comes into effect on 1 April 2021 and the market opens on 1 October.

Source: 8 February 2021, iGB

All Sports

<https://igamingbusiness.com/dutch-regulator-announces-new-match-fixing-guidelines/>

BETTING

IBIA

270 betting integrity alerts reported by IBIA in 2020

10 February 2021: The International Betting Integrity Association (IBIA) reported 270 cases of suspicious betting to the relevant authorities during 2020, with 68 of those cases reported in the final quarter (Q4). The 2020 total is a 48% increase in alerts compared to the 183 cases reported in 2019, with table tennis and eSports accounting for much of that. Tennis (98) and football (61) saw the largest number of alerts with 59% of the total, albeit a fall from 82% in 2019.

Khalid Ali, CEO of IBIA, said: "2020 was a turbulent year for many sectors including the betting industry, which had to adjust its market offering due to the global sports lockdown. As a result, IBIA focused its integrity monitoring activity to take account of new sports tournaments and competitions that emerged." He added: "The association is seeking to work with stakeholders to address any potential integrity issues that may be associated with these new events through a range of actions, including promoting a set of standards for the collation of sports data for betting. Whilst there was an increase in overall alerts from 2019 to 2020, it should be noted that the 2020 cases are consistent with the number of alerts reported in both 2017 and 2018."

Other key data for 2020:

- 12 – criminal or sporting sanctions on players/teams based on IBIA data
- 15 - sports on which alerts were reported
- 25 - percentage increase in football alerts
- 43 - countries where alerts on sporting events were reported

During the four-year period 2017-2020, IBIA reported 986 alerts across 17 sports and 95 countries, with our unique customer account data leading to numerous sanctions being imposed.

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. The 2020 report can be viewed on the IBIA website here along with previous reports. The IBIA data collation standards are available here. The association can be contacted via info@ibia.bet.

Source: 10 February 2021, IBIA

All Sports

https://mcusercontent.com/928864acfa38d85ae4d59068b/files/5927be1c-c57a-43d7-b1d3-669568042e2c/ANNUAL_REPORT_2020__final.pdf

INTERPOL
INTEGRITY IN SPORT

United States

Head of alleged illegal gambling ring involving now-pardoned Casey Urlacher pleads guilty

CHICAGO -- A northern Illinois man pleaded guilty Tuesday to federal charges that he led a sport betting operation that allegedly included the now-pardoned brother of Chicago Bears standout linebacker Brian Urlacher.

Vincent Del Giudice of Orland Park pleaded guilty to gambling conspiracy and money laundering charges. Prosecutors alleged Del Giudice, 55, paid a Costa Rica-based sportsbook a service fee of \$10,000 a week to use its online platform and recruited gamblers to place wagers on his website. Del Giudice hired people to act as agents and attract gamblers as well as collect on debts.

A sentencing date was not immediately set for Del Giudice, who faces up to 18 months in prison under sentencing guidelines. Prosecutors are also seeking an \$8 million judgment against Del Giudice. They also want to seize his home, a luxury auto and \$347,895 in silver bars and jewelry, and \$92,623 in gold coins found when agents raided his home in April 2019.

Casey Urlacher was accused of recruiting bettors for Del Giudice in exchange for a cut of their eventual losses. Urlacher, the mayor of the tiny Chicago suburb of Mettawa, was among those pardoned in the final hours of President Donald Trump's term.

Six other people allegedly involved in the gambling operation that are under indictment have pleaded not guilty to the charges.

Source: 3 February 2021, Eyewitness news

<https://abc7chicago.com/trump-pardons-casey-urlacher-brian-donald-gambling/10280679/>

GOOD PRACTICES

Sportradar

Sportradar launches social media integrity education service

Sportradar has launched a new Social Media Integrity Education Service designed to provide a range of tools for athletes and 'key sports stakeholders' for use when engaging with the public on social media.

The global supplier of sports data as well as integrity and education solutions, says it aims to tackle challenges to the integrity of sport, which it says can come from a variety of different sources including inappropriate online content and behaviour, the threat of inside information, match-fixing or betting corruption, and doping.

Amongst the first sports organisations to sign up for the new service is the PENNY DEL, Germany's top ice hockey league, whose players and clubs will attend bespoke webinars and workshops, as well as being provided with tutorials on the integrity risks that can arise when using social media, as well as guidance on how to protect themselves and the reputation of their clubs.

"The integrity and reputational risks which can arise when using social media are far-reaching," said Andrew Whittingham, Head of Education Integrity Services, Sportradar.

"Not only can failing to act with integrity online put individual users at risk of harm, it can also pose threats to the integrity of teams or clubs, leagues or competitions, or sport as a whole.

"We're excited to be working closely with PENNY DEL and we commend the robust approach they're taking to social media integrity education. By combining sessions to educate players, referees and officials simultaneously they are ensuring all participants in ice hockey understand the individual and collective responsibilities they have to maintain the highest integrity standards."

Gernot Tripcke, General Manager at DEL, added: "We are delighted about the cooperation with Sportradar. The players of the clubs are all active on social media several times a day and naturally want to make their own accounts as professional as possible. The workshops will definitely be helpful in proceeding with the greatest possible security in the social media area. Equally, it's about anti-manipulation, which has always been extremely important to us as a league."

Sportradar, an Official Partner at the Sport Industry Awards 2021, supplies integrity services to more than 80 partner sports organisations from over 25 different sports and recently, its Director of Global Operations, Tom Mace, recently told Sport Industry Group that the company had referred 5,300 'highly suspicious' matches to authorities through its Fraud Detection System in the last 15 years. That has contributed to over 400 sports disciplinary sanctions and over 35 criminal sanctions, according to the sports data and intelligence supplier.

latest

Source: 8 February 2021, Sport Industry Group

All Sports

<https://www.sportindustry.biz/news/sportradar-launches-social-media-integrity-education-service>



ODDS AND ENDS

Spain

Spanish Sports Association Claims Betting Industry Underpays

José Hidalgo, the president of the Spanish Sports Association, is seeking assistance from the government to collect further compensation from the gambling industry in Spain which has benefitted off sports.

Spanish Gambling Firms Not Contributing Enough

Gambling companies aren't paying enough in Spain, this is the sentiment Spanish Sports Association (ADESP) president José Hidalgo shared with stakeholders and the Ministry of Consumer Affairs earlier this week, arguing that gambling firms have enriched themselves at the expense of sport without paying enough back to the industry they rely on.

According to the official statement published on the organization's website, gambling firms owed "significant compensation" to sports franchises which have been effectively defining the existence of sports wagers in the first place.

The money, Hidalgo argues, would be used to bolster sports in the country. In the organization's first work meeting, Hidalgo didn't waste time and pitched several initiatives ADESP feels the government should enact.

All of these appeals have been addressed to the secretary-general for consumer and gambling, Rafael Escudero Alday. ADESP seeks additional funding to help support youth sports as well as tackle both gambling-harm and match-fixing in the country, two issues that have drawn attention from the government in 2020.

Significant Compensation Needed

"We ought to receive significant compensation," said Hidalgo cited in the official release, and reassured that the response from the ministry has been one of strong approval.

Should new taxes or fees be introduced to sports in Spain, ADESP feels confident that the money would be used to offset any potential issues that stem from gambling as well as help bolster sports.

Yet, if experience elsewhere is any indication, ADESP may be trying to secure further money at the expense of businesses that may become unsustainable. In the United Kingdom as well as in Spain, calls to end sports betting sponsorships, which often fund entire teams, have been either voiced or even put into effect.

However, without looking at the exact numbers and making decisions about sustainability, it would be hard to see if the industry can take further taxation. Nevertheless, betting on sports has been doing well in the country, and it's the biggest gambling vertical according to data published by the Dirección General de Ordenación del Juego (DGOJ).

Spain is in the process of creating a new gambling body intended at harmonizing gambling regulation and bringing clarity for stakeholders in the country.

Source: 5 February 2021, Gambling news

<https://www.gamblingnews.com/news/spanish-sports-association-claims-betting-industry-underpays/>

The Guardian

Revealed: expected goals being used in football's war against match-fixing

It is a metric at the heart of football's fiercest culture war, pitting traditionalists against stat-savvy data experts. But expected goals (xG) – along with other analytics such as passes allowed per defensive action – has become a vital new weapon in the fight against match-fixing, the Guardian can reveal.

The Guardian has learned that there are more than 30 cases in over half a dozen countries where football analytics is being used in the package of supporting evidence – alongside suspicious betting patterns and intelligence – to bring those involved to justice.

In one major case, two teams are suspected of “trading” the results of their league and cup games, so that one club was saved from relegation and the other qualified for Europe. Although there were no unusual betting patterns, the authorities believed a fix was at play and went to experts at Stats Perform, which used its Opta data to identify several red flags. The matter is with the sport's governing body and the police force in that country.

In another case, a team suspected of fixing the match had no touches in the opposition box, suggesting a lack of intent and triggering an alert. A third match under review involves a late goal from a near-post corner following a large number of suspicious bets on the number of goals in the game. Although on the surface nothing appeared wrong with the players' actions, investigators used tracking data to show the defending team's set-up and movements were completely different for the final corner.

Most sports bodies prefer not to comment on cases, and for legal and confidentiality reasons the Guardian is unable to name teams or countries involved. However Jakub Cavojsky, the integrity officer at the Slovakia Football Association, confirmed it was among the federations using analytics in investigations.

“Performance analysis is an important new tool in the fight against match-fixing and is something the Slovak FA is starting to use,” he added. “We have to find new ways in how to support evidence and investigation of match-fixing and performance analysis can play an important role.”

Jake Marsh, the global head of integrity for Stats Perform, said it had begun to use Opta's advanced analysis to support match-fixing investigations because suspicious betting patterns and intelligence were not always enough to bring a conviction.

“We started doing this about 18 months ago when a major football body said to us: ‘We've got excellent intelligence that indicates there has been a fix, but there's been no spike in the betting markets,’” Marsh said. “‘We think significant amounts have been fed into the market in a way that has evaded detection. Is there a different way you can look for wrongdoing?’”

“That led to us providing detailed reports on players and teams under suspicion – using measures like xG, supremacy, touches in the opposition box, tackle rates, and also passes per defensive action, which can show the lack of attacking intent – to help build a complete picture of a match. Usually we are not talking about slight anomalies but huge outliers in our database of thousands of games.

“Of course xG isn't the be-all and end-all. But if a team has a ton of shots from good positions but fails to score it might be a sign something is amiss. We also look at the team that's under suspicion, and other matches they've played in the same competition, to see if we can find any anomalies in their style of play, tactics and intensity – along with conducting in-depth video analysis of the players and teams.”

Match-fixing cases can take at least 18 months to be resolved, and Marsh expects the first one with analytics as a key element to be concluded this year. “This isn't the silver bullet for establishing that a match is fixed beyond doubt,” he said. “It's not text messages, bank transfers or proof of money exchanging hands. But what we are often able to say is that the data corroborates intelligence that suggests a fix – and football's authorities are telling us that it is incredibly useful.”

The Council of Europe, which in 2014 launched the Macolin Convention to promote global co-operation to tackle match-fixing, told the Guardian it was examining how analytics could be used.

“We have seen first-hand how performance analysis can be used to detect and investigate instances of match manipulation,” Elda Moreno, head of sport values at the Council of Europe, said. “We expect it to become part of the sport integrity fabric which supports the implementation of the Macolin Convention.”

Source: 13 February 2021, The Guardian

Football

<https://amp-theguardian-com.cdn.ampproject.org/c/s/amp.theguardian.com/football/2021/feb/13/expected-goals-being-used-in-football-war-against-match-fixing-data>

United Kingdom

Premier League football club enters VR partnership with crypto betting site

Premier League football club Southampton FC has entered into a partnership with cryptocurrency betting website Sportsbet.io. The new venture will give Southampton fans the chance to take in the matchday experience during the COVID-19 lockdown via virtual reality headsets, while influencers will reportedly be granted sums of Bitcoin (BTC) to create unique VR experiences.

Sportsbet.io became the main club partner of Southampton FC at the beginning of the 2020–2021 season, and the United Kingdom-based betting site now aims to utilize its matchday rights in the virtual realm. Sportsbet.io also signed a three-year partnership with Arsenal at the start of the season, becoming the club's official betting partner in the process.

The betting site has at various times accepted deposits in the form of Bitcoin, Ethereum (ETH), Litecoin (LTC), XRP, Tron TRX), Tether (USDT), and more.

Tim Heath, founder of Coingaming Group, which operates Sportsbet, said he foresaw a growing relationship emerging between football and cryptocurrency.

"We think cryptocurrency has a big future in football and we're right behind it. Alongside fan experiences like this, we've just seen the first Bitcoin transfer take place where a footballer was purchased using cryptocurrency and signed for DUX Internacional de Madrid, and earlier this year NFL pro footballer Russell Okung said he's getting his salary in Bitcoin," said Heath, adding, "We're likely to see more of the same — from clubs finding new ways to engage with fans on a match day to the way business is done at the top of the game."

The connection between cryptocurrency and football blossomed in the past few years. Sportsbet has also formed sponsorship deals with Championship team Watford FC, as well as major Brazilian team side Flamengo.

The year 2020 also saw footballers launch their own cryptocurrency tokens, while more major clubs got involved with blockchain or crypto in some way. These include German footballing giants Bayern Munich and Borussia Dortmund, in addition to the historic Italian club S.S Lazio, and Spanish titans FC Barcelona.

David Thomas, chief commercial officer at Southampton FC, said the club was excited to be part of an ongoing process that could shake up the status quo.

"As a club our digital approach has always looked to redefine the content status-quo and we were excited at the shared values between ourselves and the Sportsbet.io team," he said.

Source: 10 February 2021, Coin Telegraph
Football

<https://cointelegraph.com/news/premier-league-football-club-enters-vr-partnership-with-crypto-betting-site>



INTEGRITY IN SPORT