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INVESTIGATIONS

Netherlands

Match fixers have Dutch darts players in their sights, public prosecutor to investigate

Match fixers are setting their sights on Dutch darts players, an investigation by broadcaster NOS has shown. Darts players have to report attempts to involve them in match fixing – deliberately playing badly or losing a match – to the international darts authority DRA. Last year six out of the ten reports received by the authority came from Dutch players, NOS said. However, the DRA thinks many more players are being approached. The Dutch public prosecution office has said it is aware of the situation and will be starting an investigation of its own. Betting on the outcome of dart games is becoming more popular, with an average game netting some hundreds of thousands of euros in bets. Players are usually approached via messaging services like Telegram. In one case the broadcaster managed to identify the messenger, a man who claimed his attempts at bribing players had met with little success. Another message was found to come from Dutch match fixing groups on Telegram who were selling on matches they claimed were fixed but weren't. Two players were suspended by the DRA because of match fixing last year, including Dutch darts talent Wessel Nijman (20). Professional darts player Niels Zonneveld, one of several players NOS spoke to, said he had been approached by a match fixer who wanted him to lose a game for money. Zonneveld was playing from home in an online tournament and, because tournaments were scarce because of Covid restrictions, international gambling organisations from all over the world were offering the games to bet on.

Win win 'It's a virtual game so who's going to know. It's a win-win situation for both of us. I have approached other players as well,' read the message Zonneveld received. DRA chairman Nigel Mawer said the reason for the popularity of Dutch darts players among match fixers could be to do with the fact that online gambling will only become legal in the Netherlands later this year. But it may also be that Dutch darts players are more willing to report attempts at bribery, he said. Mawer said all his organisation can do is to suspend players. 'We can't get to the fixers and police don't seem to be too interested,' he said. Zonneveld said he is happy the public prosecution is taking action. 'If these people can do this with impunity it will continue. They'll think well, maybe he'll bite, it's worth a try.'

Source: 23 March 2021, Dutch News

Darts

<https://www.dutchnews.nl/news/2021/03/match-fixers-have-dutch-darts-players-in-their-sights-public-prosecutor-to-investigate/>



United Kingdom

Agony of young Scots football stars targeted by crooked gangland agents

The multi-millionaire even threatened a client's teammates after learning of a dressing room bust-up.

Despite being linked to numerous big money transfers, the man's name does not feature on official player transaction records published by both the Scottish and English FAs.

His long-term associate's name is entered in the documents – even though negotiations were led by the Glasgow-based gangland figure.

Police Scotland Chief Superintendent Mark Sutherland, Greater Glasgow's Divisional Commander, confirmed five players had spoken to police about how they were targeted.

He said: "Even if it's only a handful of players at this stage, that's a handful too many.

"We think this initiative might well bring more players forward."

His team are to hold the interactive sessions with young players from Rangers, Celtic, Partick Thistle and Queen's Park.

He said dodgy agents use Scottish football to achieve prestige with their criminal peers and warned youngsters end up straying into illegal activity.

Sutherland added: "We don't have a systemic problem of organised crime in Scottish football.

"But we are not naive to know that we need to make sure it doesn't get a foothold in the game.

"If you look globally, you see the links between football and organised crime and what it can lead to. We're talking about things like match-fixing.

"We want to stop that before it happens here. We believe the criminals who have been acting in Scottish football have been doing so for prestige purposes.

"Be it to boost their own profile and get good seats in stadiums that will allow them to raise their own profile in the criminal environment.

"We want to stop young players being involved with these sorts of agents."

One former star targeted by a drug dealer who also acted as an agent told how his career ended up in ruins.

The gangster approached the player on social media when he was just 17. The teenager was given a £5000 watch as a gift and treated to champagne in top nightclubs.

The player – known as John – is now playing in the lower leagues and spoke out in a bid to prevent other young players making the same mistake.

His story is told by an actor in a £5000 video produced by Police Scotland and backed by the Scottish FA, the Scottish Professional Football League and the Professional Footballers' Association Scotland.

In the film, John says: "Things were decent for a couple of years but then he started to lose interest.

"I needed him to get me transferred but he wouldn't take my calls. I tried to get his attention in a pub but he blanked me. I started getting a bit raging. Then two of his mad pals flung me outside and gave me a slap.

"That was the first time I realised I was in deep with this guy. I needed to get out of my contract but didn't know how. I was scared."

Rules introduced in 2015, made it mandatory for agents – dubbed intermediaries by authorities – to be registered for each transfer they are involved in.

Each year, the SFA publish what agents' involvement in transfers are as well as what they got paid by the clubs. And any convictions for violent or financial crimes see them banned from acting as an agent.

Between February 2019 and January 2020 almost £5.5million was paid to agents who negotiated player transfers in Scottish football.

Intermediaries in English football were paid almost £320million over the same period.

A respected figure in Scottish football, who did not want to be named, said: "One individual conducts negotiations then brings someone else in to sign paperwork when talks are concluded.

"He doesn't appear on any documentation associated with the transfer. Someone else will lend their signature. The clubs know who these people are but they look the other way when the deal is being finalised.

"One club even tells the parents of young prospects that this man is their preferred agent even though he's unlicensed."

One manager banned an unregulated agent from the club over concerns about his background. But he was allowed back once the boss left.

A source added: "The same gangster agent even phoned his client's teammates and threatened them after he found out about an argument in the dressing room. That is the level of intimidation he is prepared to go to."

Graeme Pearson, a former head of The Serious Organised Crime Agency, welcomed the new initiative. He said: "There has always been a smell around some of Scottish football and organised crime and that goes back decades."

Former agent and Scottish FA chief executive Gordon Smith said: "It goes without saying that young players should only work with reputable agents.

"But that doesn't always happen. I think this message needs to be reinforced with parents too, who often have a big role in picking their child's agent."

The SFA said: "The Scottish FA supports the Police Scotland initiative and through our wellbeing and protection team, we liaise closely with member clubs to ensure any player who finds themselves in need of support, advice or assistance can do safely and in confidence."

*Source: 28 March 2021, Daily Record
Football*

<https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/agon-youth-scots-footballer-stars-23807915>



SENTENCES/SANCTIONS

Netherlands

Speler AZ geschorst na gokken op wedstrijden uit betaalde voetbal

Een speler van AZ is voor twee wedstrijden geschorst (geweest) nadat hij heeft gegokt op wedstrijden uit het betaalde voetbal. Zowel voetbalbond KNVB als AZ maakt niet bekend om wie het gaat. Het gaat niet om wedstrijden waarin de speler zelf mee heeft gespeeld.

De speler in kwestie gokte vorig seizoen op in totaal zeventien wedstrijden. Ook op het duel De Graafschap-Jong AZ van 28 februari 2020 uit de eerste divisie. Dat laatste is extra saillant omdat de speler onder contract staat bij de club uit Alkmaar. Het gokken op wedstrijden uit je eigen competitie is verboden.

De speler in kwestie heeft zijn schorsing inmiddels al uitgezeten.

AZ laat weten met de speler gesproken te hebben en zijn verhaal aangehoord te hebben. Volgens de club was de speler niet op de hoogte dat dit tegen de regels is. Voor AZ is de zaak nu gesloten.

De KNVB vindt deze zaak een aanleiding om meer voorlichting te gaan geven aan spelers uit de ere- en eerste divisie.

'Iedereen weet dat het niet mag'

Ook aan tafel bij Studio Voetbal werd het incident besproken. Volgens Arno Vermeulen vindt AZ het aan de speler zelf zich eventueel bekend te maken. "Iedereen weet dat het niet mag", aldus Theo Janssen.

Verbazing over schorsing gokkende AZ-speler: 'Iedereen weet dat het niet mag'

Volgens Pierre van Hooijdonk was dit in hun tijd als speler nog niet aan de orde. "Toen bestond het nog niet. Alleen in het illegale circuit, maar daar was totaal geen controle op."

"Toen stond iedereen nog achter de gokkast", vult Janssen aan. Op de vraag of ze zelf weleens hebben ingezet op een wedstrijd klinkt het in koor: "Nooit."

Source: 16 March 2021, NOS

Football

<https://nos.nl/artikel/2372607-speler-az-geschorst-na-gokken-op-wedstrijden-uit-betaalde-voetbal.html>

Sweden

Judgment against youth leaders regarding, among other things, bribery

A youth leader in a sports association has been sentenced for, among other things, bribery, child pornography and fraud, to probation with special measures. An important milestone for society regarding the threat to association democracy in sports.

Match-fixing at different levels in sports is a serious problem that the Police Authority sees occurring, there are also links to organized crime.

Together with the Swedish Sports Confederation, the Public Prosecutor's Office and the Swedish Crime Prevention Council, the Police Authority considers the problem to be a significant threat to the sports movement and to society as a whole. The future direction for how the police's work against sports-related crime is to be conducted includes the handling of match-fixing as a high-priority area.

The investigation work in the current case has been conducted by the police action group against sports-related crime in collaboration with organizations such as StFF, SvFF and the Swedish Sports Confederation.

Source: 19 March 2021, Swedish Police

Football

<https://polisen.se/aktuellt/nyheter/2021/mars/dom-mot-ungdomsledare-gallande-bland-annat-mutbrott/>

Thailand

15 sentenced, fined for football bribes

The Criminal Court on Thursday sentenced 15 people, including eight former Thai Premier League footballers, to between one and five years in prison, in a major match-fixing case that started in 2017.

The crime involved the paying of bribes on several occasions by five people betting on Thai Premier League football matches. Bribes were paid to the players, a referee and an assistant referee. The defendants were committed to face trial in July and September in 2017 in Ubon Ratchathani, Nakhon Ratchasima and Chon Buri. Thirachit Sitthisuk, a former assistant referee, was sentenced to five years and ordered to pay a fine of 2,000 baht. Choetsak Bunchu, a former director of Sisaket FC, was given four years and fined 2,500 baht.

Phakphum Phannikun and Manit Setthapazit, both accused of paying bribes, were each given four years in jail and fined 2,000 baht each. Wanlop Saman and Kittiphum Paphu-nga, who is also a former well-known footballer, were each given two years and fined 2,500 baht.

Phummarin Khamruen, a former FIFA referee, was given two years, while Wira Koetphutsa, a former goalkeeper, was given one year. Seksan Chaothonglang, Sutthiphong Laophon, Suwitthaya Namsinglaek and Narong Wongthongkham, former footballers, were each given two years.

Thirachai Ngamcharoen, Thotsaphon Khamengkit, and Ekkaphan Chandakon were each given one year.

Source: 19 March 2021, Bangkok Post

Football

<https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/general/2085951/15-sentenced-fined-for-football-bribes>



United Arab Emirates

Naveed and Shaiman banned for eight years each under ICC Anti-Corruption Code

Both the UAE players have been banned from all cricket for eight years under the ICC Anti-Corruption Code.

United Arab Emirates (UAE) players Mohammad Naveed and Shaiman Anwar Butt have been banned from all cricket for eight years each after the ICC Anti-Corruption Tribunal found them guilty of breaching the ICC Anti-Corruption Code.

The bans are backdated to 16 October 2019, when they were provisionally suspended for attempting to corrupt matches of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup Qualifier 2019 in the UAE.

Following a full hearing and presentation of written and oral argument, the Tribunal found both Naveed and Shaiman guilty of: Article 2.1.1 – for being party to an agreement or effort to fix or contrive or otherwise influence improperly the result, progress, conduct or other aspect(s) of a match or matches at the ICC Men's T20 World Cup Qualifier 2019.

Article 2.4.4 - Failing to disclose to the ACU full details of any approaches or invitations received to engage in corrupt conduct under the Code at the ICC Men's T20 World Cup Qualifier 2019.

Naveed was also found guilty of breaching the following two counts of the Emirates Cricket Board Anti-Corruption Code for Participants of the T10 League 2019:

Article 2.1.1 – for being party to an agreement or effort to fix or contrive or otherwise influence improperly the result, progress, conduct or other aspect(s) of a match or matches at the T10 League 2019.

Article 2.4.4 - Failing to disclose to the ACU full details of any approaches or invitations received to engage in corrupt conduct under the Code at the T10 League 2019.

Alex Marshall, ICC General Manager – Integrity Unit, said: “Mohammad Naveed and Shaiman Anwar represented their adopted country, the UAE at the highest level in cricket.

“Naveed was the captain and leading wicket taker. Anwar was the opening bat. Both had long international careers and were well versed in the threat from match fixers. That they both chose to engage with this corrupt activity was a cynical betrayal of their positions, their teammates, and all supporters of UAE cricket.

“I am pleased that the independent Tribunal has imposed significant bans from all forms of cricket and this should serve as a warning to any cricketer who considers taking the wrong path.”

The decision on sanctions (which has been redacted to protect the identities of the ICC's witnesses and other third parties) is available here.

Source: 16 March 2021, ICC

Cricket

<https://www.icc-cricket.com/media-releases/2069768>



BETTING

United States

NCAA to keep close tabs on betting for men's basketball tournament

For the first time, the NCAA men's basketball tournament, one of America's favorite sporting events to bet on, will take place in a state with legal bookmakers operating right down the street from where the games are being played.

According to figures released Sunday by the American Gaming Association, more than 47 million Americans are expected to make a bet on this year's NCAA men's basketball tournament, which tips off Thursday exclusively in Indiana.

The NCAA and gaming regulators in Indiana say they're ready and will be monitoring the betting action closely. The NCAA and the Indiana Gaming Commission (IGC) work with third-party companies that track the betting markets for any irregularities that may signal an attempt to compromise a game. If suspicious betting patterns are detected, the IGC can order all bets canceled on a game.

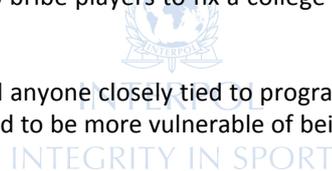
"The NCAA and its members are evolving as the sports wagering continues to change. We are continuing to expand our efforts across these important areas to ensure we are protecting the integrity of competition and the well-being of student-athletes," an NCAA spokesperson told ESPN in a statement. "Sports wagering education remains a priority of the NCAA's efforts with the goal of providing a variety of materials to support the membership's educational initiatives."

The NCAA remains opposed to all forms of sports betting, legal or illegal, but did change its policy on allowing championship events in states with regulated betting markets like Indiana. Approximately \$127.2 million was bet on basketball, both college and professional, with Indiana sportsbooks in February. Significantly more is expected to be on the line in the coming weeks, as betting interest on college basketball peaks. Nevada gaming officials estimate that \$349 million was bet on the 2019 NCAA tournament at its state's sportsbooks.

"Our highest priority is assuring the integrity of these activities," Jenny Reske, deputy director for the Indiana Gaming Commission, told ESPN. "I understand this is the first tournament played in a state with legal sports betting, but I think we've contemplated all the scenarios, looked at best practices and we're prepared to properly regulate the activity."

The most-feared scenario, of course, is a point-shaving scandal involving an NCAA tournament game. College basketball has been scarred by multiple past point-shaving schemes, with Boston College, Arizona State, Northwestern, Tulane, Toledo, San Diego and Auburn among the Division I programs having suffered gambling-related scandals in the past 50 years. Last February, a New York man entered a guilty plea for trying to bribe players to fix a college basketball game in December 2018, although investigators say the plot never came to fruition.

Regulations prohibit players, coaches, referees and anyone closely tied to programs from placing wagers on NCAA tournament games. Still, unpaid amateur athletes are considered to be more vulnerable of being compromised than professionals with large salaries.



Traditionally, betting limits on college basketball have been smaller than other sports' due to lower overall volume. The lower limits were seen as a deterrent to large-scale point-shaving schemes. But now, with the U.S. betting market expanding around the nation, the volume of money wagered on college basketball is increasing, and sportsbooks are looking to take headline-grabbing bets, despite the risk of what could be behind the big wagers. Some of the largest college basketball bets ever seen in the U.S. reportedly were placed this season.

On Dec. 4, the Barstool Sportsbook Twitter account reported that an anonymous bettor placed two \$1 million bets on the over/under total on a St. Peter's-Maryland game. The tweet was later deleted and Penn National, the parent company of Barstool, declined to comment on the bets that, if legitimate, were among the largest ever reported on a regular-season college basketball game. Both bets would've won in the Terrapins' 90-57 rout of the Peacocks.

More recently, BetMGM reported taking a \$250,000 money-line bet on underdog Ohio State to defeat Illinois in the Big Ten tournament championship game. The Illini held off the Buckeyes in overtime.

To be clear, there have been no accusations of corruption in either game. However, in general, experts say being able to place six- and seven-figure wagers on a sport that has been marred by past point-shaving scandals is more enticing to nefarious characters than in previous years when sportsbooks were less willing to take that size of wager on college basketball.

"These sportsbooks are in a big land grab across the country, and they don't want to be the ones rejecting these giant bets right now, so they take them. It's very concerning to me," said Matthew Holt, president of U.S. Integrity, a company that advises gambling regulators and sports leagues on betting integrity. "Anytime you incentivize people to do something wrong, they're going to try it. In this case, if they know the opportunity is out there to get down a million-plus-dollars, there are going to be more people likely to take chances. Betting limits have always been one of the things that have helped keep some sports safe."

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Source: 17 March 2021, ESPN

Basketball

https://www.espn.com/chalk/story/_/id/31081059/ncaa-keep-close-tabs-betting-men-basketball-tournament

United States

Waynesboro men admit participation in illegal gambling operation

AUGUSTA, Ga. (WRDW/WAGT) - Two Waynesboro men and a Greenwood, S.C., man have admitted to federal charges for participating in a longtime illegal gambling operation.

Grady Brandon Mobley, 44, and Daniel Cates, 50, both of Waynesboro, and Joel Rees, 59, of Greenwood, S.C, entered guilty pleas charging each of them with Prohibition of an Illegal Gambling Business, said David H. Estes, Acting U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Georgia. Mobley also pled guilty to fraud and false statements.

Guilty pleas include prison time and \$650,000 in forfeiture and restitution.

In accordance with the plea agreement, Mobley faces a negotiated sentence of 12 months plus one day in federal prison, and has forfeited \$340,084. He also agrees to pay \$207,716 in restitution to the IRS and Georgia Department of Revenue, and a fine of \$2,000. Cates agreed to the forfeiture of \$100,000.

As described in court documents and testimony, Mobley operated as a "bookie" for an illegal sports betting operation for at least the past 10 years in Burke County, at first collecting bets and paying out winnings himself, and later through a sports betting website operated from Costa Rica.

In 2015, Mobley merged his operation and began splitting his profits with a smaller gambling ring operated by Jones. From 2015 to 2017, Mobley cashed bettor's checks totaling approximately \$220,000 at his parent's check cashing business which operated out of the Mobley Package Shop in Girard, Ga. To help conceal the growing amount of cash involved in the transactions, Mobley enlisted the assistance of Cates, who admitted that he funneled approximately \$250,000 in gambling proceeds through his Waynesboro tire store, Cates Firestone, in return for money and favors from Mobley.

During this period, Mobley admitted filing false information on his income tax returns to conceal the amount of proceeds from the illegal gambling operation.

After plea hearings before U.S. District Court Chief Judge J. Randal Hall, each of the three men were released on bond pending sentencing and formal acceptance of the plea agreement at a later date.

Source: 19 March 2021, 12.26

All Sports

<https://www.wrdw.com/2021/03/19/three-ga-men-admit-participation-in-illegal-gambling-operation/>



ODDS AND ENDS

Special Report: Life after COVID

As European football looks to emerge from the worst of the coronavirus pandemic, a growing financial gap is accelerating the game's financial powerhouse with worrying consequences.

At the top, big clubs are suffering but remain in relatively reasonable health. Revenues at the champions of Spain, Germany, England, France, Italy and Portugal have all shrunk. Porto's revenue collapsed by 50 per cent according to the 2021 version of The European Champions Report by KPMG, but the fall was only eight per cent at Real Madrid.

Real brought in income of €681.2m in the 2019-20 season, and even made a profit after winning La Liga for a 34th time, as did Champions League winners Bayern Munich.

Supported by major television deals, the continent's elite are relatively safe and attractive to investors – investors such as ALK Capital, who recently bought out English Premier League side Burnley – but take away that income and the consequences can be devastating.

When an unprecedented TV rights deal for Ligue 1 clubs in France worth more than €1.15bn per year collapsed at the end of last year, Rennes predicted annual losses of €40m as a consequence.

Outside of these main leagues, TV revenue is less valuable. What matters, and what is hurting clubs the most, is keeping fans outside of stadia. Matchday income comprised just 13 per cent of total Premier League revenue in 2018-19, but in neighbouring Scotland it was worth 47 per cent, according to research by Deloitte.

Even further down the European football ladder, the gap is almost incredible. In 2018, total TV revenue at the 400 clubs outside the top 20 leagues was less than a quarter of an average Premier League club according to UEFA. The value of TV rights for small clubs in small leagues is unlikely to have gone up.

Player trading has joined gate money and broadcast income as a vital source of income recently. Clubs that not so long ago challenged and won European titles are now part of a supply chain for mega-clubs with transnational followings like Real and Bayern.

Over the last five years, Benfica, Ajax, Porto, RB Salzburg and Sporting – winners of eight European Cups between them – made a profit of €1.4bn in developing and selling on major players such as Donny van de Beek and Hakim Ziyech, according to research by The Daily Mail.

In mid-sized European leagues, club-trained players are now three times more likely to make their debut, according to a study by the CIES Football Observatory. Players making their debut in Slovakia's Super Liga, for example, are the youngest in Europe's main leagues at an average age of 23.58 years.

MSK Zilina has more players in Slovak youth teams than any other Slovak club and after developing these players, sells them on – such as Robert Bozenik to Dutch side Feyenoord for €4.6m.

Dr. Raffaele Poli from the CIES Football Observatory sees the crisis posed by the pandemic as an opportunity for well-run smaller clubs but warns: "Some clubs will need to go part-time."

Part-time clubs will be less able to develop players, and to sustain the player-trading model clubs need buyers. But spending on players is shrinking.

In the summer of 2020, the English Premier League was the biggest spender with £1.26bn spent on players such as Kai Havertz, a £72m signing for Chelsea, but this total was £350m lower than the previous year according to data from website transfermarkt.

Barcelona acquired Miralem Pjanic from Juventus for £54m, although pulled off some creative accounting by sending Arthur the other way, while rivals Real did not spend for the first time in 40 years. Even in the Belgian Jupiler League, spending was down around £100m on the summer of 2019 to £54.5m. That figure made Belgian clubs the ninth biggest spenders in Europe, while spending at the tenth-placed Turkish Super Lig shrank 56 per cent to just £29.2m.

This threatens one of the few post-pandemic sources of hope for smaller clubs, who need money to invest in facilities and coaching. Benfica and Ajax spend up to £10m a year on academies, coaches and scouts and, for now, are easily recouping that investment.

Zilina's rivals FC DAC 1904 spent €14m on a new training centre after getting €7.4m from Hungary's government, which supports

Hungarian speaking areas outside its national borders, such as Dunajska Streda. Other clubs are not so fortunate.

At the top end, more than 20 mainly American private equity firms expressed interest in a German Bundesliga plan to raise €300m to roll out an international online subscription service. Nine out of 20 clubs in France's Ligue 2 are foreign-owned – with Nancy acquired by a US/Chinese group – but the wave of Asian investment has mostly abated, says Simon Chadwick, Professor & Director of Eurasian Sport at EMLyon.

“What I find more interesting is the resurgence of US interest in football investments, the acquisition of a stake in Italy's Serie A, ALK's purchase of Burnley and the formation of Red Bull's SPAC being three notable examples,” says professor Chadwick. “This serves to demonstrate that there remains some considerable commercial potential in football, especially as it convergences with the worlds of digital and entertainment.”

Simon Hall, director of corporate finance at accountants BDO, who produces an annual survey of football finance, says: “US private equity in the European football space is huge. The way they generate fan engagement is streets ahead.”

US interest is mainly at the higher end where fan engagement can prove lucrative. Further down, multi-club ownership is growing, such as the recent acquisition of Bulgarian club Botev Plovdiv by Anton Zingarevich, the Russian owner of Danish club Fremad Amager.

In eastern Europe, a hangover from Soviet times means that local authorities or government departments still fund part or all of some clubs, but greater strains on public funds due to the pandemic will make using taxpayers' money to fund professional football increasingly unsustainable.

With sources of money vanishing, UEFA remains the bulwark that smaller clubs will rely on. But with the next round of TV rights due to be decided this year, plans for a European Super League have again been revived, led by US bankers JPMorgan Chase & Co.

“Football's reform cannot wait,” said Real Madrid president Florentino Perez at the end of 2020, but UEFA's Champions League is virtually a closed competition already.

There are now only six Champions League places available each year to qualifiers. These are often the same clubs, who use UEFA's prize money to cement their domestic domination.

Since changes in the 1994-95 season that heralded in the modern Champions League, just four Greek clubs have shared 52 places and only three Croatian clubs have appeared.

The smaller the European league, the greater the impact of UEFA money. In 16 of the 35 smaller national leagues, UEFA payments accounted for a third or more of all revenue and the combined domestic.

In San Marino, average club revenue in 2018 was €170,000, but champions Tre Penne earned €490,000 from losing their sole Champions League preliminary round qualifier to Andorran side FC Santa Coloma.

In San Marino, all money earned by sides from UEFA competition is pooled and shared between the country's 15 clubs, but such solidarity is anathema elsewhere in Europe, where clubs are increasingly reliant on benefactors.

Buying success can be cheap for brave investors. In 2018, average revenue in the Latvian Higher League was €626,000. In 2019-20, Ventspils earned €780,000 in UEFA money after reaching the third qualifying round of the Europa League, while champions FC Riga pocketed just over €1.3m after reaching the competition's play-off round.

This is a delicate balancing act and UEFA's research shows that many smaller clubs spend at least €6 for every €5 they make. “There are a number of countries where profitability remains the exception, rather than the rule,” noted UEFA in its 2020 financial report, which covered the period before the pandemic. Since then, money available from benefactors is likely to have been affected.

This bleak scenario increases the pressure on UEFA ahead of a decision likely this summer on the structure of the Champions League from 2024 and solidarity payments to smaller clubs.

At the start of the 2019-20 season, UEFA estimated it would make €3.25bn from European competition including the Champions League, Europa League and Super Cup, with €2.73bn (84 per cent) going to participating clubs. Just €227.5m (seven per cent) would be distributed in solidarity payments, with the remaining balance kept for administration. For the smaller clubs that emerge from the pandemic, those ratios need to change.

UEFA is planning a third European competition for smaller clubs, but details are scarce. Dubbed the Europa Conference, the tournament is unlikely to attract much interest from broadcasters, which would mean UEFA funds prize money itself to head off

a potential Super League.

Ambitious smaller clubs with benefactors still in place, like Luxembourg's FC Dudelange, will however want to be in the Europa League, which the club achieved twice in a row from 2018, not a new version of UEFA's little lamented summer tournament, the Intertoto Cup.

The Europa Conference's main appeal will be to match fixers, who will relish the opportunity to manipulate UEFA matches that barely merit a mention in Europe but would attract plenty of interest on the amorphous Asian markets that are so keen on European football.

Despite the pandemic, 2020 saw a record number of alerts for suspicious betting in European football and last year huge and separate match-fixing schemes were uncovered in Armenia and Moldova.

Figures linked to match-fixing are already circling clubs in other smaller countries and as European football emerges from the pandemic, a new compact needs to be formed. If not, the consequences could be dire for large swathes of European clubs.

Source: Steve Menary, 19 March 2021, World Soccer Football

<https://www.worldsoccer.com/best-of-ws/special-report-life-after-covid-411736>

Academia

The court of arbitration for sport jurisprudence on match-fixing: a legal update

The Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) jurisprudence on manipulation of sports competitions has vastly evolved from its initial award in RSC Anderlecht in 1998, to now Labuts in August 2020. Alongside, international and national regulations, as well as sporting regulations, including, most recently, the Council of Europe's Macolin Convention on the Manipulation of Sports Competitions, have sought to effectively tackle the omnipresent, ever-growing phenomenon of competition manipulation. Against this backdrop, this article briefly outlines the existing legal landscape on manipulation, followed by a chronological detailing of each CAS issued award. The key aspects of defining such sanctionable behaviour, select issues of standard of proof and types of evidence which are admissible and relied on, as well as the manner and quantum of sanction are then analysed. Ultimately, noting empirical trends across these awards, questions on ne bis in idem, proportionality of sanctions and legal certainty across CAS jurisprudence are raised.

Source: M. Diaconu, S. Kuwelkar & A. Kuhn, 17 March 2021, Springer

<https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007/s40318-021-00181-3.pdf>



FIFPRO

'Shaping Our Future' report calls for new social contract in professional football

FIFPRO is today launching the 'Shaping Our Future' report about men's professional football that examines global revenue streams and the working conditions of players, with a view to achieving a more stable and robust game.

The report is based on data from a sample of 79 countries and combines the economic market insights of KPMG Football Benchmark with information on the employment conditions of professional footballers from FIFPRO. This groundbreaking format shows that those markets where there is a fair social contract – in which personal, civil, economic and workers' rights are strong – can expect to sustain a more advanced football economy.

'Shaping Our Future' makes clear that domestic playing environments with sound governance, stakeholder representation, and collective agreements with player unions, lead not only to better employment conditions for footballers, but also increased market stability and sustained development.

At a time of systemic changes and a global health crisis impacting competitions, the report puts the working lives of professional footballers at the heart of the debate about the development of the game, and uses an evidence-based approach to recommend the most important steps to take over the next decade. 'Shaping Our Future' places the 79 football markets into six clusters ranging from the world's five most-advanced leagues (England, France, Germany, Italy and Spain) – "with a high degree of stability" - to 23 which face "significant challenges to development".

Among the key findings:

- Less than one-third of countries have well-functioning domestic football with stable employment conditions
- A lack of basic employment standards in many countries creates unnecessary instability and hinders development
- Several markets with smaller revenue streams (for example, the Netherlands) provide more stability and better conditions for players than larger football economies (such as Turkey)
- More than 70 percent of the analysed 79 countries have average club budgets below €10 million
- 30 of 79 domestic football markets have annual broadcast income of less than \$5 million
- There are a lack of national and international financial protection schemes to guarantee that players receive their salaries

'Shaping Our Future' makes a series of recommendations to address these and other issues, with a view to strengthening football's foundations through an efficient, innovative and consolidated approach.

Among the key recommendations are:

- Stability & Protection: global salary protection mechanisms
- Sustainable Growth: investment in player careers and conditions
- Jobs & Innovation: new competition models at all levels of the game
- Player Voice & Activism: collective bargaining and access to justice

FIFPRO General Secretary Jonas Baer-Hoffmann said: "At a time of extraordinary uncertainty, it is crucial we review and strengthen the foundations of professional football for the next generation. We are in the middle of a new wave of industrial and societal development but the culture and governance in the game is stuck in the past. It is time for a new 'social contract' and a commitment to treat players – male, female, on all continents – with dignity and respect.

"'Shaping Our Future' shows what needs to change to secure football's future, and underlines how football players must be at the heart of this process. Their voice is critical to achieve sustainability and transparency. Players make football the most impactful sport in the world. They are driving performance and entertainment, connecting people, and building communities.

"The report shows that most lack a stable platform to build a career and contribute to a prosperous game. We need to address this urgently. Players must have a say on issues that affect their working conditions and take their rightful position in decision-making structures. A proactive culture of collective agreements and inclusive representation models will pave the way for a strong and sustainable future."

Source: 16 March 2021, FIFPRO
Football

<https://www.fifpro.org/en/industry/shaping-our-future-report-launched>

Global**Restoring Trust in Sport: Corruption Cases and Solutions**

In this solutions-focused collection of sport corruption case studies, leading researchers consider how to re-establish trust both within sports organisations and in the wider sporting public. Inspired by the idea of 'moral repair', the book examines significant corruption cases and the measures taken to reduce further harm or risk of recurrence. The book has an international scope, including case study material from Europe, Asia, Africa, Australia and New Zealand, and covers important contemporary issues including whistleblowing, bribery, match-fixing, gambling, bidding for major events, and good governance. It examines the loss of trust at both national and international levels. Drawing on cutting-edge research, the book includes both on-field and off-field examples, from Olympic, non-Olympic, professional and amateur sports, as well as diverse academic and practitioner perspectives. Offering an important contribution to current debates and a source of reflection on best professional practice, Restoring Trust in Sport helps us to better understand why corruption happens in sport and how it can and should be addressed.

Source: 28 March 2021, Routledge

<https://www.routledge.com/Restoring-Trust-in-Sport-Corruption-Cases-and-Solutions/Ordway/p/book/9780367473068>



ITIA**Betting companies 'must continue their efforts' to protect the integrity of sports, says ITIA**

Betting companies should play a central role in the fight for integrity in sports, particularly relating to gambling-affiliated corruption, according to the CEO of the International Tennis Integrity Agency (ITIA).

Speaking to the Integrity Insight Podcast, Jonny Gray, CEO of the organisation, discussed the threat posed to tennis and other sports by corrupted players and officials, as well as organised criminals, and the role betting companies play in assisting with the fight against these illicit activities.

Gray stated: "I think betting companies, other data companies and others involved in the supply of live scoring data to the betting industry need to continue their efforts to innovate in the way that they detect anomalous betting patterns, to ensure that they vary in the algorithms they've got so that they're not predictable or easy to counter, and to really engage with us, and other sports, in this battle in this adversarial situation."

Adding to these comments, Gray remarked that data from betting companies 'formed the backbone of our intelligence collection' throughout 2020, as the Agency dealt with the hurdles created by the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Making sure that the betting industry continues to innovate and invest in its detection system is really important," he continued.

Tennis, like many other sports, relies heavily on betting data as an initial source of suspicion around a potentially corrupted match, whilst education of players and officials is another key preventative measure.

The use of this data and intelligence has enabled the ITIA – as well as its predecessor the Tennis Integrity Unit (TIU) – to successfully sanction a number of corrupted tennis officials and players in a range of countries such as France, Algeria, Slovakia, Ukraine and the UK.

Additionally, Gray was questioned on the results of an International Betting Integrity Association (IBIA) report published last month, which highlighted that football and tennis are the two sports most likely to be under threat from corruption. Of the 98 tennis alerts recorded by the IBIA in 2020, 39 were provided by the ITIA as intelligence reports.

When asked why tennis in particular is a target by betting corrupters, Gray stated: "Unlike team sports, it only takes one player to be corrupted to influence the outcome of the match, and the nuanced betting that was impossible is possible now with in-play betting."

Furthermore, Gray commented on the dynamic nature of betting-related threats, which range from 'unsophisticated people, potentially within the sport itself, through to organised crime'.

"Europol just warned us a few months ago that organised crime is really focusing on the lower professional levels of tennis and football as well, and trying to corrupt it," he continued.

The CEO also discussed the recent creation of the ITIA, highlighting the rationale behind its transition from the original TIU.

"The International Tennis Integrity Agency has been established by the governing bodies of professional tennis to safeguard the sport of tennis, and safeguarding it from corruption, especially betting related corruption," he explained.

"The name has been adjusted to reflect more clearly the international, global nature of our remit, and from the point of view of what is that impact, I think the impact is primarily confidence with stakeholders that tennis understands that there was a potential of conflict, if you like, and it's removed that, and fully established this independent body."

Source: 16 March 2021, *INSIDER Sport*

Tennis

<https://www.insidersport.com/2021/03/16/betting-companies-must-continue-their-efforts-to-protect-the-integrity-of-sports-says-itia/>

CORRUPTION

FIFA

Fifa gives former president Sepp Blatter additional ban of six years eight months

Fifa has banned ex-president Sepp Blatter from football until 2028 after giving him a new suspension of six years and eight months.

Former Fifa general secretary Jerome Valcke has received a similar ban, with both also being fined £780,000.

The punishments were for "various violations" of Fifa's code of ethics.

The new bans start when the current suspensions of 85-year-old Blatter and Valcke, 60, end in October 2021 and October 2025 respectively.

A Fifa statement said: "The investigations into Messrs Blatter and Valcke covered various charges, in particular concerning bonus payments in relation to Fifa competitions that were paid to top Fifa management officials, various amendments and extensions of employment contracts, as well as reimbursement by Fifa of private legal costs in the case of Mr Valcke."

In its findings, world football's investigatory chamber found Blatter accepted "an undue economic benefit" of 23m Swiss Francs (£18m) "split over the years 2010 to 2014, as a result of the conflict of interest created by the allocation and execution of extraordinary bonus payments between limited top-ranking Fifa officials".

It also found that Blatter, Valcke, along with former Argentina football federation president Julio Grondona and ex-Fifa finance director Markus Kattner, had "set up a scheme through which they were allowing themselves to obtain extraordinary benefits with a minimum of effort".

It added: "This vicious circle saw three of them (Blatter, Grondona and Valcke) signing the amendment contracts of the others and approving the respective extraordinary bonuses, while the fourth (Kattner) was in charge of implementing the payment of such bonuses (as well as of keeping the matter "off the books", by not reflecting the bonuses in the Fifa financial statements and not reporting them to the Fifa auditors)."

Blatter was originally banned by Fifa for eight years, later reduced to six, over ethics breaches when he was found to have made a £1.3m "disloyal payment" to ex-Uefa boss Michel Platini.

His appeal to the Court of Arbitration for Sport (Cas) was rejected in December 2016.

Valcke, whose initial ban was reduced from 12 to 10 years, lost an appeal to CAS in July 2018 over his decade-long ban from football.

Source: 24 March 2021, BBC

Football

<https://www.bbc.com/sport/football/56508619>



UEFA**UEFA removes 2 soccer officials linked to criminal cases**

GENEVA (AP) — A Croatian soccer official sentenced to prison in a corruption case linked to a Luka Modri transfer was removed from a committee overseeing the European Championship, UEFA said Friday.

Damir Vrbanovi lost an appeal last week against his conviction and a three-year sentence in a ruling by the supreme court of Croatia.

Vrbanovi, a former executive at Dinamo Zagreb and the Croatia soccer federation, had been reappointed by UEFA to its National Team Competitions Committee in 2019 while awaiting his appeal against the conviction the previous year.

UEFA also removed former Serbia soccer president Slavisa Kozeka from its committee overseeing the 55 European member federations.

Kozeka resigned as head of Serbian soccer on Monday after being linked to a fan group with alleged ties to organized crime.

“They are no longer members of their respective UEFA standing committees,” the European soccer body said Friday of Vrbanovi and Kozeka.

In the Croatian case, the conviction was also upheld for Dinamo Zagreb coach Zoran Mami, who resigned two days before his team beat Tottenham last week to reach the Europa League quarterfinals.

The case related to millions of dollars embezzled from transfers abroad of Dinamo players, including Modri to Tottenham in 2008 and Dejan Lovren to Lyon in 2010. Both players testified in court in 2018 and had been accused of perjury.

The embezzlement trial in Croatia led to verdicts one week ahead of the 2018 World Cup in Russia. Soccer federation vice president Zdravko Mami fled to Bosnia-Herzegovina before being sentenced to 6½ years in prison.

Mami was a close ally of federation president Davor Šuker, the former Dinamo and Real Madrid forward who has been a member of UEFA’s executive committee since 2015.

Despite the turmoil, Modri captained a Croatia team with Lovren in defense to the World Cup final, losing 4-2 against France. Modri was voted FIFA best player in the world for 2018.

Vrbanovi made headlines at the tournament when, as the convicted director general of Croatia’s soccer body, he sat in the VIP section at the quarterfinals game against Russia. In the same row of seats were then-Prime Minister of Russia Dmitry Medvedev and Croatia’s then-president Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovi.

FIFA later said there was no restriction on Vrbanovi because his conviction was not final while under appeal. UEFA said in 2018 it was awaiting developments in the case before taking action.

As a former Dinamo executive, Vrbanovi was a founding board member in 2008 of the European Club Association.

Source: 27 March 2021, AP News

Football

<https://apnews.com/article/europe-international-soccer-zagreb-serbia-croatia-dbc0b61900e64c2cc47a1eb4142c6d40>