



INTERPOL

INTEGRITY IN SPORT

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Photos International Olympic Committee

INVESTIGATIONS

Australia

Gambling watchdog investigating Tennis Australia

The Victorian gambling watchdog is investigating Tennis Australia after accusations it contravened anti-corruption protocol and that it has not done enough to prevent match fixing. An eight-month Victorian Commission of Gambling and Liquor Regulation investigation is in its final stages, and will determine whether Tennis Australia is fit to continue as a sports controlling body.

If Tennis Australia is stripped of its authorisation it would lose its cut of profits from bets made on Australian tennis as well as the right to sign sponsorship agreements with wagering companies, combined income potentially worth tens of millions of dollars. The investigation began after former Brumby government gaming minister Tony Robinson complained to the commission in May after information that arose from a match fixing case involving former Australian open boys champion Oliver Anderson. Anderson's case involved bets being placed through CrownBet on a minor tournament, the Traralgon Challenger, in 2016. The 19-year-old admitted to throwing the first set of a match to help a friend with a bet. He pleaded guilty and was not convicted.

Mr Robinson's complaint relates to the involvement of Harold Mitchell as a director of Crown Resorts, which owns CrownBet, and as a board member of Tennis Australia, which Mr Robinson argues contravenes the code of conduct governing the sport. A sporting body must "demonstrate their compliance with national and international codes of conduct and conventions relating to integrity in their sport" to maintain their controlling body approval, according to the commission. The Tennis Anti-Corruption Program states that no "covered person" - meaning any player, related person, or tournament support personnel - can be employed by a company which accepts wagers.

Mr Robinson also argues that Tennis Australia has not done enough to stamp out match fixing, as sport bets can still be made on matches in minor tournaments. "As long as these betting opportunities remain intact it is inevitable that more players in minor tournaments will be approached to fix matches," Mr Robinson says in the complaint.

Mr Robinson, the minister from 2007 to 2010, has regularly voiced his concerns about the risks gambling poses to sports integrity, including when sporting bodies are sponsored by gaming companies. Tennis Australia needs the gambling watchdog's authorisation to hold tournaments that bets can be placed on, including the Australian Open.

Under standard agreements negotiated between controlling bodies and wagering companies, five per cent of gross wagering profits from bets placed on Australian competitions are paid back to the body. It is unclear whether similar conditions are attached to Tennis Australia agreements with such companies.

Insiders consider it unlikely that Tennis Australia will be stripped of its authorisation, but the commission could recommend that the body tighten its integrity measures. The Tennis Integrity Unit confirmed to Fairfax Media that it had reviewed Mr Mitchell's involvement with Tennis Australia, but found it did not breach protocols. An integrity unit spokesman did not clarify further.

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There is no suggestion Mr Mitchell, a media industry heavyweight who writes a business column for Fairfax Media, is involved in any wrongdoing. His office did not respond to a request for comment.

A commission spokeswoman said that any claim that an organisation was failing to adhere to its obligations as a sports controlling body were taken seriously.

"All complaints are handled systematically to ensure investigative policies and procedures are followed," she said. "After receiving a complaint regarding Tennis Australia's status as a sports controlling body, as per standard protocols, the VCGLR commenced an investigation, which is in its final stages." Tennis Australia is believed to have only been made aware of the investigation in recent days.

"We are comfortable that the result of the investigation [will] reflect the VCGLR's confidence in our ability as the sports controlling body for tennis in Australia," a Tennis Australia spokeswoman said. The Anderson case raised serious questions about the integrity of the sport. But tennis and law enforcement sources believe that rather than shining a light on endemic corruption, it proved how difficult it was to fix matches within Australia.

The Tennis Integrity Unit list of about 30 players suspended or who have finished sanctions because of corruption offences includes five Australians, most of which are linked to two match fixing investigations - the probe that netted former top-200 player Nick Lindahl, and the Anderson case. Both cases were pursued by Victoria Police, whose sporting integrity intelligence unit is considered one of the best equipped to deal with sports corruption in international policing.

Source: Nino Bucci, 24 January 2018, *The Age*

Tennis

<http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/gambling-watchdog-investigating-tennis-australia-20180123-h0n3oz.html>

Global

Boxing faces being expelled from Olympic programme at Tokyo 2020 after Interim President with links to organised crime chosen to lead AIBA

Boxing faces expulsion from the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games unless governance issues, including the choice of the world governing body's Interim President, are addressed, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) warned here today.

Among serious problems highlighted by IOC President Thomas Bach included the appointment of Gafur Rakhimov, a Uzbek allegedly linked to organised crime, as Interim President of the International Boxing Association (AIBA).

An investigation into AIBA governance has been opened by the IOC, run by its chief ethics and compliance officer, Paquerette Girard-Zappelli.

Bach also said they have not yet accepted AIBA's claim that no bouts at the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro were affected by match-fixing.

"We are extremely worried about the governance of AIBA," the German said here today.

"We have received a report from our chief ethics officer and from the IOC Sports Director [Kit McConnell], which funneled the decision which we already took last December to withhold future financial contributions to AIBA.

"The IOC Executive Board is not satisfied with the report prepared by AIBA on governance, finance, referee and doping issues.

"The IOC reserves the right to review the inclusion of boxing at the Youth Olympic Games Buenos Aires and Olympic Games Tokyo 2020."

AIBA must now deliver a further report by April 2018.

The world governing body have already described the IOC response as "extremely disappointing" as they hoped they would "have understood that the processes necessary to implement even more measures require more time and that the positive steps already taken in recent times are evidence of AIBA's strong efforts and willingness to reform".

Specific concerns raised included "issues surrounding the new Interim President", the lack of "clarity" around finances, the failure of an approved project to reform the referees system and the absence of a "robust anti-doping programme".

Bach also cited as problematic the "preparations for the Extraordinary Congress in Dubai and the way the new leadership was, I cannot say elected, but promoted or installed". Rakhimov was chosen to replace Franco Falcinelli at the AIBA Extraordinary Congress in Dubai last month after the Italian decided to step down.

AIBA claimed the 66-year-old was moved to the role in accordance with the AIBA statutes, it was claimed, following a meeting held by the world governing body's Executive Board during the lunch break, as the longest serving vice-president.

Falcinelli had originally replaced Taiwanese IOC member C K Wu, forced out of office after 11 years following allegations of financial mis-management.

Rakhimov has repeatedly been named as a mafia boss in the media with strong links to organised crime, although he has never been prosecuted of anything.

Last month, however, he was among 10 individuals the United States Treasury announced they were imposing sanctions on because they were allegedly associated with the alleged Eurasian criminal entity, the Thieves-in-Law.

Bach also made clear that the IOC decision last year to reduce boxing quota places as well as the removal of two male weight categories to make way for two new female ones is "final". AIBA officials had announced at their Extraordinary Congress in Dubai they planned to lobby the IOC to overturn this decision.

Bach also conceded that they have not ruled out the possibility of matches at Rio 2016 being fixed.

Suspect results included Russia's Evgeny Tishchenko winning the gold medal in the men's heavyweight final over Kazakhstan's Vassily Levit, even though he appeared to be on the back-foot throughout.

Ireland's bantamweight world champion Michael Conlan was involved in one of the most controversial contests of the Games after seeming to dominate a quarter-final against Vladimir Nikitin before the Russian was awarded the victory.

"We at the time received reports from a committee established by AIBA which was dismissing these concerns," Bach said.

"But from the fact that refereeing is part of the decision we already took in December last year, we were requesting more info and you can conclude that we are still looking into this issue.

"We want to have satisfying explanation that the results presented to us does reflect the reality."

AIBA claim they will put into place a "New Foundation Plan" over the next six months.

"This plan and the recommendations produced will be discussed during the AIBA Executive Committee meeting in July and an update will be provided to the IOC in the requested April 30 report," they said.

"In the meantime, AIBA will continue its efforts to convince the IOC of its determination to not repeat any of the past mistakes and its commitment to a fresh, positive future centered on good governance and sound management."

They did not mention refereeing problems and the judging scandal at Rio 2016 in their statement today.

Source: Nick Butler, 4 February 2018, *Inside The Games*

Boxing

<https://www.insidethegames.biz/index.php/articles/1061028/boxing-faces-being-expelled-from-olympic-programme-at-tokyo-2020-after-interim-president-with-links-to-organised-crime-chosen-to-lead-aiba>

Malaysia

CCID ordered to eradicate match fixing in Malaysian League: Zahid

PUTRAJAYA: The Royal Malaysia Police (PDRM) Commercial Crime Investigation Department (CCID) has been directed to flush out match fixing among players, coaches and management of Malaysia League teams.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi said the social ill which could kill the number one sport of the country should be stopped immediately with offenders brought to court.

"As Home Minister, I am heeding the call of the Football Association of Malaysia (FAM) president Tunku Ismail Sultan Ibrahim that PDRM are not merely a football team but also take firm actions to stem the greed of match fixing culprits in the country's football arena.

"They seemed not satisfied with the salary, allowance and incentive provided by the team, but under the new Inspector-General of Police, activities such as throwing matches will be completely eradicated," he said here today.

He was speaking at the launch of PDRM FA squad and new jersey in the Premier League this season.

Ahmad Zahid said apart from the three aspects, PDRM would also "sniff" out referees working in cahoot with bookies in their despicable deals.

For that, errant referees would not escape action if investigations found they were involved, he warned. — Bernama

Source: 27 January 2018, *The Sun Daily*

<http://www.thesundaily.my/news/2018/01/27/ccid-ordered-eradicate-match-fixing-malaysian-league-zahid>

United Arab Emirates

The ICC's Anti-Corruption Unit is investigating a dodgy match from the UAE after incredible vision of the carnage went viral
IT appears to be the most blatant example of match-fixing in cricket history.

The International Cricket Council's Anti-Corruption Unit is investigating a suspicious match from a private league in the UAE, in which players were dismissed with alarming — and at times, comical — ease.

According to Cricinfo, the tournament — the All-Time Ajman league — was called off on its second day after authorities “refused to allow them to continue using the ground”.

The Dubai Star were chasing a modest target of 136 against the Sharjah Warriors, but could only muster 46 as batsmen fell in increasingly farcical fashion — with the majority dismissed either by run-out or stumping.

Batsmen would charge the bowler, and not put in any attempt to return to the crease. Even the fumbling wicketkeeper couldn't mess up these stumping chances.

The running between the wickets would make park cricketers shield their eyes — with suicidal attempts resulting in embarrassing run-outs.

A YouTube video of the carnage was uploaded shortly afterwards, describing it as “one of the most pitiful displays of batting, running between wickets, fielding and wicketkeeping of all time.”

“If we're honest, the only way we can explain it is if there was a briefcase (or several) full of cash and some suspicious betting patterns involved,” read the description in the video.

The embarrassing nature of the dismissals drew widespread condemnation online, with former England captain Michael Vaughan weighing in.

The match is currently under investigation.

“There is currently an ICC Anti-Corruption Unit investigation underway in relation to the Ajman All Stars League held recently in Ajman, UAE,” Alex Marshall, the ICC general manager, Anti-Corruption, said in a statement.

“The ICC ACU works to uphold integrity in cricket, and in keeping with that role we are talking to players and officials and will not make any further comment at this time.”

Source: 31 January 2018, Fox Sports

Cricket

<https://www.foxsports.com.au/cricket/the-iccs-anticorruption-unit-is-investigating-a-dodgy-match-from-the-uae-after-incredible-vision-of-the-carnage-went-viral/news-story/fdf43d68345d800e3affd8066d6e434a>



United States

U.S. prosecutors investigating global sports corruption: NYT

(Reuters) - U.S. federal prosecutors are conducting an extensive investigation into global sports corruption, including at FIFA, the world governing body for soccer, and the international and U.S. Olympics organizations, The New York Times reported on Wednesday, citing a grand jury subpoena.

As part of the probe, the Justice Department is looking at possible racketeering, money laundering and fraud charges related to two track and field world championship events and the business executives who have consulted on bids for various other elite competitions, according to the subpoena, the Times reported.

The investigation is being conducted by the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of New York in Brooklyn, which has previously investigated FIFA and systematic doping in Russia.

A spokesman for the U.S. Attorney's office declined to comment on the report.

The subpoena, one of a number that were delivered in January, solicited documents, testimony and financial records dating to 2013, the Times reported.

Since then, the United States has won bids to host the 2021 track and field world championships in Eugene, Oregon and the 2028 Summer Olympics in Los Angeles.

The subpoena did not explicitly refer to the Los Angeles Olympics bid, but did focus on the world governing body for track and field, the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF), the newspaper said.

The IAAF awarded the sport's 2019 world championships to Doha, Qatar, and the 2021 event to Eugene.

The people asked to provide information, including personal and corporate bank records, were expected to appear in federal court in Brooklyn as soon as this week, the Times reported.

A spokesman for the United States Olympic Committee declined to comment on Wednesday and a spokesman for the International Olympic Committee did not immediately respond to a request, the newspaper reported. A spokeswoman for the IAAF said it had not been contacted by U.S. investigators.

Reporting by Eric Walsh in Washington; Additional reporting by Karen Freifeld in New York; Editing by Leslie Adler and Susan Thomas

Source: 31 January 2018, Reuters

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-sports-fraud/u-s-prosecutors-investigating-global-sports-corruption-nyt-idUSKBN1FK36V>



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SENTENCES/SANCTIONS

Australia

Shelbourne harness racing trainer fined \$20,000 for fixing three country Victorian races

A SHELBOURNE harness racing trainer has been fined \$20,000 for his role in fixing three races in country Victoria in 2014.

Larry Eastman, 60, was sentenced in the Bendigo Magistrates' Court on Thursday after pleading guilty to five dishonesty offences. A magistrate said Eastman's conduct reflected poorly on the honest and hard working people of the local harness racing industry. Eastman came to police attention during their investigation of Mildura father-and-son harness racing figures Shayne and Greg Cramp, when Eastman was involved in intercepted phone calls.

His conduct involved using the technique of drenching, involving placing a tube down the horse's throat and adding a mixture of alkalis agents, sodiums and bicarbonate – illegal within 48 hours of a race as it gives horses an unfair advantage. Eastman was aware that the horse Cashiking was drenched four hours before Race 7 at Nyah at Swan Hill on December 2, 2014.

Cashiking's odds shortened from \$35 the day before to \$8.50 after a "noticeable betting plunge". Two Queensland men bet on Eastman's behalf in an attempt to disguise his betting activity. Cashiking won the race, and the associates of Eastman won \$22,110. Eastman drenched the horse Waterslide three to five hours before Race 5 at Charlton on December 8, 2014.

He planned for the horse to win the race, but not as "convincingly" as it did. The horse was held back for a blood test by stewards. Eastman attempted to inject potassium to mask the effects of drenching, but knocked the syringe down the back of the horse stall. An associate of Eastman managed to inject Waterslide. Eastman told the associate that what they did "goes to your grave". He also said the syringe would be found in 2060 when they are "pulling the joint down". Eastman placed a successful \$200 bet at three-to-one for a profit of \$400. Almost three years later, detectives found the syringe in the stall.

Eastman then told an associate to drench the horse Dynamite Dick three hours before Race 5 at Horsham on December 15, 2014. The associate was driving another horse, which was the favourite for the race. He was instructed to allow Dynamite Dick to win. Eastman told his Queensland associate that the horse would be "getting a bit of help". Eastman bet \$200 on the race. His associates won a combined \$13,655. Three days later, Eastman arranged to make a number of losing bets in an attempt to hide his betting activity.

Detectives started investigating Eastman at the time, but took more than three years before charges were laid. Eastman has since surrendered his racing licence after being involved in harness racing for 44 years. No one else involved in the race fixing has been subject to criminal charges.

Defence counsel Robert Timms said Eastman fixed the races after encountering financial difficulty in 2014, and claimed he only had \$400 left in his account for Christmas. No documents were tendered to court to prove his financial status at the time. Mr Timms said it was unfortunate because in 2015 Eastman had a number of group 1 winners.

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"The bizarre thing is that he engaged in this corrupt activity, and appears to have obtained less than \$2000 out of it," he said.

"We have a man who has lead an exemplary life up until this time of extreme financial hardship.

"He has now lost the opportunity for him to work within the industry, the only industry he has ever worked in."

Prosecutor Leading Senior Constable Alan Walker said a prison term was within range for the offending. Magistrate Patrick Southey said the offending put the public's faith in harness racing at risk.

"If the public say 'I don't trust it, I've had enough of it, I'll follow another sport,' all those innocent hard working people will be impacted," he said.

"I'm sure you will accept that the racing industry employs a lot of good people. Honest and hard-working, with a genuine love of horses.

"Their livelihoods will be put at risk if the public turn their back on it."

Eastman was convicted and fined \$20,000, with \$122.30 in court costs.

Source: Adam Holmes, 25 January 2018, Bendigo Advertiser

Harness racing

<http://www.bendigoadvertiser.com.au/story/5189473/shelbourne-harness-racing-trainer-fined-for-race-fixing/>

BETTING

Global

ESSA reports 266 suspicious betting alerts in 2017

Brussels, 31 January 2018: International betting integrity body ESSA (Sports Betting Integrity) reported 266 cases of suspicious betting to the relevant authorities during 2017, following a fourth quarter tally of 114 alerts. Tennis (160) and football (45) constituted 77% of all suspicious alerts during the year, whilst alerts covering all other sports grew significantly to 23% (up from 8% in 2016). Geographically, Europe continues to lead the location of sporting events on which alerts have been generated, totalling 144 (54%) in 2017, with Asia continuing to fill second spot with 50 alerts (19%).

Khalid Ali, ESSA Secretary General stated that: "The past year has proved to be one of our most challenging and yet productive to date. The effectiveness of the association's alert system, bolstered by an expanding membership, continues to be publicly recognised by key stakeholders. New information sharing agreements have also been put in place so that we can react more readily to changing trends and challenges to both our members' businesses and our partners around the world.

"To complement this, the association is to engage in a total of four anti-match-fixing projects during 2018, part of our on-going policy to participate in and promote integrity efforts on behalf of our members. There is a growing focus on betting integrity in existing and potential new markets and ESSA has sought to reflect this in its responses to policy consultations and in its wider engagement.

"The coming year is set to be another important period for the betting sector and integrity will again be high on the agenda. ESSA will continue to promote the adoption of proportionate and effective integrity policies and market regulations. We invite all operators committed to defending betting markets, sports and consumers from corruption to consider joining us in promoting those actions."

ESSA holds positions on high-level betting policy forums at the European Commission, Council of Europe and the IOC. It is driving a number of important initiatives aimed at addressing match-fixing and hosted an international betting integrity conference at Lords Cricket Ground (see here) last year, attended by over 150 senior officials from sports bodies, regulators and other key stakeholders.

A copy of ESSA's 2017 integrity report can be accessed here, along with previous reports.

Source: 31 January 2018, ESSA (Sports Betting Integrity)

Tennis, Football, Volleyball, Table Tennis, Basketball, Handball, Snooker, Badminton, Boxing, Ice Hockey, eSports
<http://www.eu-ssa.org/wp-content/uploads/ESSA-2017-annual-integrity-report.pdf>



GOOD PRACTICES

Badminton World Federation (BWF)

BWF sign anti match-fixing partnership

The Badminton World Federation (BWF) have signed an integrity partnership with Genius Sports to protect their competitions against the threat of match-fixing.

Badminton hit the headlines when a match-fixing scandal occurred at the London 2012 Olympics, where two sets of players tried to lose a match on purpose in order to draw supposedly easier opponents in the next round.

Additionally, a match-fixing attempt was thwarted at the BWF New Zealand Open last year.

The new agreement will see technology company Genius Sports, who already have partnerships with Major League Baseball, the PGA Tour and the English Premier League, provide the BWF with a state-of-the-art bet-monitoring system, which compares odds movements and global betting markets using algorithms to battle match-fixing.

The technology will help monitor all elite badminton competitions including the BWF World Championships, the Sudirman Cup and the BWF World Tour.

Commenting on the deal, BWF President Poul-Erik Høyer said: "The integrity of our sport is of utmost importance to BWF and we are pleased to join forces with Genius Sports to strengthen our campaign to keep badminton clean.

"Genius Sports has gained a sterling reputation in providing world-class bet-monitoring services and we welcome their expertise.

"This partnership will help to protect our tournaments from match-fixing and betting-related corruption."

Ben Paterson, the integrity operations director at Genius Sports, added: "Effectively combating match-fixing demands that sports are proactive.

"The BWF has shown an exemplary commitment to prioritising the integrity of its competitions and we are delighted to have formed this long-term partnership, using our market-leading technology to provide round-the-clock protection."

The latest BWF Masters tournament on the calendar is taking place in Indonesia this week.

Source: Thomas Giles, 24 January 2018, *Inside the Games*

Badminton

<https://www.insidethegames.biz/index.php/articles/1060564/bwf-sign-anti-match-fixing-partnership>



Global Lottery Monitoring System (GLMS)

GLMS formalises cooperation with FIFA to safeguard the integrity of football

The Global Lottery Monitoring System (GLMS) has signed a cooperation agreement with FIFA. The agreement formalises the long-lasting cooperation among the two organisations, who will continue their efforts to safeguard the integrity of football competitions. GLMS will be reporting to FIFA key information on suspicious betting behaviour or patterns across a number of international and domestic competitions. The cooperation demonstrates both organisations' ongoing and firm commitment to protecting football from the threat of match-fixing and corruption.

GLMS President, Ludovico Calvi states: "Over the last years also football has witnessed a lot of match-fixing cases and I am confident that this formalised cooperation with FIFA will concretely contribute to the global fight against this phenomenon that jeopardises the very credibility of football and its core values. GLMS has recently launched a new system powered by TXODDS, as well as a new hub in Hong Kong, which will be of pivotal importance in being of value for FIFA in terms of sharing irregularities. We look forward to our fruitful cooperation with FIFA in the highest interest of sports integrity"

The information sharing with FIFA has contributed to some concrete results in the past, as recently the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) confirmed the lifetime ban imposed by FIFA's Disciplinary Committee on match-fixing grounds. The Court concluded that there was a link between the intentionally wrong decisions of the match official and a deviation from an expected betting pattern, as reported by 5 different monitoring systems, including the GLMS.

Source: 24 January 2018, *GLMS*

<http://glms-sport.org/news/glms-formalises-cooperation-with-fifa-to-safeguard-the-integrity-of-football/>

Pakistan

PCB to hire Integrity Officers for corruption watch during PSL

LAHORE: The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has decided to hire two Integrity Officers to watch over players during the upcoming third edition of the Pakistan Super League (PSL) in a bid to prevent any corruption approach.

The PCB has floated an advertisement informing of two new openings for the post. The ad lists down the eligibility requirements for two Integrity Officers who would be hired “on a temporary basis (maximum 60 days)” for general vigilance and control.

The ad mentions that retired Army Officers of the rank of Lieutenant Colonel will be preferred for the position. Those who have completed Intelligence Course would also be given preference.

The initiative comes in the aftermath of a spot-fixing scandal that hit the PSL last year, which saw cricketers Sharjeel Khan and Khalid Latif get suspended by the PCB for five years after the board’s anti-corruption tribunal found them guilty of playing a role in the corruption.

Fast bowler Mohammad Irfan and all-rounder Mohammad Nawaz were also suspended for twelve and two months, respectively, for not reporting the corrupt approach to the board in a timely manner.

The probe is ongoing against Karachi Kings batsman Shahzaib Hasan and former Pakistan opener Nasir Jamshed.

The PSL third edition starts from February 22 and will end on March 25. The league will be held in UAE (Dubai/Sharjah) with two matches scheduled in Lahore and the final set to be played in Karachi.

Source: Sohail Imran, 26 January 2018, Geo News

<https://www.geo.tv/latest/178766-pcb-to-appoint-integrity-officers-for-corruption-watch-during-psl>

Rugby Football Union (RFU)

ESSA links up with RFU for English rugby protection

The Rugby Football Union (RFU) has announced that it has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with international sports betting integrity body ESSA.

Through this new link up, English rugby is set to be protected from potential match manipulation and sports betting breaches.

Under the terms of the agreement the RFU, a member of the UK Sports Betting Integrity Forum (SBIF), is set to benefit from ESSA’s monitoring and alert system.

This covers its members regulated markets, which comprise some of the largest operators in the world, and is designed to monitor for any suspicious betting patterns.

ESSA Secretary General Khalid Ali, commented: “No one can or should be complacent in the face of criminal elements intent on corrupting any sport to defraud betting companies.

“ESSA therefore welcomes the continuing proactive approach of the RFU and the formation of this alliance.

“The RFU is among a group of sports bodies that have made important and effective strides in this area and ESSA remains committed to working in partnership with those responsible organisations.”

Angus Bujalski, Legal & Governance Director at the RFU, added: “While no instances of betting related match-fixing have to date been identified in English rugby union we need to continue to be vigilant.

“We have already put in place a range of measures to raise awareness and to set clear rules to maintain the integrity of the game. This MoU is another important milestone in that process and complements our existing work.

“English rugby has so far been free of betting related match-fixing and we are working hard with our partners such as ESSA to ensure that it remains that way.”

ESSA, whose members include the likes of BetVictor, Betsson and Sky Bet, is currently involved in four anti-match fixing projects simultaneously.

In its Q3 integrity report, the firm details that 72 cases of suspicious betting had been referred to the relevant authorities during the quarter.

Source: Craig Davies, 25 January 2018, SBC News

<https://www.sbcnews.co.uk/marketing/2018/01/25/essa-links-rfu-english-rugby-protection/>

ODDS AND ENDS

Malaysia

No compromise on match officials involved in match-fixing: Referees committee

KUALA LUMPUR: FA of Malaysia (FAM) referees committee chairman Subkhiddin Mohd Salleh stressed that he will not compromise with match officials who are involved in match-fixing.

Subkhiddin said he is willing to work hand-in-hand with authorities such as the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) to ensure that referees do not get involved in activities which could tarnish the reputation of the sport.

He, however, hopes that match officials will be judged fairly by all parties when carrying out their duties.

"I believe our referees are not influenced by bookies," said Subkhiddin on Sunday.

"I hope they will be judged in a smart and mature manner based on suitable criteria and not by making assumptions."

Subkhiddin was commenting on the stern warning given by Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi in regards to match fixing in the country.

Speaking at the launch of the Police team's jersey for the 2018 season in Putrajaya on Friday, Zahid said stern action will be taken on those involved in football corruption.

Subkhiddin added: "At the moment, I see that there are a lot of comments which are focused on taking action against a second or third party.

"Maybe it would be better if the authorities were more proactive in taking action to eradicate the source of the (match fixing) offer."

Source: Syafiq Aznan, 28 January 2018, New Straits Times

Football

<https://www.nst.com.my/sports/football/2018/01/329689/no-compromise-match-officials-involved-match-fixing-referees>



Sierra Leone

Sierra Leone sports minister denies interfering in FA's peace process

Sierra Leone's sports minister, Ahmed Khanou, has denied interfering in the Sierra Leone Football Association's (SLFA) peace process. It follows a letter from Fifa's secretary general Fatma Samoura dated 30 January, warning him not to interfere and to allow the SLFA to "manage its affairs independently and without undue influence from third parties."

Khanou is a member of a Fifa task force set up to resolve internal problems within the SLFA.

"I'm disappointed at Fifa's Fatma Samoura because I've not interfered with the peace process," Khanou told BBC Sport.

"I received a letter from the SLFA executive committee (the unrecognised faction led by Brima Mazola Kamara) on 10 January, saying they wanted to convene a congress to adopt the Fifa code of ethics and elect members to the electoral board to conduct elections.

"These are in line with the Fifa road map. So, as a member of the task force, I decided to call another member of the task force - Veron Mosengo-Omba (Fifa's director of member associations) - to inform him about the letter I received.

"He promised to get back to me, only for me to then receive a letter from the Fifa secretary general urging me not to interfere," explained Khanou.

Sierra Leone football has been dogged by internal wrangles on issues ranging from integrity checks on current and potential SLFA executive members, delayed FA elections and the investigation of match-fixing allegations.

In November, Fifa overturned a decision by the SLFA to set aside Isha Johansen from her role as president, ruling it 'invalid'.

Johansen's vice President - Brima Mazola Kamara - had taken up the reigns after Johansen faced corruption charges in court along with the Fifa-recognised SLFA secretary general Christopher Kamara. Both Isha Johansen and Christopher Kamara have repeatedly denied any wrongdoing.

There are now two factions claiming to lead the SLFA, but in the letter to Khanou, Fifa reiterated its stance to recognise the Johansen-led leadership, a stance the Sierra Leone sports minister strongly disagrees with.

"By continuing to recognise Johansen as President of the SLFA means Fifa has no respect for the laws of Sierra Leone," said Khanou.

"It's a total disregard of our country's laws which are supreme.

"This has the tendency to forestall the peace process which I have been part of.

"Since I became a minister I have succeeded in breaking barriers by having the parties in the SLFA conflict to talk to each other," Khanou added.

Fifa confirmed that the next meeting of its task-force would be in mid-March 2018 in Zurich, Switzerland.

Source: BBC

Source: 4 February 2018, Ghana Soccer Net Football

<https://ghanasoccernet.com/sierra-leone-sports-minister-denies-interfering-in-fas-peace-process>



United Kingdom

Joey Barton says HALF of all professional footballers bet on matches: 'It's culturally ingrained'

Joey Barton believes gambling is 'culturally ingrained' in English football. The 35-year-old midfielder is currently serving a 13-month ban for breaking the Football Association's betting rules after admitting placing bets on 1,260 matches. The FA tightened its regulations in 2014 to stop players in England's top eight divisions betting on any football-related activity, anywhere in the world.

Barton, who will be able to play again from June 1, concedes he was right to be punished - but claims he is far from the only professional footballer to have been in clear breach of the FA's rules. The former Manchester City and Burnley midfielder also insists the issue runs deep in English football.

'I think, and I'm being conservative, I think 50 per cent of the playing staff would be taken out (banned), because it's culturally ingrained,' Barton told BBC Radio 4's Today programme. 'You'd have half the players out for sure.'

He added: 'I had to be sanctioned, because I stepped out of the boundaries of the rules. So there's no doubt about it, but the FA think I'm the only footballer who has ever bet on football ever.'

'But the reality of it says that that is not the case. I've seen (it) with my own eyes.'

'I'd place bets for other footballers on my accounts. I would say, on a conservative estimate, being in professional dressing rooms where there's been readily available cash for over 15 years, you'd have half the league out.'

Barton says the reason for that is because of the change in regulations. He also believes it is important to distinguish between gambling rules and match-fixing rules.

He said: 'The (gambling) rules have become more and more stringent. Ultimately we've ended up now with a totalitarian kind of ban - no football betting anywhere.'

'Where we've got it wrong is we've got the gambling rules mixed up with the match-fixing rules. Because match-fixing is fundamentally wrong and challenges the integrity of the sport.'

'I think culturally betting is acceptable. There's nothing wrong with betting if it's controlled - it's when it becomes out of control and people bet beyond their means.'

Source: Press Association, 24 January 2018, Daily Mail Football

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sport/football/article-5306343/Joey-Barton-believes-50-footballers-bet-matches.html#ixzz55BSdcwe5>



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