

## **Match-Fixing: A Historical Perspective. Mike Huggins, 2018**

### **Abstract:**

*Match-fixing has a long history, but while use of drugs in sport has a substantial secondary literature, match-fixing has only recently begun to attract the attention of historians. This essay begins with a brief overview of its global contemporary contexts, the broad range of sports where it now surfaces, increased recognition of its moral, social and economic threat, and the varied responses of leading sports organisations, legal gambling operators, police forces, governmental departments and regulators. The following section explores the challenges of finding any reliable evidence of match-fixing in the past. Such material can include reports of criminal trials and investigations, the decisions of national and international sporting bodies, journalistic investigations, players' confessions, suspended investigations and the many various unsubstantiated allegations of fixing. An overview shows that match-fixing has been a major and substantial long-standing historical continuity in sport usually but not always linked to gambling and sporting materialism. Examples are brought forward to show that it could be found in Ancient Greece and Egypt, and was widespread across the early modern and modern periods in Britain, America or Australia. The essay concludes by suggesting some key questions which a future historical agenda for the study of match-fixing might address.*

### **Key Words:**

Match-fixing, gambling, corruption, football, criminality

Although the sub-field of sport history has more often focused on sport's positive aspects and its contributions to society, sport has always had a darker side, involving bribery, cheating, doping, corruption, dishonesty and scandal. While historians of sport have not avoided such topics, the bulk of work in recent years has been on the history of doping for performance enhancement and the use of steroids at top levels of competition, rather than match-fixing's history. This can be seen in the contents of leading sports history journals such as *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, *Sport in History*, or the *Journal of Sports History*, all of which have regularly published articles with titles involving drug-use related topics authored by leading researchers such as Paul Dimeo, John Greaves, John Hoberman, Thomas Hunt or Michael Kruger. But while match-fixing studies have proliferated in recent years in journals of sport management, sports policy and politics, sports law and criminology,

sports history studies are still generally empirically lacking and under-theorized.

### **What is Meant By Match-Fixing?**

Now, as in the past, match-fixing has taken two major forms. The one of most concern amongst sporting bodies has involved attempts to deliberately distort the outcome of a sporting contest (or an element within the contest) for the personal material gain of one or more parties. Many of these match-fixing forms, as Gorse and Chadwick have recently stressed, have been betting-related, manipulated to profit maximize on the gambling market, most usually by gamblers, organized crime or players themselves.<sup>1</sup> The relationship between sports such as football and gambling has historically been a complex one and can be exploited.<sup>2</sup> Sometimes persons off the field directed match-fixing to make often illegal financial gains using a mixture of legal and illegal sports betting platforms, sharing some of that profit with those connected to the sport who executed the fix on the field. As a profit-maximizing form, it therefore required contacts and financial arrangements variously between gamblers, criminals, players, team officials and/or referees, umpires, judges or other officials. Some fixes have been organized and controlled by sporting competitors who either placed the bets themselves, or could persuade someone to on their behalf.

A second form of match-fixing has been sporting-motivated, for reasons that are not related to betting and are less likely to have criminal involvement, even if there is some indirect financial gain from the fixing. This has usually but not always been done in a team contest. Most commonly the motives for this type of match-fixing were connected with the financial survival of a club, or for the achieving of some sporting advantage such as the avoidance of relegation

or the gaining of promotion in a league, through the bribery of match officials, club officials or opposing players. This kind of match-fixing usually appeared later in the season. Less often it was earlier, to improve the chances of progression in a tournament. Such arranged matches were manipulated by internal corrupters to ensure that one specific team won or drew, sometimes by collusion when both teams could gain in terms of promotion/relegation or status, while sometimes only one team gained. Here the risks were more limited, though such decisions involved a large number of participants, and there was a risk of leaks to the media or authorities.

Though it may in the past have been more common than believed, this form has been less foregrounded by researchers until more recent examples in Western Europe began to surface, partly perhaps since it often involved senior figures within clubs or national sports organizations, and it could not be detected through betting patterns. In the past it was sometimes done by players wanting their opponents to lose and allow them the points to avoid relegation and drop in wages. An early English League example was an approach by the Burnley captain to the Nottingham Forest captain in April 1900, though the Forest captain refused the offer.<sup>3</sup> Much more often, a club's manager or chairman organized the approach. Manchester City's Billy Meredith was suspended in 1905 after offering Aston Villa's captain £10 to throw a match that would have got Manchester City the First Division title, and later claimed his manager had been behind the move.<sup>4</sup> In the 1960s investigative journalists discovered that end-of-season fixing of promotion and relegation matches in Britain was quite common, with one manager claiming that 'this kind of thing happens all the time'.<sup>5</sup>

A third form of fixing has become more common in recent years, most notoriously in sports such as cricket. This is spot-fixing, with deliberate under-

performance in a specific part of an event during a contest. The rapidly expanded market for in-game betting, betting not on the winning or losing of a game but on other factors offered increased gambling temptation, since those players induced to manipulate games were happier when it did not affect results. As early as the 1940s, In America, the introduction of the points spread by bookmakers introduced the possibility that gamblers would induce players to fix the margin of games, without necessarily altering the result, something players felt more comfortable with as quite often it could be done subtly, and was not obvious to spectators. American basketball, to cite just one example of many, has had a long line of scandals dating back at least to the early 1950s, with occasional prosecutions through the period. <sup>6</sup>

### **Contemporary Contexts**

In the past two decades many high-profile sporting figures, sport administrators and governing bodies have argued that match-fixing involving betting has become a greater threat to the integrity of sport than doping, and is now the major challenge facing modern sport.<sup>7</sup> In most sports, competitors, referees and other officials operate in a relatively closed environment. In many countries and at lower levels of sport, professionals have relatively low pay and poor financial security which makes them more vulnerable, and making money from fixing more attractive, especially where the game can be manipulated by a single competitor, the outcome is not important or there is limited regulatory control.

The global growth in (often unregulated) internet betting platforms in the past two decades especially in the Far East, the increased accessibility of on-line betting across all societies, and the substantial expansion in the

involvement of international criminal gangs, whose activities are hugely profitable, span the continents and affect an ever-growing number of sports, have had a major impact on betting-related result arrangements. According to most commentators, the digital era has transformed match-fixing.<sup>8</sup> It has made sport far more vulnerable. Anyone in Asia can now place a bet on a relatively unimportant sports result in any small European country and vice versa. Criminal gangs have found the manipulation of sports results for betting purposes on the globalized sports gambling market an effective tool for making and laundering money around the globe, with relatively high revenues, often little oversight and control by local authorities, low detection rates and low sentences if caught. In the new on-line markets, the illegal sport betting markets in Asia (perhaps 60% of the global total), and the illegal betting markets in North America, are reputedly largely run by organized crime and cannot be policed or searched.

In the past few years there have been cases across the globe in football, cricket, baseball, horse racing, sumo wrestling, tennis and many other sports. Cases have been exposed, even at the highest level of play, in the world's most popular sports. In cricket, the captain of the South African team was found to have facilitated defeat for his team in a Test Match against England in 2000, and several other allegations of fixing in the sport emerged at the hearings into the case. Leading leagues, such as the National Basketball Association (NBA) in the United States and German soccer's Bundesliga, have been the focus of referee corruption scandals.<sup>9</sup> Tennis has also come under suspicion in recent years, Back in 2008 one report concluded that 45 top matches played in the preceding five years should be investigated because of strong indications from betting patterns that profits had been generated by, at the least, insider trading.<sup>10</sup> All sports are vulnerable. To take Australia as an example, a study of

the period from 2009 to 2013 identified substantiated or alleged cases of different forms of match fixing in soccer's Victorian Premier League, the National Rugby League, New South Wales greyhound racing, the Australian [Rules] Football League and thoroughbred racing.<sup>11</sup> As a recent study of European grass-roots soccer showed, fixing can be found at lower levels of sport as well.<sup>12</sup>

In response to such problems there have been Integrity or Ethics Units set up by the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), the International Olympic Committee (IOC), the International Association of Athletic Federations, and some other leading sports organizations like the British Horseracing Authority attempting, with limited success, to combat it. The Tennis Integrity Unit, for example, is an anti-corruption body focusing on professional tennis throughout the world, working out of London, funded by the sport's major shareholders such as the International Tennis Federation and the various Open events. World Rugby held an Inaugural World Rugby Sports Integrity forum in November 2016 and other sports are moving in similar directions. Sports organizations increasingly work with police forces, gambling commissions and legally recognized organizations like Ladbrokes or William Hill in the UK, or the World Lottery Association, to monitor irregular betting patterns.

Anti-match fixing strategies have in part focused on deterrence and prevention, as well as on the detection and prosecution of offenders when detected. But more recently there have also been efforts to deliver anti-corruption education to players, especially those entering the sport and stakeholders, both to encourage deterrence and to encourage them to recognise and report match-fixing of any sort.

To many, match-fixing undermines some sporting values such as integrity, loyalty, fair and open contests (i.e. fair play), sportsmanship and respect for others. To others, whose early lives were spent in particular sub-cultures living by different rules, fixing has been merely a financially rational choice in specific circumstances, and to use words like 'corrupt', 'dishonest' or 'immoral' feels less relevant. In such cases potential fixers carefully evaluate the costs and benefits to them of engaging in manipulation of events on the field for betting gain.

Sport needs uncertainty to give it meaning and appeal to spectators, but it also needs to be trusted. Results are important to competitors, promoters, sponsors, trainers, other connections, fans, supporters and gambling backers, and the concern for sports clubs and organizations has been that the fixing of results risks alienating sponsors, fans and supporters. Some concerns have been moral in nature, conceptualizing it as a potentially terminal threat to the integrity of sport.<sup>13</sup> As sport has moved from a leisure pastime to become a huge global commercial business this has increased concern with match-fixing's impact on different sports' commercial business model and the credibility of the brand: i.e. the potential result-fixing damage to revenue streams, which include gate receipts, associated merchandising, sponsorship and TV and other media rights deals. When sports organizations are dominated by commercial decisions there are major concerns that match-fixing can have an impact upon the companies and brands that are associated with it, including negative consumer brand perceptions of and associations with the sponsor and adverse image transfer from the corrupting property to the sponsor.<sup>14</sup>

All major international sports organizations now recognize the potential threat posed by match-fixing. In 2011, Michel Platini, the President of the

Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) and Gianni Infantino, later its General Secretary, both strongly indicated that combating match-fixing had become a major priority for UEFA. The same year, Jacques Rogge, the former president of the IOC, gave a clear and stark warning that its issues represented 'the next big fight facing sports organisations and governments'.<sup>15</sup> He pointed out that while 'doping affects one individual athlete ... the impact of match-fixing affects the whole competition. It is much bigger.'

Such concerns have meant that betting-related match-fixing has started to assume a higher profile in the policy agendas of international organizations like FIFA and the IOC, national governments and sporting bodies. The IOC now works in close cooperation with the national regulatory offices such as the Gambling Commission, Interpol and sports betting, and has working groups looking at awareness raising and prevention, the exchange and analysis of information, and legislative programmes. In 2012 the Global Association of International Sports Federations (SportAccord) produced research-based guidance to address concerns related to the threat to sporting integrity.<sup>16</sup> Global interest in looking at integrity issues soon followed.<sup>17</sup> In 2014 UEFA signed a memorandum of understanding with The European Union law enforcement agency Europol.<sup>18</sup> FIFA's previous gambling monitoring company, its Early Warning System for match-fixing, never managed to make known a single example during Blatter's rule, but now uses a more creditable organization, SportRadar. Legal online sports betting exchanges are now generally monitored as 'a statistical screening for nefarious conduct in the market'.<sup>19</sup>

The general focus of concern has been on the top levels of sporting competition, and on processes, law enforcement and prevention strategies.<sup>20</sup> The real challenge for action is the secrecy that surrounds match-fixing. Dino



Numerato's ethnographic study of match-fixing in Czech soccer, for example, showed how the publicly secret nature of match-fixing is normalized and the match-fixing complex is reinforced by a compromising complicity of social actors who are both victims and principals.<sup>21</sup> A further problem is that law enforcement organizations that carry out investigations still sometimes find it difficult to get support from sports authorities, who are reluctant to act, since it is not in their commercial interests to publicize match-fixing and alienate spectators. Many of the leading clubs have official betting partners providing sponsorship, and some European governments have grown accustomed to accepting revenue from gambling organisations based there, and this provides further reluctance to publicise any problems.

On the broader international front, in 2014 a *European Convention on the Manipulation of Sport Competitions* was published, setting out to combat the manipulation of sports competitions in order to protect the integrity of sport and sports ethics by preventing, detecting and sanctioning national or transnational manipulation of national and international sports competitions. Its intent was to promote national and international co-operation against it between the public authorities concerned, as well as with organizations involved in sports and in sports betting. Countries have been encouraged to sign it but many have yet to commit. There is increased belief that there is a need for a new international treaty on match-fixing.<sup>22</sup>

The United Nations *Convention Against Corruption* and the United Nations *Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime* now provide a legal framework for law enforcement agencies to combat match-fixing, and serve as universally accepted reference points for sports organizations and other stakeholders to support this fight. In 2016 the International Centre for Sport Security, which now plays a more major role in addressing critical issues in

sport such as corruption, betting fraud and transparency, published a practical resource designed to help officials detect and investigate match-fixing.<sup>23</sup>

There appears to be a widespread assumption amongst policy-makers that match-fixing is either a relatively recent phenomenon, or that whilst it appeared in the past, in recent decades it has substantially increased. As late as 2012 one supposedly authoritative survey claimed that ‘the first case of match-fixing in modern sport seems to have occurred in 1915 in a match between Manchester United and Liverpool, which was fixed in Manchester’s favour’.<sup>24</sup> Despite occasional unquantified anecdotal references to historical examples, historical references to match-fixing in current work have been minimal, even though the problems about match-fixing which seem to currently bedevil modern sport have strong historical antecedents. Yet almost all commercialized modern sports were formalized somewhere between 1840 and 1900, in a period which appears to have had many examples of corruption. Vamplew’s study of professional sport in Britain between 1875 and 1914, for example, had a substantial section on ‘unsporting behaviour’ such as match-fixing.<sup>25</sup>

### **Finding Evidence of Match-Fixing in the Past**

Academic interest in the current phenomenon of match-fixing has now generated a substantial literature which has explored its key aspects in modern societies across the world, covering topics as diverse as processes, law enforcement, links with gambling, integrity, the groups involved and their methodologies.<sup>26</sup> It is therefore surprising that there has been little attempt to study match-fixing in historical perspective, over the *long durée*. Whether match-fixing is now more common than it has been across history is therefore a moot question. Clearly the modern forms are very different to those fixes

used in the past, but how common it was in the past is extremely difficult to assess. The evidence base has always been thin, with plenty of rumour, helping to create a range of representations of fixing.

In terms of modern sport the strongest form of evidence has come from reports of trials with clear judgements in court or other legal proceedings. In the past, given match-fixing was usually not formally a crime, such court judgements were rarely to be found and often surfaced only accidentally in private prosecutions. In 1865, for example, a 'gentleman' pedestrian from Aston in Birmingham, England, sued another pedestrian in the Birmingham County Court for a debt owned of £10, but the trial revealed, after a series of vague, 'hardly intelligible' and 'somewhat obscure' evasions, that the plaintiff had actually bribed the other to 'square' the race, and had not got the result he had paid for. The judge decided that 'it was clear from what had transpired' that the plaintiff had given the money for a questionable purpose' and gave a verdict for the defendant.<sup>27</sup>

Evidence has also occasionally survived from the decisions of national and international sports associations which started to emerge from the mid-nineteenth century. Unfortunately these decisions depended upon how these associations viewed evidence, and so they are not directly comparable. The English Football Association passed a law in 1884 that the players or clubs when accused were guilty until proved innocent, and had to prove to the satisfaction of the Committee that the offence had not been committed. By contrast the English Rugby Football Association often demanded overwhelming evidence, similar to that in a court. Quite often the investigating committees asked for the production of information or documents which were either unforthcoming or compiled especially for the investigation and witnesses could not be required to attend or answer questions. Unfortunately

for the historian, usually only the decisions of sports organizations have been recorded in their minutes and not the evidence on which they were based, though sometimes newspapers with links to committee members were able to pick up leaked material.

Other potential material relating to match-fixing comes from newspaper reports of betting scandals,<sup>28</sup> confessions by former players in autobiographies or newspapers and material from inconclusive suspended investigations, and finally the most common form of all, the many unsubstantiated allegations. Across history fixing has been widely suspected, often alleged, but rarely documented.

Because match-fixing in many countries has not itself been a crime, it has most often prosecuted under laws relating to conspiracy or fraud, as with Britain's 1906 Prevention of Corruption Act. In Britain, even in the past 15 years there have been only a few successful investigations and convictions, despite what appeared to be strong evidence, with prosecutors often relying on much earlier conspiracy laws. It appears that for law enforcement it has not been a priority.<sup>29</sup> In tennis, for example, the Tennis Integrity Unit operates on a confidentiality basis, only making public comments after a successful investigation with sufficient proof to lead to disciplinary action. Across the world, sport bureaucracies which saw that rules and regulations were universally applied, and facilitated a larger network of competition, have only started to emerge in the past 150 years. So there are no decisions of sports organizations to examine in the more distant past.

### **Match-Fixing: As Old as History?**

What modern organizations have failed to realize is that match-fixing has always been a major and substantial sporting continuity, linked to gambling

and sporting materialism, alongside another longstanding continuity, a widely-held belief in a mythical recent past of pristine purity. High-stakes betting, dishonest dealings and suspicious performances can be found throughout history. It has been a perennial sporting concern and source of tension, though specific examples have always been embedded within very distinctive social and historical frameworks. There is real need to highlight the topic and give thought to an agenda which begins the process of discussing and analyzing the nature and extent of match-fixing in historical perspective.

Cheating in and the fixing of sports events have a history that is probably as old as organized sport. Success in the various ancient Greek Games had high status, and in the Greek city states powerful military and ruling groups had a political interest in outcomes, which made fixing tempting. At Olympia 16 'zane' statues were erected from the fourth century BC onwards, with the money of fines imposed upon bribery-corrupted persons or cities that had been found guilty of corruption in its Olympic Games.<sup>30</sup> The location of these statues was no coincidence: the athletes had to pass them when going to the running track to remind them of the need for honest contests. The reasons for the fines were given in inscriptions on the statue bases and are extensively discussed by the Greek historian Pausanias.<sup>31</sup> The inscriptions emphasised that athletes should win through strength or speed, and not through money. It was significant that then, unlike most cases now, not only were those athletes punished, but also those that paid the bribes. During the 98th Olympics, in 388 BC a boxer named Eupolus bribed his three opponents to let him win and all four men were fined. In 68 BC, during the 178th Olympics, Eudelus paid a Rhodian to let him win a preliminary wrestling competition. Both men and the city of Rhodes paid a fine.

Similar material exists from the ancient Roman world. A recent papyrus contract dated to 267 AD, for example, provided solid evidence of match-fixing, showing how formalized it could be in the past. The contract was made between the father of a wrestler called Nicantinous and the trainers of Demetrius who were set to wrestle in the final of the 138th 'Great Antinoeia', which was a series of games held during a religious festival in Egypt. The contract stipulated that Demetrius must 'when competing in the competition for the boy [wrestlers] ... fall three times and yield' and in turn he would be rewarded with 'three thousand eight hundred drachmas of silver'. The contract contained a clause that Demetrius would still get his money if the judges picked up on the fact the match was fixed and refused to grant Nicantinous victory. To make absolutely sure of a win, Nicantinous' father placed a clause in the contract that if Demetrius backed out of the deal, and went on to win his trainers would have to pay a larger sum of money to his son.<sup>32</sup>

The extent of fixing in the past has always depended on a number of factors. Recent research suggests that match-fixing decisions for those involved are often about practical issues.<sup>33</sup> Fixing has been more likely in sports where betting volume is higher, such as football, which could be targeted by illicit betting syndicates in an attempt to hide otherwise irregular betting patterns in the general weight of money bet on the particular game or event. It helped where the scrutiny on the competition was less intense, as in lower leagues. Where athletes were poorly paid and salaries were regarded as unjust those bribed to lose were less likely to have moral qualms, though in contests where winning has high status there was more reluctance to lose. It was also easier to fix in sports where the actions of one individual could ensure the appropriate result. Those towards the end of their careers, and youngsters unsure of success were often more tempted. In America, for example, Albert

Figone has shown that with the average college athlete possessing a slim chance of making the draft, 'athletes who have spent the majority of their lives preparing for professional careers may be vulnerable to the entreaties of gamblers after realizing that their hopes are in vain.'<sup>34</sup>

Stephan Szymanski has argued that fixes in recent cricket stemmed not just from moral frailty but also from the remarkably low salaries paid to the players who were induced to accept as bribes what were, for world class athletes, remarkably small sums of money.<sup>35</sup> As the betting market has become larger and more sophisticated, it has moved from personal bets between known individuals to other forms such as pool betting and betting personally with bookmakers. In such situations the money betted had to be put on in a more conspiratorial and concealed way, perhaps by commissioning others to do it, so as not to attract concern from the bookmaker and a too rapid shift in the odds, as bookmakers were always very aware of such attempts, and the possibility of losing large sums. With the changing balance between unregulated, grey, semi-regulated and regulated on-line betting markets concealment has become easier.

### **Match-Fixing's Impact During the Past 300 Years**

The current concern about the risks posed by match-fixing in terms of issues such as loss of public confidence, decreasing spectator attendance and cuts in investment, raise questions about how much that was a concern in the past. Most people in the past with an interest in sport and betting and with access to the journalistic media would have noted allegations that that results were occasionally fixed. It was taken for granted. Even in wider popular culture there

was probably a general awareness of that. How far it affected attendances, betting and interest is much less clear.

British examples make that clear. Gambling and sport had always been closely related and in some sports mutually interdependent in past times. The earliest sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth century rules, 'articles of agreement' and contracts for many sports, from cricket to horseracing, were drawn up to with the interests of gamblers foregrounded, since all parties were aware that where the rules were loosely constructed their limits would immediately be tested and exploited. Because wagers were often placed on contests, this meant that 'fair play' was often concerned with protecting the financial interests of gamblers and ensuring there was a chance of winning. The notion carried multiple meanings. Because its criteria were associated with natural justice and appropriate performativity, seeing and assessing 'fair' play in a contest was not decided by contestants but assessed by those present. Fair play existed in *their* minds as much as those of the contestants or wager-makers, but this could depend on the peer group's moral and ethical codes.<sup>36</sup> Early bets were only made between individuals many of whom knew each other, and on credit, often only at the event itself, or a short time before.

In Britain, almost as soon as sports such as cricket, horse racing and pugilism started to be reported in early eighteenth-century newspapers and periodicals, they were accompanied by allegations of attempts to influence results. Fixing was not difficult, and the professionals not always well paid, but the betting market was relatively small. Despite regular allegations that cheating was practiced by members of *all* classes, from the titled elite to esquires and those of more humble origins, these early sports continued to attract both new participants and spectators, since even if gamblers



sometimes found themselves fleeced, gaming was so popular that there were always new groups becoming attracted.

There were sub-cultural differences in attitudes to match-fixing too, with differential responses to what now might be considered illegal or dishonest practice. Where men taking part in a sport on a semi-professional basis were in jobs with low pay or irregular employment, the temptation to occasionally lose a match to gain financially through bribery or betting was often seen as acceptable. In the marginal regions of northern England, where Cumberland and Westmorland wrestling competitions with prizes were a feature from the early nineteenth century, 'taking a fall', or 'barneying' was almost normalized.<sup>37</sup> In early horse racing, many accepted that owners had the right to run a horse to lose. Many owners were titled and rich but it was a period when corruption was rife in Parliament and politics so this may have made it acceptable. In 1802 the stock breeder and journalist John Lawrence (1753–1839) argued that 'stratagems and manoeuvres' were 'surely lawful in horse racing' and that it was 'not inconsistent with the honour of a sporting gentleman to start his horse with the intention of losing' to gain through backing his opponent or by using the race as a run out before a forthcoming race with better prize money.<sup>38</sup> There were more negative views towards the substitution of a better horse for a worse one, relatively easy if the horse was entered in a distant race. From the 1760s onwards examples surfaced occasionally of horses deliberately injured or poisoned to prevent them running in a future race. Jockeys could be paid to lose a race, by holding back their horse, though as early as 1718 at York, a well-backed favourite would have won, had not his jockey, Thomas Duck, 'intentionally thrown himself off'.<sup>39</sup>

Even though cheating at cards, or the manipulation of horse races by 'sharpers', 'blacklegs' and other supposed cheats were regularly referred to, gambling was widely popular and attendances at race meetings at Newmarket and elsewhere do not seem to have been affected adversely. Even when some members of the titled upper classes and landowning gentry were often believed to be involved in result manipulation, it was more plebeian gamblers who were more often accused.<sup>40</sup>

Betting exchanges like the Jockey Club rooms, coffee houses and Tattersall's began to develop an ante-post betting market, catering largely for the better-off during the eighteenth century, but bookmakers in their modern form, laying and offering changing odds to suit their betting book only began to emerge from around the turn of the nineteenth century. Their emergence offered better opportunities for fixed results, especially in London where the market was larger, and fixing was supposedly rife. Only a few sports attracted sufficient interest for this ante-post form, with cricket and pugilism along with racing perhaps the most popular. One leading batsman, Billy Beldham (1766-1862), explained that young players would be approached in a public house and bought drinks. The 'sharp' gentleman would then explain they could earn far more than the low sums on offer for playing by losing occasionally.<sup>41</sup>

Pugilism had a popular following over the period from the 1770s to the 1820s, and the involvement of Jewish and Irish and then black fighters attracted prejudice and loyal support, and heavy betting, though purses were initially generally small. Here too there were regular allegations of fixed fights, some influenced by racism and anti-Semitism. In November 1824, for example, a match between the Jewish boxer Barney Aaron and Dick Curtis never took place following insinuations from Jewish supporters that there had been attempts to bribe Aaron, and from the Curtis side that he had stayed

‘incorruptible to all the bribes and temptations of the Jews’, with letters and press allegations from both sides.<sup>42</sup> The elite were still often believed to be involved, and the same year William Vasey, in a Newcastle speech on boxing morality, alleged that the upper classes, who managed boxing, accumulated the money, arranged the terms of the fight, fixed the fights according to their wagers, used deceit and abused the ignorant fighters.<sup>43</sup>

From then on, as a richer, more diverse and widely-accessible commercial sporting culture emerged it was accompanied by more widespread and regular allegations of suspicious results relating to gambling in a wide range of commercialized sports involving professionals or semi-professionals such as horse racing, pedestrianism, pugilism, sculling, wrestling or bare-knuckle boxing. Countries like the United States and Australia experienced similar problems. The Australian Michael Rush, champion sculler in the 1860s, experienced many sculling races with results agreed beforehand by the participants.<sup>44</sup>

Nineteenth-century sporting newspapers and periodicals quickly picked up and generated discursive features to indicate to their more ‘knowing’ readers their suspicions of a lack of honesty in the contests, without deterring novice supporters.<sup>45</sup> A new language was circulated by sports journalists. In horse racing journalism, for example, where in the eighteenth century the phrase ‘riding booty’ had sometimes indicated that the horse was being held back and not intended to win, the nineteenth century saw a wider range of indications about such performance: ‘dead meat’, ‘back teeth pulled out’, ‘not busy’, ‘head pulled off’, ‘not on the job’, ‘running loose’, ‘a stumer’ or ‘a stiff’un’.<sup>46</sup>

In many other sports a contest could be ‘on the square’ i.e. honest, or ‘squared’. Phrases like ‘sold the fight’ indicated the commercial nature of the

fixing transaction. Occasional references to 'rigged' contests, where the betting market was manipulated or managed in a fraudulent or underhand manner and influenced using illegal or improper methods became common from the 1850s, following the term's earlier use applied to auctions.<sup>47</sup> In a period when some bets were 'play or pay' and lost if the contestant did not compete, contestants, human or animal were occasionally 'nobbled', a word applied to when a person or animal was struck, maimed, drugged or hurt beforehand to ensure the contestant withdrew. The word entered more common use in the 1840s in Britain.<sup>48</sup> Sometimes a result was described as 'fixed', a word that according to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) seems to have originated in the USA as slang and became common from the 1880s. Sometimes a contest would be described as 'on the cross', which was already defined in 1812 as 'any illegal or dishonest practice', and the term soon applied to fraudulent contests where the result was decided beforehand.<sup>49</sup> To 'throw' a contest meant to lose a contest or race deliberately or by corrupt pre-arrangement and also seems to have entered Britain via the USA from the 1860s according to the *OED*.

As new forms of sport played, dominated and controlled by the growingly powerful middle class began to emerge from the 1850s, they generated powerful new ideologies: of amateurism, new philosophies of 'fair play' unconnected to betting, athleticism, muscular Christianity, and a strong opposition to professionalism and betting, linked to concerns about fixed results. Many of those who were key officials in British sports such as rugby, athletics or soccer came from public school, university, the professions and commerce, and wanted to keep their sports what they termed 'pure'.<sup>50</sup> There was a widespread belief that when more and more working men played a sport, and got paid for playing, they were more easily tempted into fixing

results. Even in rugby, which attracted less betting than soccer in Britain, there were already rumours in Yorkshire in the 1890s that bookmakers were trying to influence players.<sup>51</sup> According to *Reynolds News*, a widely-read Sunday paper of the period, the corruption of horseracing had become a newspaper byword.<sup>52</sup>

America faced similar problems. Voigt has shown that that there were match-fixing scandals in early baseball even in the 1860s and 1870s, as in 1877 when four Louisville men threw several late season games, with regular rumours thereafter, especially in the early 1900s.<sup>53</sup> This of course culminated in the 'Black-Sox Scandal' of 1919 when eight members of the Chicago White Sox, a team chronically underpaid, were accused of intentionally losing the 1919 World Series against the Cincinnati Reds in exchange for money from gamblers. This became an iconic event for baseball, and created a subsequent cultural industry of books and films such as the 1988 film 'Eight Men Out', based on Eliot Asinof's 1963 book, or the 1990 film 'Field of Dreams', based on W.P. Kinsella's book 'Shoeless Joe', which made the banned player a victim, a symbol of purity in a sport corrupted by gamblers.<sup>54</sup>

American pro-football also had fixes, and in 1906 the huge expense of maintaining the super teams, extensive use of ringers, and accusations of fixed games virtually destroyed it for a short time.<sup>55</sup> In Australia during cricket's supposedly 'golden age' in the late nineteenth century, it 'was not uncommon for there to be ... corruption and bribery, and the fixing of matches'.<sup>56</sup>

Despite such concerns, and despite the work in Britain of the protestant churches and the National Anti-Gambling League, which saw ready-money betting banned in 1906, betting was becoming ever more popular, and gambling sports grew in popularity. After World War I, between 1918 and 1939, when greyhound racing was seen as emblematic of modernity, and horse

racing likewise attracted large crowds, most attenders were well aware that in both sports, the number of handicap races where handicaps were based on form meant that in some races form was concealed and races were deliberately lost to gain future benefit.<sup>57</sup>

Even those who never attended but only bet on sports would also have been aware of this, not least because such issues regularly surfaced in popular culture, in literature and in film, mediating and conveying societal understandings of the role of fixing in sport, and in turn impacting on lived experiences. In a period when the cinema attracted up to 23 million weekly attendances, sports films often featured narratives of dishonesty overcome by the hero. Horse-racing films, from both America and Britain, often featured some sort of racing crime alongside a romantic subplot, with crooked bookmakers, dishonest trainers or jockeys and nobbled horses.<sup>58</sup> Boxing films had similar themes. Bombardier Billy Wells, a former British heavyweight champion, starred in the 1920 silent film 'The Great Game' which involved a fix of the Newmarket 2000 Guineas horse-race, and attempted fixes of other boxing and horseracing matches. In another example, the 1938 film 'Flying Fists' a young boxer agreed to fight a crooked bout to get money for his father's operation, but thanks to his girlfriend persuading him to fight fair he won a famous victory and his girl. Even children's comics like 'The Wizard' occasionally featured characters manipulated by unscrupulous villains for gambling reasons.

Novels merging sport with crime and romance were popular with both men and women. Nat Gould (1857-1919) was probably the most prolific and widely-read novelist of his day, writing over 130 novels, set in Australia or Britain, often concerned with racing or cricket, and selling widely. His heroes and heroines characteristically overcome obstacles such as corrupt

bookmakers and often won important races climaxed by a thrilling finish. In Australia, Arthur Wright (1870-1932) was a best-selling novelist whose stories often exposed the villainies of the turf underworld. The novels of Edgar Wallace, Wright and Gould were sometimes adapted for films, at a time when cinema audiences were very large. The cheap racing novels of Britain's Hornsea and Aldine presses produced in large numbers from the 1920s onwards often featured similar stories of racing dishonesty overcome, and sold well. It should be noted that more recently, the racing fiction written by ex-jockey authors like Dick Francis, John Francombe and Richard Pitman perpetuate similar themes and attract a large readership. Yet despite such regular literary reinforcement of the idea that bookmakers and dishonest criminals tried to fix sporting events, there is little current evidence that this affected attitudes, and impacted adversely on betting markets

Maybe such books did not reach the sporting market or it may be that audiences assumed that sport was generally 'all square' and that the cases they saw and read were exceptions. Data is lacking and oral history techniques might shed light on this.

### **Building a Future Agenda**

Currently there has been little detailed analysis of match-fixing in the past. There are major themes to explore. Case studies such as Simon Inglis's detailed account of well-known British soccer scandals many of which involved match-fixing, or Chris Taylor's study of the bribery and corruption of referees and players involved in match-fixing in South America, have been relatively rare.<sup>59</sup>

Many questions remain to be addressed. To what extent has the lack of action against match-fixing by governments in the past been a factor? In the USA different state legislatures outlawed gambling, driving it underground into

criminal cultures and increasing the likelihood of fixing results. Steve Riess has shown how New York legislators fought to break the chain that bound gambling and late nineteenth century gangsters.<sup>60</sup> In Britain, the state tried to control gambling by selective prohibitive legislation.<sup>61</sup> Recently however neoliberal economics and increased consumer leisure spending have seen major deregulation in many countries across the world. Though some activities have always been legally defined as criminal acts, match-fixing has been treated differently by the criminal law in different countries in the past, and it is only recently in many countries that it has started to become a separate offence.

Other key issues involve more analysis of the extent to which sporting bodies recognize match-fixing, how they deal with it and the effectiveness of sanctions. Particular national sports organizations and governing bodies have tried to impose integrity in their sports and ensure that those involved have not got involved in gambling or the fixing of results in a variety of ways. Some have introduced rules and regulations provisions to govern their participants' behaviour in relation to betting. Others have not. For example, even in the nineteenth century football players and officials were banned from betting, initially on matches in which their club was involved by the English Football Association yet it is clear that subsequently soccer players continued to breach betting regulations, as the recent 18-month banning of Joey Barton, a Premier League player, by the FA, illustrated. He was accused of placing 1,260 bets on football matches over a 10-year period to May 2016, including games he was involved in.<sup>62</sup> What sorts of rules have been introduced over time, and why then? How have these changed over time? How robust have these efforts been? How practical? How effective? Most have sanctions, but what sorts of sanctions have applied? Have sports bodies in the past tried educational



approaches? And to what extent have there been changing attitudes to reporting and information sharing? How effective are sanctions likely to be when the match-fixing is linked to the financial survival of a club, or the avoidance of relegation and officials as well as players and referees or umpires are involved.

Recent work has tried to create a cost-benefit analysis to help predict where fixing is most likely to take place, and this model could certainly be useful for exploring past examples.<sup>63</sup> The major costs to fixers are partly financial but also include the chances the fix will be unsuccessful; the penalty if there is detection; feelings of guilt; loss of esteem among team mates; and loss of opportunity to play if deselected. These have all to be carefully assessed by those involved, even when they have a range of motives, which may not be entirely financial, though the benefits are the size of the bribe and the probability of a successful fix.

The practicalities of organizing gambling fixes in the past remain to be explored, as do issues of power with the enterprise. Declan Hill, in his recent study of contemporary global match-fixing, has shown its complexity.<sup>64</sup> Fixers need access to players and match officials to influence them, either by personal meetings, using former players or other third parties. Then fixers have to be set up, which might be through creating insincere friendships or perhaps searching out weaknesses such as sexual frailty or gambling addiction and putting pressure on. The creation of corruption relationships, in which more regular and reliable fixing success can lead to more trust and credibility amongst those involved, more favour reciprocity and more certainty of success. Secrecy has to be maintained. The betting market also needs to be fixed to maximize profit, which depends on the bookmakers and those offering odds not knowing unless involved directly. Where the betting market is small,

as in lower profile sports, these can be easier to fix as those involved will not earn much, but it is hard to gain big profits. Where there is a large betting market, players earn more so fixes can be harder to set up. Then the players, referees, judges or umpires have to fix the result without spectators, team mates and sports organizations knowing.

Cross-cultural comparisons would also be useful. What difference has culture and context made? To what extent have there been differences in moral attitudes to fixing across countries, as well as across social class, gender and other forms of identity? How important or unimportant have ethical considerations been at different points in the past? The term 'corruption' has always involved diverse processes which mean different things in different societies. Has fixing been more common, more deeply embedded, when there has been a high level of 'corruption' generally in everyday life and others are also taking bribes?

Finally, it is worth exploring match-fixing in terms of the history of crime and policing. So there is material to be found about organized crime and criminality in the past century, and the role of policing. But it may also be important to recognize that even when fixers violate moral codes and 'fair sporting competition' they have often formed an integrated part of a culture's economic and social fabric. Match-fixing has never been eliminated in the past. There may be little possibility of it being eliminated in the near future.

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<sup>4</sup> Richard Cox, Dave Russell and Wray Vamplew (eds), *The Encyclopaedia of British Football* (London: Frank Cass, 2002), 71.

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