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# **SOCCER AND MATCHFIXING: SOCIO- CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES**

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# SOCCER FIXING

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Deliberately distorting the outcome of a match for personal material gain by one or more players, or the referee. Often betting-related, manipulated to profit-maximize on the gambling market, most usually by gamblers, organized crime or players themselves.

- Sporting-motivated though with some indirect financial gain from the fixing. Often connected with the financial survival of a club, or sporting advantage such as the avoidance of relegation or the gaining of promotion in a league, or to avoid a build up of fixtures, through the bribery of match officials, club officials or opposing players. This kind of match-fixing usually appeared later in the season.

# Today, match-fixing globally and in the UK is perceived by the soccer industry as a new problem, potentially the biggest 21<sup>st</sup> century threat.

- 'combating match-fixing is now a major priority for UEFA'... and if it continues, "football is dead." **Michel Platini**, the President of **UEFA**
- '**Chris Eaton**, the former Head of Security of **FIFA** - a "crisis",
- **Zhang Jilong**, president of the **Asian Football Confederation**, has stated that it is a "pandemic."
- 'one of the biggest potential problems facing our national game', **Fraser Wishart**, of the Scottish FA
- 'The threat posed by match fixing and other sports betting integrity issues is a global issue', **Nick Tofiluk**, **Gambling Commission Sports Betting Integrity Unit**.
- **Convention on the Manipulation of Sports Competitions of the Council of Europe** issued on 9 July 2014, some signatures but unratified.



# Changes in last decades

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- Vast increase in the size of the global gambling market. World Cup of 2002: already £11billion. About 70 per cent of this is the illegal and unregulated Far East sports gambling market. Recent **International Centre for Sport Security** estimate is that the far East illegal betting markets, in China and elsewhere, turn over somewhere between US\$750 billion to US\$1 trillion annually.
- **No longer betting locally and nationally. Betting can be facilitated via internet, anonymously and remotely online.**
- Betting in Asia very popular: attracts very substantial criminality. Match-fixing has had a toxic impact. Audiences are switching off. Disillusion and an erosion of confidence in sports' integrity has hit many Far Eastern sports. Huge financial loss on the sports competitions and leagues. China, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, south Korea, Thailand, Vietnam, all rife. Asian gamblers started betting on less corrupt Western sports. So the Far Eastern criminal gangs now moving into the West
- **Soccer has become a global industry. European football market in 2016/7 worth some €25.5bn (£21.9bn).The English Premier League was the market leader, with record revenue of £4.5bn**

# Syndicates of criminals operate globally.

## S'poreans and the global fix

**US** June 2011

Der Spiegel alleges that three Concacaf Gold Cup matches in 2011 appear to be rigged after unusual scores and betting patterns were discovered. The German magazine quotes an unnamed source that "everything leads to Singapore".

**EL SALVADOR** October 2010

El Salvadoran Football Federation president Carlos Mendez confirms in 2011 it signed a contract with Exclusive Sports, a Singapore-based company that allegedly organised a dodgy match between Costa Rica and El Salvador in October 2010.

**HONDURAS** October 2011

A Malaysian with close ties to Wilson Raj is arrested and later released by Honduran police. The man was in Finland with Wilson Raj days before the latter was arrested in 2011.

**PANAMA** 2009

Former S-League player Gaye Alassane is named by El Grafico for offering bribes to Deportivo Arabe Unido during the Concacaf Champions League in 2009 and 2010 in Panama City.

**BOLIVIA** 2010

According to Wilson Raj, his alleged protege-turned-rival, Mr Anthony Santia Raj, is sent to Bolivia to strike a deal with the football association there.

**HUNGARY** Nov 2011

Hungarian authorities arrest several nationals linked to Wilson Raj for match rigging. Local newspapers have reported the fixes were "decided in Singapore" by a Singaporean leader.

**EUROPE-WIDE** February 2013

Europol alleges that 380 fixed matches are linked to Singapore syndicates. Another 300 fixes in Africa, Asia and Latin America are also uncovered.

**FINLAND** 2011

Wilson Raj Perumal, 45, is charged in May 2011 with bribing players from several football clubs in the Finnish League. He is now under house arrest in Hungary.

**ITALY** Dec 2011

Italian authorities issue an arrest warrant for Mr Dan Tan Seet Eng for allegedly fixing Italian league matches. His syndicate has been operating there since 2009.

**TURKEY** February 2011

In Antalya, Footy Media, a company Mr Santia Raj represented, organises international friendlies played on Feb 9, where all seven goals scored were from penalties.

**SYRIA** 2009

Two Singaporeans fail to bribe local football club players with US\$50,000 (\$62,000). They are arrested and deported.

**BAHRAIN** September 2010

A fake Togo side plays against Bahrain. A spokesman for Bahrain Football Association tells The New Paper that Football Four U, a company owned by Wilson Raj, had organised the friendly.

**MALAYSIA** June 2011

Singaporean businessman Rajendran "Pal" Kurusamy is hauled to court Malaysia for allegedly offering bribes of more than RM24,000 (S\$9,700) to fix two matches in the 2010 President's Cup tournament.

**EGYPT** March 2011

Using an Egyptian events company, Singaporean match fixers allegedly organise seemingly legitimate friendlies in the Middle East.

**SOUTH AFRICA** June 2010

The South African Football Association reported in December 2012 that its pre-2010 World Cup friendly matches were infiltrated by Wilson Raj and his "bogus" company, Football Four U.

**ZIMBABWE** 2009

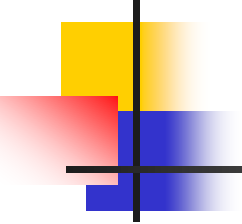
A number of Zimbabwe national team players admit to taking bribes to lose matches on Asian tours in 2009. Wilson Raj is alleged to have manipulated those matches.



# What is being done in Australia

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- Integrity organisations like those of the Australian Football League or the Professional Football Associations are developing a variety of strategies – phones confiscated, mentoring of players, educational programmes, film analysis of player behaviour during games.
- BUT costly so only top tier.

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- Whenever there has been an illegal betting market available a small percentage of match-fixing has always accompanied it. Historically it is a normal part of sport.
  - Occasionally making more money by losing when winning is expected has always been appealing to many players, especially w/c. It has been least appealing to the most well-paid, top-flight players who do not need the money, and want to preserve their standing.
  - Some match-fixing has always been done by the clubs themselves.



# Is it true that individuals will not gamble on a contest unless they are convinced it is conducted fairly?

## WRITING MYSELF INTO THE ANALYSIS



# Did most involved in the past know, that occasional matches were fixed but still take part and betted?

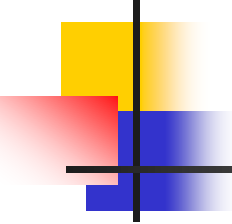
- As Preston and Szymanski (2010) point out, 'there certainly does not seem to be any clear evidence that scandals related to cheating have reduced interest' in the past.
- Learned behaviour in working-class subculture, linked to gambling in Britain, with its long history amongst ALL classes of cunning, deception, putting one over on the other, however defined. Sportsmen tend more often to be risk-loving than the general population.
- Difficult for people to be unaware of its occurrence: failed attempts by crooks, dishonest gentry and bookmakers to fix a sport have been a dominant trope, regularly found in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century films, novels, comics and penny 'bloods. The 'honourable' hero is sometimes tempted but always resists or outwits attempted skullduggery. Fixing was regularly hinted at in the press.

## Manchester United 1914-15 season

Manchester United were in danger of relegation. The Liverpool captain with three other players met the three Manchester United players in a pub to plan a betting coup and give Man. U. the points. They got bookmakers' odds of 7-1 against a Manchester United win 2-0.

The Football League gave all seven players life bans when they were caught.





# ATTITUDES TO INVOLVEMENT IN MATCH FIXING IN THE PAST HAVE BEEN DETERMINED BY 'rational decisions based on specific circumstances' (Hill)

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- Different conceptualisations of sport AND gambling;
- The size of betting market on that sport;
- social class AND personal morality;
- personal circumstances and the personal significance of the event;
- chances of being detected, and the greater the loss if so;
- powers of police, legal system and sport governing bodies;
- nature of football at that time.

# SPORTING INTEGRITY? Or Differing ideologies

fair-mindedness, fair play,  
mutual respect, honour,

love of the game, moral certainty

**integrity,** -----

**Fair play,** pure, uplifting,  
chivalric, amateur,  
fairness, honesty, ethical

**sportsmanship,**  
clean sport, democratic,  
clean players, idealism

noble,

revenue/profit/turnover

**Discourses of deception**  
commercial interests

betting industry

money/capital

income generation

**Monetary gain,**  
gamesmanship

**Match-fixing**

**Lack of scruple**  
self-interest

**different ethics**

**'dark entrepreneurs'**

**Use of the dark web**

# Whenever there was betting on sport it was accompanied by matchfixing.



- Nine Premier League clubs and 17 of the 24 Championship clubs have a gambling company as their main shirt sponsor. Betting is a major revenue stream for soccer clubs AND betting industries.
- Many young men strongly associate their support for the game with gambling, leading to “gambification” of watching football (McGree, Bath University).



# Then AND now

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- strong illegal gambling networks,
- high levels of relative exploitation of players,
- perceived corrupt officials.
- Few get caught.



## WHY GET INVOLVED?

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- Betting gain on own account.
- **Avoid over-exertion in early rounds of knockout competition.**
- In response to bribe offered by betters, seeking to profit from their private knowledge.
- **in response to bribe offered by bookmakers or criminals but often set up via go-between, ex-player, sometimes creating 'counterfeit intimacy'.**
- Some grievance against a trainer, club, promoter or manager eg. resentment about low salary levels.
- Safe enough - 'to complain is easy, to substantiate is awkward'.  
*Liverpool Echo*, 13 October 1914.





# JUST PERFORM THE FIX WELL

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- Try to ensure falling behind early.
- Appear very involved and active even when trying to lose to convince the spectators you are fully committed to winning, appear to be trying, shouting and exhorting, encouraging, pointing, putting every effort in. If the spectators suspect then performance is poor.
- Football players underperform, with plenty of small mistakes, sending spinning balls or hospital passes to those on the team not involved. They retain the ball too long, pass back, go out of position, send a misdirected pass, miss tackles, dribble straight at a defender or goalkeeper, fail to give passes to those not in on the fix, Missing goals or giving away penalties often not necessary.
- Who does it? Players for whom fixing is culturally acceptable; who are under-paid, whose career is near its end, or where earlier progress is not being made; who get addicted to gambling, befriended by fixers in clubs, in debt, caught in honey traps. NB Premier League referees generally get around 98 per cent of decisions correct so harder to avoid suspicion.



# Recent attempts to address match fixing – what are their chances?

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- devising measures to reduce corruption by concentrating on illegal gains from betting markets?
- **better forms of detection?**
- **better law enforcement? The conclusions of the 3<sup>rd</sup> International Conference on the Fight against the Manipulation of Sports Competitions at Strasbourg were NOT very positive.**
- inter-sectional co-operation rather than rivalry?