

Sportradar Integrity Services

The History



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Introduction

Match-fixing is one of the most severe problems sport is facing at the beginning of the 21st century. The internet has made it much easier for manipulators to achieve their criminal goals. The number of bookmakers has increased, as has the range of different betting types. Bookmakers in Asia accept huge stakes and the mobile internet further helps the match-fixers place their bets – even alongside the field of play. If sport federations want to keep up with this pace they have to react in a comprehensive way. No matter what the motivation for match-fixers might be, manipulation in sport is a fraudulent act that has to be tackled.

Those involved in manipulation are not only individual players or referees, but sometimes even whole teams. The reasons for and the execution of the match-fixing differs across sports and across countries - a detailed analysis of the criminal activities therefore is more important than ever before. Some contests are fixed for betting purposes, whilst others are manipulated for sporting reasons¹; there are even cases of threat and extortion in the context of manipulation. With the rapid recent commercialisation of sports, the incentive for fraudulent activities has also become more appealing. One single match can effectively decide the sporting and economic survival of a club.

In this context we have observed a worrying development. The sheer number of manipulations for betting purposes has increased notably, following the motto 'when I pre-arrange a result I can bet on it and win much more than with the actual sporting success'. This is especially true in smaller countries and lower leagues where players can gain significantly more profit with this behaviour than relying on wages alone. According to law enforcement agencies, manipulation of matches for betting purposes is increasingly executed by international organised criminals.

¹ A team may need to win the league and bribe their opposition; a team may lose on purpose so as to obtain a better draft pick (in American sports); or a Tennis player may lose on purpose in order to rest before a major tournament.

2005 – A decisive turning point

The German Bundesliga² Scandal of 2005 is arguably the most infamous and indeed informative modern case of match-fixing in sport. It was revealed through the cooperation of corrupt referee Robert Hoyzer³ that 13 matches had been manipulated by a criminal syndicate; at the head of which sat Ante Sapina. The Bundesliga Scandal is pivotal to the understanding of match-fixing since a great deal was revealed by both Hoyzer, and later Sapina, regarding the methods used to manipulate sport for the purpose of profit. Later, the workings of the 'Kelong Kings' from Singapore were exposed to have taken match-fixing to extremes, rigging football matches across the globe.

Contests fixed for profit are often organised by crime syndicates. However, there have been many cases of persons within certain teams, or players in individual sports, taking it upon themselves to manipulate a specific contest or part of a contest and often in conjunction with associates placing corrupt bets. Finally, referees can - and have - been forced to influence a match, whilst others have acted alone for individual profit. And so, although match-fixing has always been known to be a disease inherent in sport, until 2005, little had been done to eradicate, or even monitor the problem.

A reaction in football

German football reacted to the 2005 scandal. With the introduction of Sportradar's Early Warning System (EWS), a comprehensive system was built. This system was able to monitor the worldwide betting market, identifying manipulation and detecting fraudulent betting activity. On behalf of the German football federation (DFB) and the German football league (DFL) Sportradar is today monitoring the majority of their matches – from the Bundesliga to the Oberliga (top to fifth level), from women's football to youth football and the national team – more than 7,500 matches in total. The next federations to utilise the services of Sportradar were FIFA (Fédération Internationale de Football Association) and UEFA (Union des Associations Européennes de Football) in 2006 and 2007. These were later followed by the AFC (Asian Football Confederation), CONCACAF (Confederation of North, Central American and Caribbean Association Football), the English FA, Scottish FA, Maltese FA, the FFA (Football Federation Australia), MLS (Major League Soccer), Czech FA, Italian Lega Pro and the Estonian FA.

² Though called the 'Bundesliga Scandal', only the 2nd Bundesliga, DFB-Pokal and Regionaliga competitions were affected.

³ Robert Hoyzer was responsible for the bulk of the match-fixing revealed in the 2005 scandal. He was lured by Ante Sapina to perform illegal actions to influence results.

From Early Warning System to Fraud Detection System

Live betting has become more attractive to gamblers every year. The number of live betting opportunities has increased considerably, with higher limits; especially at the European (1x2 markets) and Asian bookmakers (Asian Handicap markets). This phenomenon has been accompanied by a rise in match-fixing, which is taking place in the live betting markets with increased regularity. There are two reasons for this: firstly, the already mentioned increasing limits offered by bookmakers. But, even more importantly, there is only a relative short time slot in which the suspicious betting happens. This makes it very difficult for sports federations and law enforcement agencies to intervene.

Should the betting occur before the start of the match, it is much easier for those authorities to react beforehand (e.g. by changing the referee). However, an early warning is not possible when the suspicious betting occurs during the live markets.

Sportradar reacted to this shift in manipulation methods with an evolution of the Early Warning System. Together with UEFA, the Fraud Detection System (FDS) was developed and this improved extensive detection and analysis system was used for the first time in 2009.

On behalf of UEFA, Sportradar is now monitoring the vast majority of professional football matches in Europe. Over 32,000 competitive matches from the 55 member states (first and second leagues plus cup matches), as well as all of UEFA's own competitions, are systematically monitored each year.

The Fraud Detection System – Comprehensive Monitoring – Pre-Match and Live

The FDS was developed to track odds and odds movements at hundreds of different bookmakers around the world and to detect suspicious betting patterns immediately. The FDS monitors all the relevant data from the worldwide betting industry; this includes state-owned lotteries, betting exchanges, European, American and Asian bookmakers – retail outlets and online. Additionally, all data relevant to the match and background information regarding the players and teams is analysed to estimate the probability of a match being manipulated.

The FDS's in-house experts analyse all information and try to eliminate all reasonable explanation for large odds movements. The FDS analyst team is comprised of individuals from all corners of the betting industry. This means the system benefits from expert knowledge concerning European sportsbooks, Asian operators, betting exchanges, spread betting operators and proprietary betting companies. Every angle is covered.

Using pre-delineated algorithms, the FDS provides alerts if it detects anything unusual, be it in the odds, liquidity, or even regarding the number of bookmakers who have been forced to withdraw their offering on a specific fixture. Every rumour, suspicious odds movement and piece of relevant news is scrutinised to give the clearest and most accurate picture of what actually took place.

The algorithms can detect extraordinary odds movements or even odds that are incongruous when compared to Sportradar's calculated odds. This latter function operates in-play, as the FDS has a complex mathematical model depicting the expected odds for every conceivable match scenario. Also, the system detects bookmakers that remove certain matches from their offering (e.g. due to integrity concerns).

Once the FDS experts have concluded that a match is suspicious, Sportradar produces a thorough report analysing all suspicious betting movements. This is produced within 72 hours of the final whistle. This report also includes an appendix of betting data, with graphical representation of every alert.

FDS Facts

The number of monitored matches and sports has increased. Over 160,000 matches are now monitored per annum across 13 different sports on behalf of over 70 different sport rights holders. Since May 2009, Sportradar has produced over 3,100 reports on matches from different sports worldwide that are likely to have been manipulated. Moreover, there are 5 billion datasets produced each day.

Approach to solve the problem

Though the threat from manipulation is real and rising, the outlook for the integrity of football and sport in general is far from bleak. Even though famous cases are constantly discussed in the media, less than 0.5% of the 160,000 matches monitored across different sports each year are suspected of being manipulated for betting purposes. However, the size of the problem is not to be underestimated!

The victims of manipulation are always the same: the sports federations or leagues that lose credibility, the fans which are deceived, the betting companies which have to pay out the money that is won by fraud and the betrayed bettors who lose money because they placed bets expecting an honest contest played according to the rules.

Players and referees are the executing individuals in betting-related fraud and can also be victims themselves, especially where threats and coercion are used, whilst the organisers themselves

operate outside of sport and are generally from international organised crime. These criminals are sophisticated: manipulating and corrupting the players and referees and operating in a very flexible manner between different leagues and sports. Therefore, the problem of match-fixing can only be tackled successfully with the international coordinated cooperation of sports stakeholders, law enforcement agencies and the betting industry. The Fraud Detection System is one of the premium, award-winning tools available for the monitoring and tracking of this fraudulent behaviour.

How our findings underpin investigations

While Sportradar initially set out to provide expert intelligence to sport federations and rights holders in order to aid their own investigations and disciplinary proceedings, things have developed differently... and for the better!

Since 2006, Sportradar have been invited to support criminal prosecutions in different countries and jurisdictions. Starting with Frankfurt and the State Office of Criminal Investigations in Hessen, our credibility really attained new heights during the Southern Stars case in Australia that broke in 2013.

Back then, FFA CEO David Gallop said: "***The integrity of football is paramount. We provided information to Victoria Police within 24 hours of receiving an alert from our international betting integrity monitoring agents Sportradar, who then worked closely with the investigation team***"⁴.

Not only did the FDS discover and report the initial match-fixing to FFA and Victoria Police, but due to their eagerness and aptitude, it was possible to deliver real-time betting analysis to run alongside their official investigations. The betting patterns indicated which team was at fault and even if a referee was likely to have been compromised. In this particular case, Victoria Police were able to gather essential evidence and used the FDS to interpret the meaning behind the betting terminology and the criminal syndicate's intentions. The suspect players' history had all been recorded within the Fraud Detection System. Therefore, it was possible to further highlight the likely parties at fault. The case ended with six guilty verdicts in the Victorian courts, two prison sentences and FIFA-endorsed worldwide football bans for the players involved.

The case proved a catalyst for further parallel investigations run by sports stakeholders on the one hand, and public authorities on the other. Working on the case that involved Kuljic and Taboga alongside the Austrian Federal Office of Criminal Investigation (Bundeskriminalamt), the following statement was made by Andreas Holzer (Deputy Director) on behalf of the Federal Minister:

⁴ <http://www.footballaustralia.com.au/news-display/victoria-police-make-arrests-into-alleged-match-fixing/74932>

“The know-how and the professional analysis Sportradar provided and provides are a substantial contribution to the thorough processing and reasoning in this investigation procedure. The Austrian Federal Office of Criminal Investigation hereby wants to express its gratitude and hopes for a further good collaboration!”

Showcasing our strong working relationship with UEFA, they have decided to forward our Reports through to other European FAs and law enforcement agencies, including Bulgaria, Latvia, Moldova and Montenegro. Further afield, the ICAC have recently worked alongside the team in the Sportradar Hong Kong office in order to progress investigations focused on football on the island.

While Sportradar continues to provide its Reports primarily to sport rights holders and respects their desire to investigate matters internally, the trend that has seen these very rights holders forward those Reports on to police and other law enforcement agencies is a welcome one. These public authorities have powers and resources that sport rights holders cannot call upon. Their involvement in parallel with those who protect support maximizes the chances of success and makes the repercussions for match fixers all the more serious.

2016 has been a crucial year in that regard. In July, CAS, the world’s highest sport dispute resolution forum, upheld the UEFA Appeals Board decision which found that FDS reports could be used as a basis for imposing match-fixing related sanctions on a club.

A further case that found its way to CAS concluded that two FDS reports, alongside player performance evaluations, provided a sufficient basis to impose match-fixing sanctions on a club and its players under that country’s football federation regulations.

These two processes highlight the high regard that our findings have in both the sports and criminal processes around match-fixing and manipulation. Undoubtedly, more rights holders and prosecutors will feel more confident to proceed with further investigations and cases based on our Reports and findings in the future.

The Fraud Prevention Service – Education and Consultancy

A comprehensive monitoring of the worldwide gambling market by Sportradar's Fraud Detection System is a vital requirement to identify manipulation. However, it is also important that educational measures are implemented to inform athletes, coaches, referees and officials about the dangers and consequences of match-fixing. Only through the use of such education can we hope to prevent match-manipulation in the future. Sportradar have supported and educated sports federations and state authorities in this field since 2005.

A comprehensive prevention program is the most effective way to tackle sports corruption. Sportradar's Fraud Prevention Service (FPS) offers every sport federation or league the support and information they need to tackle match-fixing. Whatever problems a sport federation faces – whether they have on-going problems with match-fixing or simply have the foresight to take the necessary preventative measures – the FPS can meet their individual needs.

This education will have a lasting impact on the continued fight against corruption. When a player, official or coach is not only aware of incoming threats but understands the consequences of manipulation, those seeking to corrupt sport will lack the opportunities they usually exploit. Italian football federation, Lega Pro are a positive example that highlights that education and deterrence can lead to a considerable decrease in fraudulent behaviour. Since 2010, Lega Pro have been working together with Sportradar; using our FDS to highlight manipulation and the Prevention Services to prevent fraudulent behaviour from spreading.

For example, Sportradar conducted a full education workshop with the club of Salernitana Sport as part of the 2013 Lega Pro Integrity Tour. In May 2013, Salernitana Sport player David Mounard reported an approach made to him by a former teammate to help fix a league match against U.S. Gavorrano. He correctly passed this information to the Procura Federale, and the match was ultimately not manipulated.

In previous Lega Pro seasons Sportradar has detected matches that are suspected of being manipulated. The subsequent monitoring of their matches by the FDS, combined with the parallel organisation of an Integrity Tour, comprising of the comprehensive education of Lega Pro's clubs (players, youth players, presidents and referees) as well as an accompanying e-learning program, has been a key factor in there being a significant decrease in the level of suspicious activity.

In 2014, Sportradar set about evolving its FPS educational tools. Bringing on board a new Head of Education, the new awareness-raising package includes face to face and practical educational workshops and tailored e-learning modules full of sport-specific case studies. Sportradar have developed a powerful back-end to the e-learning service which allows those organising and providing the modules (usually sports federations) to accurately understand workshop attendance, e-learning completion, areas of concern and refresher priorities. The FPS today has moved from "encouraging" understanding and behavioural change, to "ensuring" it: something the company is very proud of.

Integrity Tours/Programs

Aside from the aforementioned 2013 Lega Pro Integrity Tour, Sportradar also successfully organised the 2014 Integrity Tour of Serie A and the 2015 Tour of Serie B, effectively offering its educational services to all the professional clubs in Italy. In addition, tours of Wales and Gibraltar in recent years have proved informative and engaging.

2015 Serie B Integrity Tour

Launched on 15TH January 2015 by Serie B President Andreas Abodi, Sportradar Integrity Services undertook and delivered a tour of all 22 clubs that make up the league.

The Integrity Tour included the tailored workshops, all delivered in Italian by our specialist Marcello Presilla and completed within three months.

The three year deal will also include refreshers and the new e-learning modules that will ensure that all first team and youth club players understand and are comfortable with the critical information they have received.

Speaking on the day of the launch, President Abodi said: “Deceiving football supporters means deceiving the whole football world. That is the reason why knowledge and training about match fixing is essential for Serie B’s credibility, and is fundamental to ensuring our stadiums are full.”

2014 Football Association of Wales Integrity Tour

Similar to the Serie B Tour, the FAW launched their national tour with a press conference in Cardiff, attended by the FAW’s CEO Jonathan Ford and the Welsh Premier League’s Secretary Gwyn Derfel.

The Tour was completed in a matter of weeks and was delivered by our Head of Education. Taking in all 12 clubs of the Welsh Premier League, as well as the league’s officials. 2015 and 2016 will see the Tour rolled out to the second tier clubs in the Nathaniel Cars Welsh Football League Division One and the Huws Gray Alliance League.

The FAW’s CEO underlined that: “the FA saw the importance of educating all those involved in the game about the potential threat and consequences and so we partnered with Sportradar, who are world leaders in this area, to assist us in delivering our FAW Integrity Tour.”

Law Enforcement Training

As mentioned above, Sportradar have noticed over recent years that the role of law enforcement agency investigations have become an increasingly important part of bringing fixers to justice. However, the world of modern international betting and organised criminal match manipulation activities are not simple to grasp and understand.

Spotting an appetite for support, insight and intelligence, Sportradar has recently rolled out a number of well-received Law Enforcement Training modules. These one-day long workshops have provided law enforcement agencies, police forces and even public prosecutors with the benefit of our ten years of experience in this world. Now that our credentials have been established through the range of investigations that our team have initiated or supported, we look forward to offering these modules to other groups of stakeholders that need this refresher or sharpener.

Expert Consultancy Package

Apart from educating sports organisations and their target groups respectively, the Fraud Prevention Service operates a comprehensive consultancy package which can be delivered to sports organisations on demand. With the increasing threats of match-fixing, sports federations ought to be prepared to safeguard their sports from such harm.

The Sportradar Consultancy Experts advise and support sports federations to implement an effective integrity program and/or infrastructure to achieve this objective. The Consultancy Experts also assist sports federations to deal with both internal and external stakeholders on match-fixing related matters.

A subscription to the Consultancy Package also gives the federation privilege access to certain exclusive services that are not available otherwise such as, *Investigations of Players, Coaches and Referees* as well as *Field Investigations*.

Tackling the problem of match-fixing within your sport is a daunting task. Sportradar are proud to offer federations a full 360 degree integrity service.

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